

P A T R I A



MUSIC /  
THEATRE  
PROJECTS

# PATRIA MUSIC/THEATRE PROJECTS NEWS AND VIEWS

February 2002

## "THE ENCHANTED FOREST" Journey

by Barry Karp

"*The Enchanted Forest* belongs in the tradition of the community pageant and is . . . a celebration of the creative imagination in all of us."

William Littler,  
*Toronto Star*

"*The Enchanted Forest* is magical, humorous and alive with meaning."

Robert Everett-Green,  
*The Globe & Mail*

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I first read *The Enchanted Forest* over ten years ago and was moved by the beauty of the images and the power of the play. It speaks directly to our world about what is relevant and integral to our lives. I knew then that I had to find a way to mount the piece. After considering a number of options, I made the decision to develop a workshop production of the piece with my theatre students at **Canterbury High School of the Arts** in Ottawa.

*The Enchanted Forest* is not your garden-variety piece of theatre; it is an interdisciplinary work that contains dance, drama, music, art and song. For the first time in the history of the school all the arts departments were asked to collaborate. This was not a simple task since each discipline guards its territory very carefully. This was the beginning of an adventure that has nourished all those involved in the development and creation of *The Enchanted Forest*.

The workshop at Canterbury High School of the Arts was a tremendous success. The enthusiastic audience travelled around and inside the school to experience the various scenes. For the first time we could see the shape of

the work and the impact it had on an audience. With this information, Murray re-wrote the piece and added music and new scenes to give it new strength.

Our "Enchanted Forest" adventure next took us to **4<sup>th</sup> Line Theatre** outside of Peterborough. In the fall of 1994 a committed group of artists, members of the Wolf Project, friends and supporters mounted the first production. The cast consisted of community artists and a core group of professionals. The show sold out and was very well received by the press. Best of all, the members of the cast and the audience felt that they had truly embarked on a noble adventure. I have clear memories of "mature" members of the audience re-discovering the spirit of their childhood during the perilous journey with the children into the Enchanted Forest. They fought off foes, learned lessons and finally reached their goal - they literally skipped like kids at the end of the show. When the crickets applauded as the audience and cast made their way by candlelight back to the start, I was totally enthralled.

**Brazil** came four years later. With a Portuguese version in hand and most of

the logistics met, we gave a workshop production of *The Enchanted Forest* in the heart of Sao Paulo. Marisa Fonterrada, a professor of music at the University of Sao Paulo was instrumental in making this happen and happen it did. The team of Rae Crossman, Jerrard Smith and Barry Karp put together and ran a series of workshops to familiarize the participants with the concepts behind the piece. Let's face it, there are no birch trees in Brazil nor are there wolves. We had a very enriching time together being constantly fed by the astounding Brazilian spirit and creativity. Artifacts multiplied, images exploded and the piece fermented; Murdeth was turned into 40-foot puppet; Stump became a field of stumps and Marsh Hawk had a friend. The show was performed in an ancient park near the **University of Sao Paulo** and attracted hundreds of spectators. There was something in our workshop treatment of *A Floresta Encantada* that resonated deep in the hearts of the Brazilians. Whether it was due to their own search for truth and enlightenment in times of corrupt government and the horrors of terrorism, I do not know, but the show had an immediate impact on them. When a loud roar of approval rang out at the point of Murdeth's demise and the

**The Enchanted Forest...**  
Will be performed once again  
in the middle of September,  
2002. Watch for the April  
Newsletter



**The Palace of the Cinnabar Phoenix** will air on CBC radio Two, on **Two New Hours**, Sunday May 19, 2002 at 10pm.

... *Patria Cycle*, [is] the most wildly imaginative and physically ambitious series of music theatre works in the history of the Canadian stage"

William Littler, *The Toronto Star*



Scarecrow, *The Spirit Garden*, 2001

## The Enchanted Forest, continued

entire audience celebrated the victory, I knew we had struck the right chord.

And now **The Enchanted Forest** will be born once

again. It is the right time for this to happen. The site of the **Wolverton Hills** will inspire its own unique vision. As with all mythic

tales, **The Enchanted Forest** creates a life of its own and cries out to be passed from generation to generation.

## Artistic Director's Report

With the production of **The Palace of the Cinnabar Phoenix** last September, eleven parts of the projected twelve-part **Patria** cycle are complete and have been produced at least once. This leaves only **Patria 7: Asterion** to be completed. A draft text exists, but the complexities of the work are enormous since a set in the form of a labyrinth needs to be created. Nevertheless, as time permits, I am committed to completing it.

Thanks to **Patria Music Theatre Projects** we have been able to produce several works in this cycle. Our choice for next year is **Patria 9: The Enchanted Forest**, which will be presented in the forest area of **Wolverton Hills**, where **The Cinnabar Phoenix** production was given, thanks to the support of

the owners of this beautiful property, Dan and Debbie White.

At the 1994 premiere of the **The Enchanted Forest**, when six sold out performances were given. Some people know the story of how the rock group, **The Grateful Dead**, contributed \$10,000 to the original production and ordered 25 tickets as well. Perhaps that accounted for the production's popularity, but I think that the work has its own merit and the production was excellent. You will soon have a chance to confirm this for yourselves. An ecological work, **The Enchanted Forest** involves over 100 performers, professionals and amateurs, including many children.

Production meetings are well under way and we'll keep you informed about the dates in our next

newsletter.

Looking forward to the future, we hope to repeat **Patria 8: The Palace of the Cinnabar Phoenix** in the summer of 2003; and we very much want to revive **Patria 3: The Greatest Show**, which we presented in Peterborough in 1987 and again in 1988. This whole work takes the form of an old-time fair, complete with magicians, fire-eaters, game shows, hucksters and freaks of all kinds. It is enormous and will take careful planning, and of course a lot of money. The momentum for a repeat is mounting, so we'll keep you informed.

With best wishes to all our supporters,

R. Murray Schafer

## A Word from the Editor

I met Murray in 1981, in Ottawa, when **Espace Musique** performed one of his pieces. Murray doesn't remember that, the food mustn't have been that great... Our collaboration started in 1993 at the University of Ottawa when I co-ordinated a multi-media course he was teaching. I knew little of the man and his work but soon found out that working with and for such a creative and insightful man could only

enrich my life.

It is with this in mind and an almost missionary zeal to "spread the word" that I agreed to help publish this newsletter. With your help and that of Sarah and Murray, I will endeavour to provide, on a quarterly basis, news from the field, discussion about Murray's work and comments from you and the public.

Also, each issue will contain a profile of an active volunteer or professional

associated with **Patria**, such as the interview with Diana and Jerrard Smith on page 3.

On the last page, you will find a form requesting your help in producing **Patria**. Please, seriously consider donating of yourself or of your pocket book. **Patria**, by its nature, requires continued community participation for its success.

YOU can make a difference!

Claire Heistek

## DESIGN PATRIA PROJECT - part 1

An interview with Diana and Jerrard Smith by Sarah Ojamae

Music-theatre is considered by many to be a celebration of life. Theatre is the art form that mirrors life with least distortion. Music expresses the emotions we all experience more eloquently than can words. Exhausting, enduring debates over whether life imitates art or art imitates life are made meaningless when examining the life of the artist.

The work of designers Jerrard and Diana Smith is certainly to be celebrated. It is passionately rendered, purposeful and serendipitous at once; creations not unlike the creators.

Jerrard and Diana began their personal collaboration in the Vancouver of the 1970s. Openness to possibility and a commitment to creative expression prompted the pair to move to Toronto in 1974. They took turns attending the Ontario College of Art, after a stint in a band that toured Ontario, Québec and the Maritimes.

While in Vancouver, Jerrard considered enrolling in a course at Simon Fraser University taught by an innovator in the field of soundscape research, one R. Murray Schafer. Circumstance intervened, and Jerrard did not take the class. Jerrard and Diana later learned that R. Murray Schafer, too, had trekked back to Ontario when in the late 1970s friends realised that he was their neighbour. It was not until 1981, that by a fortunate accident of fate the Smiths met Murray Schafer. Third time's a charm, as they say.

Though Diana and Jerrard were each enthusiastic about music, it was happenstance that they became theatre artists after art school. The rich collaboration between the Smiths and R. Murray Schafer began when a mask maker was sought for *Princess of the Stars*. Jerrard was selected, and he 'dragged' Diana in - "and almost every single friend and relation," Diana adds, laughing. Diana describes

sharing their Bathurst Street house with Dawnbird masks, Wolf and the Three Horned Enemy. It was by 'default' that she, too, came to collaborate with Murray Schafer; one might imagine it impossible not to be inspired by the compelling creatures that Jerrard designed for *Princess*. Exhausted at the end of their first collaboration with Murray, Jerrard and Diana could not but be energized when Murray suggested a show inspired by ancient Egypt. Both enthusiastically agreed to design *RA*. Then, *The Greatest Show*. *The Greatest Show* was an arduous artistic endeavour, so large was the scale of this production. The exhaustion at the end of this particular project must have been enormous, but by that time the Smiths were committed to continuing their collaboration with Murray. Almost fifteen years have passed since *The Greatest Show* was staged and Jerrard and Diana's commitment is unchanged. "We're Capricorns," Jerrard jokes, "once we begin something we keep going until the end. And, we haven't gotten to the end yet."

The collaboration between Diana and Jerrard, individually and together, with R. Murray Schafer is rich. Both Diana and Jerrard hesitate to compare the collaboration on *Patria* productions to the commitment required to stage traditional theatre pieces. However, neither declined to comment on how Murray's concept of the *Theatre of Confluence* is actualized. Citing Murray's generosity as the reason the idea works relatively well, Jerrard explained that by affording all the different disciplines more or less democratic status in the development of the piece the *Theatre of Confluence* is realised. Diana suggested that Murray culls a richer collaboration with other artists in the way he chooses to work.

There are discussions, and debates, about the development of the production, because Murray is open to others' interpretations and contributions. The process involves frequent, formal meetings and informal discussions. Once Murray determines that he would like to do a particular production, he is accessible – always - to the artists he asks to help him to realize his vast vision. "You can call anytime to talk about the concept or the direction," Jerrard notes.

The collaboration among members of the creative team, too, is often "inspiring," Diana enthused. It seems that while all who work with R. Murray Schafer revere him, stagings of *Patria* productions are successful because there exists a mutual respect between Murray and the many who contribute to the realization of his music-theatre epics.

Jerrard and Diana have inspired other artists, much as Murray has inspired them. The production of a Schafer piece is often only possible with volunteer or amateur help. For the two years spent working on *RA*, Jerrard recalls turning his and Diana's home into a studio and "having dozens, if not over one hundred, volunteers coming around, at various times during the process, to learn a bit ... and contribute some of the labour to actually get the piece finished." Sometimes Jerrard and Diana would tutor others, and at times would themselves be taught, when other artists would want to work with them for a while. The pair still nurtures new talent and learns still more from the other artists they have opportunity to work with. In several cases strong friendships, both professional and personal, were forged while working with others on *Patria* projects. (To be continued)



**The Spirit Garden: Spring**  
production in Winnipeg, June 2001,  
banners and scarecrow, designed by  
Diana and Jerrard Smith



"Very few people do theatre the way R. Murray Schafer does, with God as co-designer on stage and lighting. The risks are high with such a fickle collaborator, but when it all works, the effect is beyond description."

Robert Everett-Green, *The Globe & Mail*

# THE SPIRIT GARDEN

by Stephen Lawson

As unpredictable and spectacular as the weather, which creates the backdrop to the performance environment, R. Murray Schafer's **The Spirit Garden** ritualizes the birth and death of the growing cycle. Audiences are introduced to a cornucopia of characters, from women who burst forth from the field and the forest (The Corn Mothers, The Mistress of the Planting), to the royal court and its members (the **King** and The **Master of Fires**), to a magniloquent and golden high priest (the **Heirophant**). Choirs sing behind (and sometimes beside) you, an orchestra wails, dancers flail, and we the spectator are asked to participate in the construction (and finally destruction) of a magnificent garden of tomatoes, beets, squash, corn, beans, onions, cabbage and potatoes.

Presented in two parts, **Spring** in the spring and

**Harvest** in the fall, **The Spirit Garden** has one theme which informs and transcends both productions. Although wonderfully different from each other (indeed as different as the seed is to the harvested plant) the two pieces challenge the spectator to commune with the earthly garden and through this activity to create exchange and community amongst themselves. Both contain activities for the audience to become energetically engaged (processionals, the planting of seeds, the eating of the bounty) and both give the spectators a rare chance to celebrate in unison the awe-inspiring change-of-the-seasons. In a North American world which is becoming more and more removed from the land and from the simple act of live human exchange, **The Spirit Garden** provides us with a rare opportunity to experience and revel in the joy

of the natural earth, the very essence of our existence.

So what exactly is **The Spirit Garden**? Outdoor theatre? An unusual opera? Ceremony, observance and rite? The answer is all of these and none. All because the performances are unabashedly theatrical and dramatic, and none because the experience is curiously real. One is hopefully left, after experiencing **The Spirit Garden**, questioning today's world, with new eyes to see the unexplainable natural magnificence that surrounds us daily, and to recognize that to be alive is to be in a constant state of negotiation and change - just like a garden.

(Stephen Lawson directed **The Spirit Garden: Harvest** at St. Norbert's Arts and Cultural Centre, Winnipeg in October 2001. He also played the role of Dr. Hummus in **Spring** (May 2001) and was the assistant stage director.)

## PATRIA

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## We need your help!

Since the Banff Centre production of **Princess of The Stars**, in 1985, it has been a pleasure to be associated with various **Patria** productions. I believe I speak for us all when I say our association with R. Murray Schafer has been a life-changing experience. It is my sincere hope that this newsletter will help to keep us all abreast of the current events we feel so strongly in supporting.

Please continue to show your support. Become a friend of **Patria** by saying, "Yes, I want to help continue to share the magic of R. Murray Schafer and Patria!" and fill out the enclosed newsletter donation form below.

Finally, thank you to all who donate of their time, energy and dollars and continue to help make **Patria** possible.

Michael Cumberland,  
Secretary of the Board of Directors, *Patria Music/Theatre Projects*

### **Patria Music/Theatre Projects** Donation Form

Friend of **Patria** donations should be made payable to: **Patria Music/Theatre Projects**  
And sent to: *Patria Music/Theatre Projects, 3296 Cindy Cres. Mississauga, ON, L4Y 3J6*

*Yes! I want to continue to share the magic of R. Murray Schafer and **Patria**!* \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (enclosed)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

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*I would also be interested in contributing as a volunteer.*

- constructing sets     performing     front of house     helping to build the labyrinth for the final Patria creation  
 newsletter     publicity

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