



The young and the stoned



Bellini displays the resemblance

I don't know what ruined my summer more – the lousy weather, that fuckwad garbage strike or missing Indrit Kasapi's production of *Deathwatch*. The play, an obscure one-act by Jean Genet, was performed at XPACE Cultural Centre on June 17–20. The poster showed a bunch of tough-looking prisoners in wife beaters. My kind of people.

"We kept the set spare, just a few light bulbs hanging," recounted Indrit, who also played one of the prisoners. "We picked a low ceiling basement, sort of like a jail cell, with only 15 seats, so all of our shows were sold out." Latecomers like myself were not admitted. "There are erotic themes, some nudity and simulated sex," he elucidated. And I missed it. *Drat!*

Indrit is new to the theatre scene, but then again, he's only 25 years old. Born and raised in macho Albania, his family came to Canada ten years ago. His parents wanted him to be a lawyer, but the little sprite insisted on taking dance lessons. "I think Britney Spears turned me gay," he claimed. "I would do choreography to all of her music."

A few years ago, Indrit wrote and staged a play for Summerworks called *The Red Devil*, about the problems of Albanian immigrants. "Our move here was absolutely no drama, but other people's stories within my community were not so lucky – using fake passports, pretending to be Italians, offering bribes. I heard a story of someone who was caught in Paris and walked around in leg irons at the airport." I understand. What could be worse than pretending to be Italian?

Though he hopes to do a show in Lebanon later this year, Indrit also wants to keep staging classic gay plays through his company, lemonTree theatre creations. "We don't talk enough about our history," he said.

I teased Indrit that he looks a lot like me when I was 25. A worried look crossed his face. "Don't worry, you're not going to turn into this," I told him. Not unless he ends up in prison.

Over on the other side of the country, Darcy Michael is hard at work making people laugh.

"When I first started standup," he says in his act, "I was all worried my mom would think less of me. But she said she didn't think that would be possible." Darcy is a gay stand-up comedian, but he makes it a point to play to mostly straight audiences. A typical joke: "I noticed a lot of straight families watching Pride parades, and it occurred to me that these were the people that couldn't afford tickets to Cirque du Soleil."

Born in Pickering, he now lives in Ladner, B.C. with his husband and their 11-year-old daughter. "It's 45 minutes from Vancouver – far enough away from the city that I don't have to worry about wearing any of my good clothes when I'm out."

Comedy was not his first career. "I have an obsessive compulsive disorder involving shapes and angles, so I became an interior designer," he told me. "But people didn't believe this big ugly bear could know anything about designing." So he turned to comedy. Darcy does the Yuk Yuk's circuit, has projects with both XM Radio and OUTtv, and he's just released his first comedy CD, *You're Gay Now*.

Darcy also admits to being a hard-core stoner. "I took my daughter to the park, and she's on the swings swinging away and she says 'Ha ha, I'm higher than you', and I'm thinking, No, you're about a quarter ounce behind." It's a brave admission for a man raised by a Toronto police officer whose father was on the bomb squad.

I'm not sure if Darcy Michael is a typical gay comedian or not. He's very funny to a gay crowd but how do straight audiences react? "It's always a crap shoot," he admitted. "A lot of people come up to me afterwards thinking the gay thing is an act. But no one's shot me yet."



More Bellini at paulbellini.blogspot.com
paul@fabmagazine.com