LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS
Un spectacle ludique et pédagogique veut sensibiliser petits et grands à la disparition des abeilles. Avec la collaboration de l'Espace abeilles d'Evolodia.

« To bee or not to bee », ça fait le buzz!

CLAIRE-LOUISE DIXON

Il est complètement déprimé, ce fermier américain. Depuis des années, il ne mange plus que de la marmite. Il n’y a plus que la main qui pousse. Plus d’arrières, plus de fruits, plus de légumes. Car les abeilles ont disparu. Et comme elles pollinent 80% des plantes... C’est le débat de « La Chaux-de-Fonds pour les abeilles », en français « Être ou non être une abeille ». Une pièce de théâtre ludique et pédagogique qui invite les petits (et les grands) à essayer de découvrir pourquoi les abeilles disparaissent et ce qu’il faudrait faire pour les y réveiller.

Ruches chauves-fonnières

Les représentations auront lieu systématiquement au théâtre ABC, dans la ville de Chaux-de-Fonds, à Cernier, ce rucher didactique fictif actuellement situé sur le site du théâtre ABC. Chaque ruche à son histoire, et l’enquête de Jonathan Minza, passionné et interprète de son époque Godofre- Richard. Il n’aura pas longtemps pour trouver une explication à cette disparition. Sa femme, elle, est du genre de personnes qui préparent un déjeuner de toute beauté. C’est aussi l’hôtel qu’il habite actuellement.

Abeilles dans un temple


En pleine répétition au théâtre ABC, Jonathan Minza, et son épouse Godofre-Richard, des « Abeilles-de-Canada, sont le « Pâtis-Théâtre Company ». En annexe-foyer, l’inestimable Majon qui interprète les compositions musicales de Carole Ferguson créées pour les « Écluses-Usines ». Le spectacle a été présenté dans plusieurs villes, entre autres à l’Espace abeilles d’Evolodia, à Sion, afin de sensibiliser les gens à l’importance des abeilles dans notre alimentation et de leur rôle dans la pollinisation.

LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS
Nouveau président de la section UDC

Photian Robert-Nicole est le nouveau président de la section UDC de la Chaux-de-Fonds. Élu en novembre dernier, il prendra ses fonctions dans les prochains jours. Il succède à Michel Hirschi, démissionnaire après une longue activité au sein de l’UDC. La nouvelle présidente est une figure connue de la vie politique locale, née en 1959. « Les abeilles sont un sujet passionnant qui doit être discuté à grande échelle, notamment en lien avec les changements climatiques. »

LES PONTS-DE-MARTEL
Un réveillon à la montagne

La commune de Ponts-de-Martel (municipalité des Ponts-de-Martel) a invité tout le monde à un réveillon à la montagne. Ce réveillon a été organisé sous l’égide de l’Office de tourisme de la commune, en partenariat avec le Club des guides de montagne de la vallée d’Aure et le Syndicat d’initiatives du Canton de Valais. Le réveillon a débuté par un dîner dans un restaurant du village, suivi d’une danse traditionnelle. Les participants ont ensuite assisté à un spectacle de musique traditionnelle, avec des musiciens locaux. Le réveillon a été animé par le DJ local, qui a égayé l’ambiance avec des musiques variées.

LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS
Sixième édition de l’Action Sapin Solidarité

Deux soirées de dons au pied du sapin

L’Action Sapin Solidarité a organisé deux soirées de dons au pied du sapin pour rassembler des dons de denrées alimentaires et autres objets utilisables par les personnes en difficulté. Les deux soirées ont eu lieu dans les locaux de la commune de la Chaux-de-Fonds. Les participants ont pu apporter des dons de nourriture, vêtements, objets ménagers et autres biens utiles. Les dons ont ensuite été acheminés vers les associations et institutions locales qui les utiliseront pour aider les personnes en difficulté. L’Action Sapin Solidarité a mis en place un système de collecte de dons en ligne, qui a permis aux participants de donner directement en ligne sans avoir à se déplacer. Cette initiative a permis de rassembler une grande quantité de dons, qui ont été redistribués dans la commune et les environs. L’Action Sapin Solidarité a déjà organisé des actions similaires dans le passé et a réussi à rassembler de nombreux dons. Cette initiative est largement soutenue par la population locale, qui en a fait une action de solidarité et de partage. L’Action Sapin Solidarité est une association loi de 1901 qui a pour but de venir en aide aux personnes en difficulté. Elle organise des actions de solidarité et de partage, notamment en agriculture et en alimentation. L’Action Sapin Solidarité a pour mission de favoriser l’autonomie des personnes en difficulté et de les aider à devenir indépendantes. Elle organise des actions de collecte de dons, de sensibilisation et de partage pour aider les personnes en difficulté. L’Action Sapin Solidarité est une association loi de 1901 qui a pour but de venir en aide aux personnes en difficulté. Elle organise des actions de solidarité et de partage, notamment en agriculture et en alimentation. L’Action Sapin Solidarité a pour mission de favoriser l’autonomie des personnes en difficulté et de les aider à devenir indépendantes. Elle organise des actions de collecte de dons, de sensibilisation et de partage pour aider les personnes en difficulté.
‘To BEE or NOT to BEE’

Shelburne theater company dramatizes plight of vanishing honeybees

By STEVE PFARRER
Staff Writer

APPLES, nuts, avocados, blueberries, strawberries, citrus fruit, soybeans, broccoli, cucumbers ... how'd you like to do without any of these, and scores of other types of food, in your diet?

That's a question Piti Theatre is asking with its new play, “To Bee or Not to Bee,” which will be staged Saturday afternoon at the Northampton Center for the Arts. It's the Shelburne company's take on a mysterious problem threatening an enormous amount of the food supply: the disappearance of the honeybees that pollinate many of our crops.

Piti Theatre — “piti” is an ancient Indian word that means joy or rapture — is built around the husband-and-wife team of Jonathan Mirin and Godelieve Richard, whose goal is to use the stage both to entertain and to raise awareness of topical issues. In their artistic look at what's broadly known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), they're tackling an issue of great concern to scientists, beekeepers, farmers and agricultural officials alike.

"Bees pollinate about a third of our food supply," Mirin said. "They're pretty essential." Their dwindling numbers, he added, "is one of the more serious but less well-known environmental stories."

As Mirin observes, U.S. beekeepers lost an estimated 50 percent of their bees from 2006 to 2007, and the losses have continued at somewhat smaller percentages in more recent years. Like something from a science fiction tale, whole hives of bees have vanished without a trace, the bodies of the insects never found.

And the problem isn't restricted to the United States. For instance, Mirin says, 50 percent of Swiss honeybees disappeared last winter.

Researchers tracking the declines suspect a number of culprits: insecticides, loss of habitat, pollution or even simple weariness. Many commercial hives are typically trucked across the country, for months at a time, so that bees can pollinate crops in different states. A new study in 2012 pointed to a class of widely used pesticides known as neonicotinoids, suggesting bees that ingest them from plant pollen lose their homing instinct and can't find their way back to their hives.

Whatever the reason, Mirin says,
Piti Theatre founders Jonathan Mirin and Godeliève Richard rehearse “To Bee or Not to Bee” Sunday afternoon their home in Shelburne. Carrie Ferguson accompanies them on the piano.

Jonathan Mirin says the dwindling bee population “is one of the less well-known environmental stories.

Mirin and Richard call their theater company an “interdisciplinary performance troupe.” They founded in 2004.
Piti Theatre founders Jonathan Mirin and Godeliève Richard rehearse “To Bee or Not to Bee” Sunday afternoon their home in Shelburne. Carrie Ferguson accompanies them on the piano.

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Mirin and Richard call their theater company an “interdisciplinary performance troupe.” They founded in 2004.
Shelburne theater company

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it's a serious issue, with food and jobs at stake. But it also lends itself well to a story that children in particular can understand, he says, given the sort of imagery and sensory feel that bees project.

Ultimately, he said, "Our play is really about hope, about being part of a grassroots movement to find a solution to the problem. ... We're trying to provide an emotional experience about it."

In a bad mood

"To Bee or Not to Bee" dramatizes the issue with a story line that incorporates humor, puppetry, music, dance and audience participation. The one-hour play centers on the travails of Farmer James (Mim), who's lost his bees and has nothing but gruel to eat. People from the nearby town (the audience) have arrived outside the farm to protest, chanting "There's no good food, we're in a bad mood."

A traveler, played by Richard, returns to the farm in search of the delicious honey she remembers getting there when she was a child. Instead of honey, she discovers a despairing Farmer James. Refusing to let him wallow in his grief, she convinces him to explain what happened, and the story unfolds in part through the use of puppets the farmer has been making to while away his time.

Among various problems, it transpires that a slick salesman convinced Farmer James to cut his lawn and treat it with chemicals, depriving his bees of natural food from flowers and weeds. Another salesman got him to feed his bees cheap high fructose corn syrup instead of honey during the winter, which researchers also believe has contributed to CCD.

Mim and Richard are joined onstage by Northampton singer/songwriter Carrie Ferguson, who composed the music for the play — Mim wrote most of the lyrics — and performs it in the role of the Piano Lady. She also provides key voice-overs, like that of the lawn-care specialist, who at one point intones, "A lawn is a reflection of the soul — nice green lawn, nice green soul."

Ferguson says she's enjoyed the experience, both as a "nice change of pace" from her normal schedule and for the play's environmental message: "It's a good way, a fun way, to approach a serious subject."

On one tune, Ferguson hammer's out a boogie-woogie beat and sings as Mim and Richard, with bee puppets made from corn cobs, bob and shake to imitate the excited "dance" that bees do to alert one another to a source of food.

Eventually, Farmer James and the traveler realize that only by reviving the land will the bees be able to return, and the farm to prosper again. That discovery segues into a real-world grassroots campaign that Mim and Richard have started called "10 Percent for the Bees," in which audience members, at the end of the show, will be given seeds for planting bee gardens — flowers and plants that serve as food sources for the insects.

The campaign also encourages replanting 10 percent of lawns with bee-friendly habitat and not using chemically based products of lawns. Mim says local partners in the campaign include the environmental group Greening Greenfield and two businesses specializing in organic seeds and herbs.

Overseas engagements

Mim and Richard, who is originally from the French-speaking region of Switzerland, formed Pitt Theatre — what they call an "interdisciplinary performance troupe" — in 2004. They've performed throughout the Northeast U.S. and in Switzerland. Two of their previous works have been nominated for an Independent Reviewers of New England Award.

Mim, the chief playwright, and Richard, a choreographer and designer, staged a French version of their current play — "Etre ou né pas être une abeille" — last fall in Switzerland, and they plan to return to Switzerland this summer for another engagement.

Mim notes that "To Bee or Not to Bee," an earlier version of which they debuted in Amherst last year, is an extension of an environmental theme he and Richard explored in "Elmer and the Elder Tree," a 2009 play about an unemployed city man who rediscovers the beauty of nature. He says he first began thinking of "Bee" as a play about bees, something that would address "this idea that you're supposed to keep your lawn perfectly manicured, which is not a friendly environment for bees."

Though he and Richard have also done a few plays for adults, Mim says their prime target audience is families, with content that can keep both adults and children engaged.

"Some humor, some music, some dance and some serious ideas — that can make for a pretty good story," he said.

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"To Bee or Not to Bee" will be performed Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Northampton Center for the Arts. Tickets cost $8 for adults; $4 for children ages 3 to 12; free for children under 3. Call 584-7327 for more information or visit pico.org.
Elmer's world

ELMER AND THE ELDER TREE Elmer, a victim of the times, is a city dweller who loses his job and heads for the country. This interactive nature fable, presented by the Piti Theatre Company, is followed by art and theater workshops for ages 5-14 after the Saturday and Sunday matinees. May 1-17. $12, $10 students and seniors, $8 under 15. Boston Playwrights' Theatre, 949 Commonwealth Ave., Boston. 866-811-4111. www.ptco.org
Growing up with Crohn's

Jonathan Mirin, 38, was diagnosed with the digestive disorder Crohn's disease after leaving home to attend Swarthmore College. An actor and playwright, he is performing his one-man show, "28 FEET," Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at the Boston Playwrights' Theatre. He spoke by phone last week from his home in Shelburne, where he lives with his wife and the play's director, Godelieve Richard, and their 5-month-old son, Ezekiel.

ELIZABETH COONEY

Q. What does "28 FEET" mean?
A. The title comes from the length of the intestine. It's also a journey in the play that starts in the womb and ends in my late 20s.

Q. What is it like to live with Crohn's?
A. When you're having an acute episode, eating can be a painful process. Along with that, there's unpredictability. You don't really know what's going to trigger a flareup. It's part of my sense of self, but I wouldn't say it's a defining part. In general, I feel pretty good. Life for me these days is about being married and having a child and making theater.

Q. Why did you write a play about your disease?
A. My primary motivation was to create something that serves people with chronic illnesses of different kinds in some way. I think Crohn's has its own particularity, but the journey, this learning to live with chronic illness, is analogous to a lot of other chronic conditions. I wanted to take all of the misery I'd been through and redeem it somehow through performance. It's also about growing up, which everyone has done.

Q. When did you learn you had Crohn's?
A. I was diagnosed at the classic time, which is in the late teens, the moment when you first leave home and you want to run out and see what the world has to offer. It was a little like feeling I had sandbags attached to my ankles. Different people cope with illness in different ways and my technique was to try to ignore it as much as possible.

Q. Until you couldn't?
A. In 1999, it was surgery or go on a liquid diet. That made it very clear. I went through a lifestyle change after surgery [to remove one foot of inflammation-damaged intestine], becoming very conscious about diet and seeing a nutritionist. Recurrence is expected.

Q. What can your audience expect?
A. It's a cliche, but laughter is the best medicine. It's not like, 'Honey, let's go see that show about Crohn's.' It's about getting sick, getting better, and growing up.

Interview was condensed and edited.
For more information about "28 FEET" call 866-811-4111 or go to www.pteo.org/solo.
For a Reformed Wavoid,
The Play's the Thing

The Mania Over Wave Systems
Lives On, in Drama if Not Fact

By DANNY HAKIM

BOSTON — Jonathan Mirin says he first heard about Wave Systems from a guy named Jerry.

"This company's selling for a dollar a share," Jerry told him. "In a few years, it'll be going for $500."

In those days — the late 1990's — Mr. Mirin was a struggling New York actor in his late 20's and a teacher in the public schools. The way he tells it, Jerry was a fellow teacher who told him over a cafeteria lunch one day that he had once been a big-time investor: "Limosines, jets, the whole thing." Yes, he had lost everything in the crash of 1989, but now he was back in the game and had a hot tip to share.

"There's a company I've been watching," Mr. Mirin remembers Jerry saying. "They've got a prototype for a security chip that's going to be in every motherboard of every computer everywhere in the world in, say, five or six years. You ever play the market?"

Mr. Mirin hadn't, but he did, and now he has turned the experience into a one-man show, "Riding the Wave.com," that is part of the New York International Fringe Festival, a theater arts festival that continues through Aug. 29.

Some parts of the story are embellished — including the tipster's name, which Mr. Mirin said was not really Jerry — but the play is mostly based on his experience of losing what little money he had, and a lot more that he borrowed, on shares of Wave Systems, a tiny technology company based in Lee, Mass.

"I felt like I had received this tip, and I'd better make the most of it, because I don't travel in circles where I get tips," Mr. Mirin said in an interview between performances in Boston, where his show had a warm-up run in early August. "I was enjoying living in New York, but I felt this would be a lot easier if I didn't have to worry about paying the rent."

Mr. Mirin was not alone. At the height of the technology bubble, Wave Systems attracted a devoted throng of investors from across the country who called themselves Wavoids. They plowed their savings into Wave, bought vanity license plates embossed with Wave's ticker symbol and, tongue in cheek, served Kool-Aid at shareholder meetings. They also made message boards devoted to Wave the most popular ones on Raging Bull, the financial chat Web site.

Among the faithful was Joe Trippi, who later managed Howard Dean's presidential campaign, using his experiences of in-

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Market watch
What happens when an actor with no money uses credit to buy stock in a ballooning Massachusetts company — just before a market crash? Find out when the actor in question, Jonathan Mirin (left), and the Pli Theatre Company bring his autobiographical show “Riding The Wave.com” to the Boston Playwrights’ Theatre tonight. Mirin’s play takes his character (and the audience) on a spiritual journey, one that ends with, we’re guessing, quite a bit of credit card debt. 7 p.m. Through Jan. 20. $15. Boston Playwrights’ Theatre, 949 Commonwealth Ave., 617-933-5639. ptcb.org [ms]

Sidekick