

# Stage North play judged best in zone

Stage North's "Opening Night" has won the Best Production award at the Peace River Zone drama festival held in Dawson Creek. Director John Kelly was named Best Director for his work with the Stage North play, which will compete at the Mainstage, Theatre B.C.'s competition at the B.C. Festival of the Arts in May.

Best Actor went to Ward Washington and best supporting actor was Michael Nash, both of the Dionysus Theatre in Dawson Creek.

Rosemary Wheeler of Dionysus won Best Actress, and Marian Truscott of Stage North was best supporting actress.

Certificates of Merit were presented to Stage North's Tom Kirschner, Tanya Clary and Wendy Nicholson and to Roger Anderson of Dionysus Theatre.

The Dionysus Theatre production of "The Good Doctor" was judged best visual presentation and will go to the B.C. Festival of the Arts for a scene development workshop given by theatre professionals.

stage  
NORTH

presents...

APR 1991

DUP

Member theatre  
bc

## OPENING NIGHT

A comedy by Norm Foster

Directed by John Kelly

MAY 10,11

8 p.m.

Charlie Lake School

Adults \$8<sup>00</sup>

Students/Seniors \$5<sup>00</sup>

TICKETS AT THE ARTSPACE

Best Production - Zone Festival 1991



DUP



The Stage North production of "My Darling Judith" begins Thursday at the old Stedman building on 100th Avenue. Kevin Truscott is direct-

ing this two-act Canadian comedy by Norm Foster. This is a scene involving actors Dennis Szalai and Sandi Allan.

Photo by Paul Cowley



# Truscott debuts as Stage North director

By Paul Cowley

## Alaska Highway News

For Kevin Truscott, making the transition from actor to director of Stage North's latest production was easier than he anticipated.

Truscott is directing a local production of the comedy "My Darling Judith", which opens Thursday in the old Stedman building on 100th Avenue.

"It has been easier than I thought it would be because there have been no real problems." He says the cast — which includes his wife, Marian, in a starring role — willingly followed his instructions and gave him a lot of support. The other cast members are Chris Gordon, Dennis Szalai, Sandi Allan and Ann Marie O'Donnell.

The experience of directing his wife and being in a position to tell her what to do as an actor also worked out well, he says. "She was more worried about it than I was. I thought it would be fine and she has come to agree with me that it worked out pretty good."

He wanted to direct the play as soon as he read the script for the comedy, written by Canadian playwright Norm Foster, who has written several well-received plays over the last

decade.

"My Darling Judith" is about the attempts of a married man to break up his marriage by having his wife seduced by an employee bribed to woo her. The husband would then be left free to marry his mistress, who has political aspirations and can not afford to have her name associated with any scandal.

Truscott's association with Stage North began with a 1984 version of the "The King and I." He has wanted to direct for some time but could never find enough time off work to take on the heavy workload and responsibility of directing. Work commitments have also forced him to take smaller roles as an actor in the company.

Truscott says although he has taken directing workshops for the last four or five years, he found directing is not an art easily taught. "You can't really do what they say (in directing workshops), you have to develop your own style and you have to understand how you would direct and what you want to do."

Despite his lack of directing experience, he says he had no shortage in confidence in his own abilities when he began production on this play. "You have to have the feeling you can do

anything if you put your mind to it," he explains.

"Directing is a challenge in that I have never done it before, but I think I can do it and I think I have done a really good job here."

"Because if you don't have a lot of confidence in what you're doing, your actors don't have that confidence. If they don't have it, the show just doesn't come together."

This show should appeal to Fort St. John audiences, he says, because unlike past shows, largely based on American scripts, this play has a distinctive Canadian flavor. "A lot of the culture and flavor in a Canadian script is totally different than in an American or British script.

"I thought it would be a good show to do in Fort St. John. It would build a good audience and a lot of people would recognize that it was a Canadian play."

Many people in Fort St. John do not realize the quality of the Stage North production. The theatre company can compare with the best companies in B.C., he says.

He says he would like to direct again if he can find the time. "It's really been a good experience, everybody has been great."

# Auditions

## for comedy

DEC 5, 1990

Auditions for Stage North's production of "My Darling Judith", a full-length comedy by Canadian Norm Foster will take place Friday, Dec. 7 from 5 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 8 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the old Stedman's store next to City Furniture on 100 Avenue.

# AUDITIONS

Stage North Theatre Society

## *"My Darling Judith"*

- ☛ 2 male, 2 female roles
- ☛ between 20-45 yrs. of age
- ☛ also backstage crew

FRIDAY, DEC. 7th, 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, DEC. 8th, 4:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

at the old Stedman's building  
(next to City Furniture on 100th Ave.)

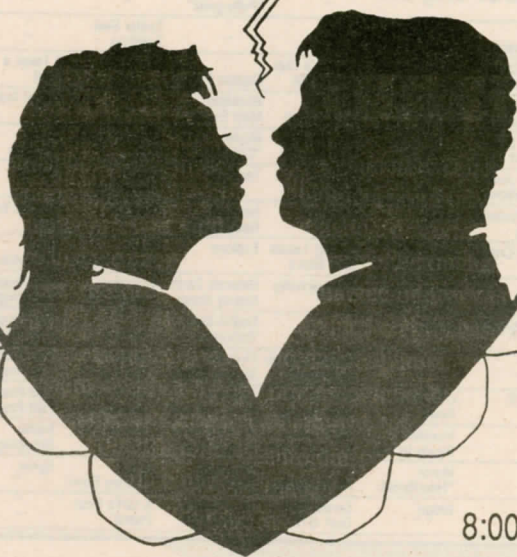
***EVERYONE IS WELCOME!***

stage  
NORTH *presents...*

Member **theatre**  
bc

# *My Darling Judith*

A Comedy by Norm Foster  
Directed by Kevin Truscott



8:00 P.M.

**FINAL WEEKEND!**

Feb. 28, March 1, 2

**Old Stedman's Building - 100th Ave.**  
(Next to City Furniture)

**Adults: \$8.00 - Students & Srs: \$5.00**

**Tickets At The Artspace**

1991



*Dup*



STAGE NORTH'S spring production, *My Darling Judith*, opens at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14, at the old Stedman's building on 100 Avenue. The two-act comedy stars Marian Truscott (left) as Judith, Dennis Szalai as her husband David, Chris Gordon (right) as Carl, a travelling salesman and Sandi Allan as Anna, David's mistress. The play runs Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays till March 2. Tickets, available at the Artspace, are \$8 adults, \$5 students and seniors.





Ann Marie O'Donnell, Chris Gordon, Marian Truscott, Sandi Allan and Dennis Szalai

## Acting superb in "Judith"

FEB 1991

By Deborah Butler

The superb acting in Stage North's latest comedy production, "My Darling Judith," written by Norm Foster, is a credit to the talent in Fort St. John. This may be amateur theatre, but under the experienced eye of director Kevin Truscott, the results are quite professional.

Leading man Dennis Szalai has an uncanny ability to adjust his facial expressions to fit perfectly each comic situation and enhance the character of David Stafford, owner of Stafford Underwear, or is it "Men's Accessories."

Marian Truscott is sensational as David's wife, Judith, the spiny, slightly tipsy, woman behind the man.

At one point Judith says to David, "Isn't it romantic -- I've never seen an honest-to-goodness blue moon before." To which her husband replies, "It's the bug light, dear."

The story is of a love triangle involving the sexy Anna Miles, David's politically-ambitious mistress,

### REVIEW

well portrayed by Sandi Allan. David and Anna conspire to bribe a humble young company salesman, endearingly played by Chris Gordon, into seducing the muddle-headed Judith, thereby supplying grounds for a divorce without endangering Anna's political future, and leaving David free to marry her. Well...that was the plan.

Revovating the old Stedman's building into a neat, albeit rustic, theatre complete with sloped seating must have been quite a task for the dedicated crew of Stage North, and is a credit to the local businesses that provided assistance.

By their own admission, this drama club's reward is "an audience" and a chance to perform. Judging from the laughter and enthusiastic applause, their efforts are well appreciated.

"My Darling Judith" will continue Feb. 28 to March 2. FEB 27, 1991



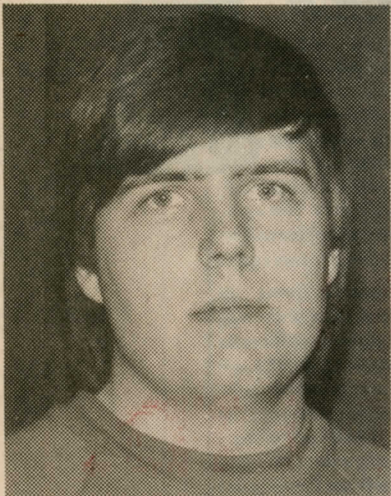
# Stage N

By Paul Cowley  
Alaska Highway News

Stage North has turned its considerable arsenal of acting talent and aimed it directly at the audience's funny bone in the group's latest play, "My Darling Judith."

The play opened Thursday night in the old Stedman building, and for more than two hours the audience was treated to a fine display of comedic acting.

The Judith of the title is played by Marian Truscott, who almost steals every scene she is in as the doting and occasionally drunk wife



**KEVIN TRUSCOTT ...** director of the lead character, David Stafford, played by Dennis Szalai.

David is a top executive in a men's accessories company. One of the accessories he wants most is a pretty young girlfriend, Anna Miles, played by Sandi Allan, to grace his arm.

To get Anna, David must dump his wife, but unfortunately his girlfriend-to-be, Anna, has political aspirations and can not afford to be associated with an adulterous man in the midst of a messy divorce.

So the pair decide to find a stooge to seduce David's wife Judith so David can accuse her of adultery and divorce her, leaving Anna out of the matter.

One of David's employees, Carl Newhouse, is recruited by the conniving pair to woo Judith. Chris Gordon plays Carl, who is one of



WED

FEB 1991

# North targets the funny bone



Chris Gordon and Marian Truscott are hilarious in "My Darling Judith", a new play produced by Stage North. It began its nine date run last night.

Photo by Paul Cowley

the lesser lights in the Stafford men's accessories universe.

But he has all the necessary qualities for his role in the plot. He is young, fairly good-looking and the "company's biggest suck-up," says David. Gordon brings an endearing charm to the pathetic Carl, who is talked into seducing Judith on the promise of getting the company's best sales district.

The plot to seduce Judith is hatched at the Stafford's lakeside retreat where the four collect for a weekend. Carl's bumbling attempts at playing Casanova and the eccentricities of his unknowing victim give the play its momentum.

Carl soon discovers Judith's eccentricities increase exponentially with the amount of wine she drinks. Marian Truscott steals the play with her portrayal of Judith. She makes the inebriated Judith seem like a cross between Archie Bunker's wife Edith and Ethel Merman on amphetamines.

Szalai and Allan are great as the squabbling couple impatiently waiting for Carl to seduce Judith. Allan plays Anna as a rock-hard veteran

of many love campaigns and determined to avoid being the "other woman" much longer. Szalai's David is portrayed as a manipulative hustler used to getting his way and not altogether sure two wives aren't better than one.

The comedic tension in the play builds beautifully as Carl tries to get into a position to have carnal knowledge of Judith. But to Anna and David's frustration, the only knowledge he seems to be picking up are the words to popular show tunes sung by a drunken Judith.

The play is full of razor-sharp one-liners that pepper each scene and give life to the broader comedy of Judith's character. Where David

is witty, Judith is witless — or so it seems.

The flawless comedic timing shown by all the actors pushes the play along at a torrid pace so its more than two-hour length seems to pass all too soon. Under Kevin Truscott's direction, the jokes never miss their mark and propel the play along quickly and hilariously.

In his directing debut, Truscott skillfully uses his actors to accentuate the wit of the Norm Foster script without burying it under the physical comedy that runs throughout the play.

The play runs tonight, tomorrow and the following two weekends, Feb. 21-23 and Feb. 28 to March 2.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## **"MY DARLING JUDITH" OPENS TONIGHT** *1991*

FORT ST. JOHN (Staff) -- Stage North's production of "My Darling Judith", a Canadian two-act comedy, begins tonight. The curtain goes up at 8 p.m. in the old Stedman's building on 100th Avenue. The show will also run Friday and Saturday and continues for weekend performances through to March 2. Kevin Truscott is directing.

## STAGE NORTH GEARING UP FOR NEW PLAY<sup>1991</sup>

FORT ST. JOHN -- The Stage North Theatre Society has begun its rehearsals for the romantic comedy "My Darling Judith." The two act play, by Canadian writer Norm Foster, will be brought to life by local performers Dennis Szalai, Marian Truscott, Sandi Allan, Chris Gordon and Ann Marie O'Donnell. Anyone interested in helping out is asked to contact the producer, Linda Scarfo, at 787-1325 or 787-0206.



# Stage North attends competition

Sandi Farran

Alaska Highway News

The Stage North theatre troupe has once again made residents of Fort St. John proud.

The group just returned from Nelson where it performed a comedy called "Opening Night" in Mainstage '91, the provincial theatre competition.

The eight actors received the privilege to perform at Mainstage

'91 when they won the Peace River Zone Drama Festival in Dawson Creek last April.

For their efforts at Mainstage '91 members of Stage North won the Sydney Award. This prize is given to the troupe with the best backstage co-ordination.

As well, Kevin Truscott was given the award for best technician.

The group also came home with an honorable mention for a poster in the

graphic design competition.

The week was filled with productions from across the province. Stage North, however, performed the only comedy.

Truscott, an actor with Stage North, said "Opening Night" went over very well with the audience.

Truscott said that Stage North is very grateful to Dionysus Theatre Company from Dawson Creek for filling in as its stage crew.

Dionysus was chosen to attend the festival and participate in the scene development component.

This gave the Dawson troupe the opportunity to perform their play in front of a professional director and

JUN 1991  
then receive advice on how it could be improved.

Truscott said the experience was wonderful because all the plays were well done. He said the adjudicator had a difficult time picking the best play. When the decision was made it went to a group from Kelowna.

Stage North members benefited from a three hour critique of their performance from the adjudicator.

The production of "Opening Night" starred Kevin Truscott, Marian Truscott, Dennis Szalai, Tom Kirschner, Chris Gordon, Tanya Clary, Wendy Nicholson and John Kelly directing.

# Stage North to perform

Christmas bells will jingle early in Fort St. John when the local cast of 40 actors take the stage with "A Christmas Carol" on Dec. 5.

Tickets for this Stage North production will be available at the Artspace early in November.

The show will run eight nights during December.

The magic of spirits appearing and disappearing on stage has challenged the production crew of the show.

The ghosts of Past, Present and Future were choice roles to cast and stage direct.

Although Stage North has a construction and production crew well-versed in community shows, they always welcome more volunteers.

Anyone interested in working with this show is encouraged to phone director Linda Scarfo at 787 1325 or 787 0206.

The familiar role of Scrooge is played by Tom Kirschner, who has been seen often in past Stage North

productions.

He began attitude adjustments in rehearsals this month from his usual friendly cheerful manner to the Scrooge character we all know so well.

Cringing from Scrooge's gruffing, Ryan O'Rourke playing Tiny Tim did not require much acting adjustments.

Scrooge is believable and Tiny Tim reacts quite naturally.

Marley's Ghost is a made-to-order role for John Geary, who has

been disappearing and re-appearing in stage productions even before he came to Fort St. John.

A choir of 10 singers lends the eerie atmosphere along with traditional carols of Christmas under the direction of Esther Oosterbaan.

Dicken's himself narrates this well-known production of "A Christmas Carol" with the voice of local actor Russ Conway. The show is a Christmas delight for everyone and an entertaining reminder of the meaning of Christmas.



STAGE NORTH THEATRE SOCIETY

# AUDITIONS

"A Christmas Carol"

Saturday, Sept. 14th and Saturday, Sept. 21st  
From 2:00 to 5:30 pm.

Thursday, Sept. 17th and Wednesday, Sept. 18th  
From 7:00 - 9:30 pm.

**10067 - 100th Avenue**  
(across from Trappers)

Need Men, Women & Children from age 6 to ???  
Contact **Linda** for further information:

**787-0206** Days or **787-1325** Evenings

**CAST & CREW NEEDED**

1991

stage  
NORTH

is  
holding

# AUDITIONS

for

## *"A Christmas Carol"*

Sat. Sept. 14 - 2:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Tues. Sept. 17 - 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Wed. Sept. 18 - 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Sat. Sept. 21 - 2:00 - 5:30 p.m.

at 10067 - 100 Ave.

(formerly Blues & Shoes

across from Trappers New & Used)

**We need Men, Women & Children**

**Ages 6 to ??**

**Cast & Crew**

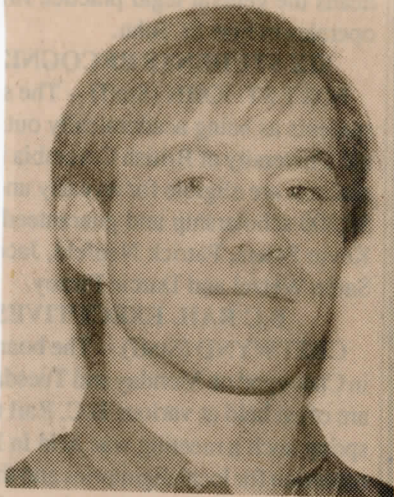
SEPT 11, 1991

For further information, call Linda at  
**787-0206** (days) or **787-1325** (evenings)

shipper/receiver and carpenter's helper.

Tom spent two years selling shoes at his parent's store, In-Steppe Shoes, which the family still owns. He even worked for a while in the oil patch, on the rigs: "I didn't last long. You have to be a special breed, I think."

And in the early 1980s Tom took



**TOM KIRSCHNER**

a stab at the music business for several months and moved to Kelowna. "I had a friend down there who could play guitar but not sing, and I could sing but not play guitar, so it worked out well," he recalls.

Tom comes to the *AHN* from *The Northerner*, which he joined two years ago shortly after it started up.

One of Tom's biggest thrills is his ongoing involvement with Stage North, the local acting troupe. He's been with them for over six years and has participated in about a dozen productions.

His most recent performance was earlier this year in "Twinkle, Twinkle", in which he played a lovable, beer-drinking lout. The role won him rave reviews. Tom has also directed two plays, "The Valedictorian" and "Still Stands the House". Both were entered in the Peace Zone Drama Festival.

But the highlight of his acting career came in 1989 when he shared a Peace Zone best acting award and won an award of merit for acting at the Mainstage provincial theatre competition.

MAR 1, 1991

The most recent addition to the *Alaska Highway News* staff is **Tom Kirschner**, a resident of Fort St. John for the past 23 years. He joins our staff as a sales rep.

Tom was born in Vancouver and spent his early years in Richmond before his family moved to the North Peace.

He attended Dr. Kearney Secondary School and then began a series of jobs which included hotel banquet porter, grocery store bag boy,





Photo by Paul Cowley

Rehearsals are continuing for "Opening Night", Stage North's latest award-winning production. The play runs this Friday and Saturday at

the Charlie Lake Elementary School. Seen here are actors Wendy Nicholson, Marian Truscott, Dennis Szalal and Kevin Truscott.



# Stage North production offers plenty of laughs and insights

By Paul Cowley  
Alaska Highway News

Unlike the characters they play in "Opening Night", the Stage North acting troupe puts on a fine performance in their latest production, being staged at Charlie Lake Elementary School.

This Norm Foster comedy focuses on the opening night of "Whisper of the Wind", a fictitious play about the plight of farmers. Various characters are followed from the tense minutes before the performance through to the end of the ill-fated drama.

The hilarious cast of characters includes Richard Hyde-Finch (played by Dennis Szalai), the overbearing and pretentious director of the play about to be unveiled before an expectant world.

Szalai, who played the conniving executive in Stage North's "My Darling Judith" in February, shows he has a real knack for portraying characters with all the moral fibre and integrity of Ghengis Khan.

Hyde-Finch is a man who dismisses theatre critics as "endomorphnic residue." Szalai's character has many of the best lines in the play, and Szalai arches his eyebrows and delivers every witty line with the comedic accuracy of a Patriot missile.

As Cilla Fraser, Wendy Nicholson has the difficult task of preventing the sensitive character of Cilla from being buried under the venomous sarcasm of Hyde-Finch, her boyfriend.

Nicholson handles the thrust and parry ex-

## A REVIEW

changes between the two characters skillfully, allowing the vulnerability of her character to shine through. It can be a very difficult task to play straight man to a character armed to the teeth with one-liners. But she succeeds admirably.

Tom Kirschner and Marian Truscott play Jack and Ruth Tisdale, the couple who went to the play for their 25th wedding anniversary. Kirschner's portrayal of Jack is great — kind of a cross between Oscar Madison (the sloppy one in *The Odd Couple*) and Al Bundy (the shoe salesman father in *Married With Children*).

Jack, the varnish salesman, wanders through every scene with one hand thrust firmly down the front of his pants obnoxiously calling for beers in the VIP lounge.

Jack is a sort of Anti-Christ of theatre etiquette, much to the horror of his long-suffering wife, Ruth. Marian Truscott, who was the female lead in Stage North's "My Darling Judith", brings the same endearing charm to Ruth as she did to Judith. Truscott is very good at portraying wimpy characters who possess inner strength.

The rest of the cast are the actors whose lives will be changed to some degree by "Opening Night". Chris Gordon plays young aspiring actor Tom Delaney as having the same desperate-to-please enthusiasm of a puppy. His character

does not have the great one-liners of many of the others but Gordon brings humor to his character with his arsenal of facial expressions.

Daniel Vecchio is hilarious as the "washed-up actor" Michael Craig, who has gained more fame as Handy Randy, the guy from a hardware commercial, than from any of his theatre acting. Vecchio ably portrays the desperation of a man who dresses as a socket wrench for a living.

Kevin Truscott, practically steals every scene he is in as the master thespian Clayton Fry. He strikes theatrical poses and commands the stage as if he was in a London theatre, which becomes even more hilarious in the confines of the Charlie Lake gymnasium.

Tanya Clary plays Libby Husniak, the young actress getting her first big break in "Whisper in the Wind." Husniak is one of the funniest characters in the play, although she is on the stage for only a short time.

It would be giving too much away to even hint at the antics of Clary's character. But it is fair to say Husniak handles the pressures of opening night with the same aplomb shown by the navigator of the Titanic when someone pointed out there were icebergs ahead.

As directed by John Kelly, "Opening Night" moves along quickly and never loses momentum. This production combines slapstick and razor-sharp one-liners with sensitive character studies. It's sure to leave audiences chuckling for hours afterward.

"Opening Night" continues this Friday and Saturday at Charlie Lake Elementary School. Show time is 8 p.m.