



Review: Urban Tails

## Description

# Plays take on licentiousness

By **Byron Toben**

Years and years ago, when there were wolves in Wales... well, maybe not quite so long ago... twenty years, by my reckoning... Yvan Bienvenue pioneered Contes Urbain in the French Sector. This became an annual feature of the Christmas Season, featuring dark tales of often lonely souls to balance the excessive jollity and commercialization of the week.

Shortly thereafter, all around theatre guy Harry Standjofski organized an English version under the umbrella of Urbi et Orbi. Anchored by his melodious guitar playing, Urban Tales has showcased dozens of our popular local actors and writers doing their interpretive bittersweet best.

This year the theme has turned Erotic, as Tales became Tails that focused on erroneous zones of the body. (Yeah, I know it's erogenous, but permit me a little sardonic humour as well).

This year's six selections featured three written by the performers themselves and three by writers performed by others.

## Written by the performers...

### **Do we have a Mary? — Stefanie Buxton**

Shades of the famous 2004 New Yorker magazine humorous item, The Gospel of Debbie, wherein a teeny-bopper becomes fixated on Jesus as a sexual symbol, same happens to Ms. Buxton's character here. I also bonded with her when her role as a mere sheep in a church Xmas show led to her being cast as Mary, mother of God, the next year. I was cast as a background tree myself in my first grade school show, but so impressed all that my next role was as Christopher Columbus, so yell Land Ho! and see this charming tidbit.

### **Quimby — Harry Standjofski**



~~This is sort of A Child's Christmas in Ville St-Laurent where the teenage Harry relates the greatest day of his life in his dad's garage on Christmas eve, sans Dylan Thomas's cats and snowballs. A dynamic recitation, as usual.~~

### **The baby dyke and Santa's wife — Dayna Mcleod**

A regular on the lesbian circuit, Ms. McLeod's story is the most in your face (or, more precisely, her face) of the six selections. The plot thickens at the office party where Santa is the boss and his wife is the silver haired fox. Will bathroom door locks hold?

### **Written by others...**

#### **Madame Butterfly — by Yvan Bienvenue, told by Bill Rowat**

Mr. Rowat's shy unveiling rendition of Mr. Bienvenu's clever script is itself worth the price of admission. Clever twists wherein a musical instrument is mistaken by the audience as something else and a misdirected postal delivery takes much unwrapping to reach a climax. Mr. Stadjofski is to be credited for his direction, but I feel that the fine comedic hand of Mr. Rowat's partner, actor Felicia Shulman, added to the whole.

#### **Mankind — by Marianne Ackerman as told by Leni Parker**

Ms. Ackerman, fresh from her Centaur hit Triplex Nervosa, sets this piece in a three-story building where Ms. Parker, alone and sleepless, having rejected an alcoholic husband, somehow dallies with a hunky Santa. Smells of a man, indeed all mankind, play a role in the text. Ms. Parker managed to make her recitation seem as directed to each individual member of the opening night audience, a pretty darn good trick when the onstage actors are oft blinded by the stage lights from actually seeing the audience's faces.

#### **Felix Navidad — by Luciana Burcheri as told by Nadia Verrucci**

Ms. Burcheri's script, yet another Christmas office party, is the most serious of the six and so Ms. Verrucci was at a disadvantage when faced with the other five comparisons, many stacked with tee-hee oh what you said and laugh now! lines. Still, she, as usual, pulled it off well.

#### **Special guest**

Holly Gauthier-Frankel has long since revealed a serious acting talent (Triplex Nervosa and Motherhouse, both at the Centaur), but here returns to the striptease role that first shot her to fame, that of Miss Sugarpuss as an entre acte serving to set the mood for the show.

*Images: courtesy of the Centaur Theatre*

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Urban Tails continues on December 17, 18 and 19

Tickets: 514 288-3161 or [centaurtheatre.com](http://centaurtheatre.com)

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*Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.*

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