

**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'Evologia.

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

CLAIRE-LISE DROZ

Il est complètement déprimé, ce fermier américain. Depuis des années, il ne mange plus que de la polenta. Il n'y a plus que le maïs qui pousse. Plus d'arbres, plus de fruits, plus de légumes. Car les abeilles ont disparu. Et comme elles pollinisent le 85% des plantes... C'est le début de «To bee or not to bee», en français «Être ou ne pas être une abeille». Une pièce de théâtre ludique et néanmoins pédagogique qui invite les petits (et les grands) à essayer de découvrir pourquoi les abeilles disparaissent et ce qu'il faudrait faire pour y remédier.

### Ruchers chaux-de-fonniers

Les représentations auront lieu dès demain au théâtre ABC, par la compagnie helvético-américaine «Piti Théâtre Company», en collaboration avec l'Espace abeilles d'Evologia, à Cernier, ce rucher didactique fermé actuellement pour la pause hivernale, et rouvert le 20 avril prochain.

«Être ou ne pas être une abeille» sera joué pour la première fois en français, et pour la première fois en Suisse, à La Chaux-de-Fonds donc, ville qui arbore des abeilles sur ses armoiries, «et la première ville à répondre à nos demandes de subventions», explique Jonathan Mirin, coauteur et interprète avec son épouse Godelieve Richard. Il est natif du Massachusetts mais sa femme est des Ponts-de-Martel. C'est d'ailleurs là qu'ils habitent actuellement.

### Abeilles dans une tempête

Ce spectacle a déjà été représenté aux Etats-Unis, aux clas-



En pleine répétition au théâtre ABC, Jonathan Mirin, du Massachusetts, et son épouse Godelieve Richard, des Ponts-de-Martel, soit le «Piti Théâtre Company». En arrière-fond, Gêraldine Mojon qui interprète les compositions musicales de Carrie Ferguson créées pour les Etats-Unis. CHRISTIAN GALLEY

ses notamment, et continuera ensuite sa tournée en Suisse et en France. Au cœur du problème, l'abeille qui se trouve elle-même au cœur d'une tempête, entre changements climatiques, monocultures, pesticides, insecticides et attaques de varroa. «Aux Etats-Unis, on en a perdu 50% en 2007-2008», expli-

que Jonathan Mirin. «Pour l'hivernage 2011-2012, nous avons les mêmes chiffres en Suisse», continuent Gilbert Dey et Daniel Deleury, de l'Espace abeilles. Gilbert Dey: «Dans le canton, c'est catastrophique. J'avais 26 colonies fin 2011, au printemps 2012, il m'en restait cinq. Dans ces proportions, ça ne m'était jamais arrivé».

Jonathan Mirin et sa femme ont composé une pièce destinée à tous, enfants, ados, adultes, avec présence à chaque représentation de spécialistes des abeilles, qui répondent à toutes les questions et qui apportent une ruche de démonstration. Ces spécialistes seront tous membres de l'Espace abeilles

d'Evologia. Un Espace que Jonathan Mirin a découvert avec émerveillement. «Aux Etats-Unis, il n'y a pas d'espace didactique de ce type». A tel point qu'au début, il voulait carrément représenter «Être ou ne pas être une abeille» là au milieu!

### Des graines à planter

Le spectacle se termine sur une note d'espoir: tous les enfants reçoivent un petit sachet de graines de flore mellifère (exploitable par les abeilles domestiques) indigène. Elles sont destinées à être plantées, pour lutter contre l'appauvrissement du milieu.

Autre note d'espoir: voir toutes ces classes qui visitent l'Es-

pace abeilles, tous ces jeunes «qui commencent à être touchés». Et il y a un certain engouement pour l'apiculture. Gilbert Dey: «L'an dernier, j'avais 23 personnes, ce sont des gens qui ont une certaine bienveillance pour les abeilles, et qui ne se précipitent pas sur un spray dès qu'ils voient un insecte voler»... ◊

### INFO

**A voir et à discuter:** «Être ou ne pas être une abeille», au théâtre ABC à La Chaux-de-Fonds, mercredi 21 et dimanche 25 novembre à 16h30, mercredi 28 novembre à 14h et 16h30. Représentations suivies d'une rencontre avec un spécialiste des abeilles. Représentations du mercredi 28 suivies d'une dégustation de miel. Réservations: 032 967 90 43.

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



Florian Robert-Nicoud est le nouveau président de l'UDC de La Chaux-de-Fonds. ARCHIVES C. GALLEY

Florian Robert-Nicoud est le nouveau président de la section UDC de La Chaux-de-Fonds. Etudiant en droit, né en 1984, le député et conseiller général succède à Michel Hess, démissionnaire après le refus du RER (notre édition du 9 octobre). La vice-présidence est assurée par le conseiller général Andy Favre, ferrailleur né en 1989.

«La section se félicite de disposer d'un comité formé de jeunes élus, mais aussi de personnes ayant une plus grande expérience de la politique», communique la section. «Ce comité dispose d'une large vision de la population chaux-de-fonnienne et de ses attentes, grâce à sa mixité générationnelle et professionnelle.» ◊

COMM-SYB

## MÉMENTO

### LE LOCLE

**Boogie-woogie.** Silvan Zingg Trio & Axel Zwingerberger seront sur scène samedi (20h30) à la Boîte à swing, dans la maison de paroisse, rue des Envers, au Locle. Avec deux pianos et deux des meilleurs spécialistes européens de boogie-woogie-blues, ce 3e concert de la saison s'annonce endiablé. Renseignements sur [www.boiteaswing.ch](http://www.boiteaswing.ch) ou au tél. 032 931 30 05.

### LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS

**Perregaux au lycée.** Le Lycée Blaise-Cendrars vernit jeudi à 17h une exposition d'œuvres choisies de Jean-Paul Perregaux. Elle sera visible jusqu'au 20 décembre, les jours ouvrables de 8h à 18 heures.

«Ce sont des gens qui ne se précipitent pas sur un spray dès qu'ils voient un insecte voler.»

GILBERT DEY L'UN DES EXPLOITANTS DU RUCHER DIDACTIQUE D'EVOLGIA

## LES PONTS-DE-MARTEL

### Un réveillon à la montagne

Le groupe théâtral de l'ADP (association de développement des Ponts-de-Martel) invite tout le monde à un «Réveillon à la montagne». Une comédie de boulevard de l'auteur français Yvon Taburet qui fera apparaître dix comédiens du cru: Martine Soguel, Sandrine Monard, Isaline Benoît, Jean-Daniel Rothen, Christiane Todeschini, Michel Rossel, Fabienne Benoît, Luc Hinden, Solène Bettex et Rémy Schneider, sur une mise en scène de Davina Hinden. L'intrigue commence bien: une agence immobilière loue par erreur un même studio en montagne à deux familles différentes. Un 31 décembre au soir! Il faudra bien s'arranger... Pas évident, d'autant que ces gens-là n'ont pas grand-chose en commun, entre

couple de cadres parisiens et couple de prolos banlieusards...

Ce groupe théâtral n'a jamais de mal à trouver son public, y compris le club des aînés pour lequel il joue le 29 novembre. Par ailleurs il a déjà prévu des supplémentaires. Comme d'habitude, le bénéfice sera dédié à l'embellissement du village.

Ce samedi-ci, c'est la soirée principale, avec la chorale Internotes et les musiciens Nouvelle vague en première partie. La représentation sera suivie d'une disco années 1980. ◊ CLD

### INFO

**«Réveillon à la montagne»:** Représentations: samedi 24 novembre, 20h, Bugnon. Supplémentaires: 28 novembre, 8 et 15 décembre, 20h, salle de paroisse. Vente des places: Proxi, Kiosk'Bar, Fromagerie des Martel.

## LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS

Sixième édition de l'action Sapin Solidarité.

### Deux soirées de dons au pied du sapin

L'action Sapin Solidarité a soutenu les familles de quelque 275 élèves l'an dernier, en leur apportant une aide pour financer les camps scolaires, d'été ou d'hiver.

Cette année encore, et pour la 6e édition, l'événement sera recondit sur deux jours par six clubs-service de la région, en collaboration avec les écoles, les autorités communales et de nombreux sponsors privés. Le jeudi 6 décembre, l'action sera lancée sur la place du Marché de La Chaux-de-Fonds par la chorale des Forges, dirigée par Henri Grezet. Sous la tente dressée pour l'occasion, le sapin sera illuminé progressivement, au rythme des dons du public qui est invité à acheter – virtuellement – les ampoules. Chaque personne ache-



L'action Sapin Solidarité a permis d'apporter une aide de 23 000 francs à des élèves issus de familles défavorisées l'an passé. ARCHIVES GALLEY

tant une ampoule recevra une des 2000 cartes postales confectionnées par les élèves. Les amateurs de fondue pourront réserver une table le jeudi et le vendredi dès 19h30. L'argent récolté est destiné à aider les parents des élèves chaux-de-fonniers à financer la participation aux camps. L'an passé, l'action a apporté une aide aux parents (en sus de la subvention communale) de 23 000 fr. Vu la générosité des participants, les organisateurs se félicitent d'avoir également pu participer à l'achat de souliers de ski de fond. ◊ SYB

### INFO

**Action solidarité:** jeudi 6 et vendredi 7 décembre, dès 17h30. Rés. fondue (tables de six): 079 342 92 03 [laurent.cattaneo@publicitas.com](mailto:laurent.cattaneo@publicitas.com)

## 'To BEE or NOT to BEE'

Shelburne theater company  
dramatizes plight of  
vanishing honeybees

By STEVE PFARRER  
Staff Writer

**A**PPLES, 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 Godeliève 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,

■ See **SHELBURNE** / Page C5



CAROL LOLLIS

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.



CAROL LOLLIS

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



CAROL LOLLIS

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



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## Shelburne theater company

### ■ Continued from C1

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 (Mirin), 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.

Mirin and Richard are joined onstage by Northampton singer/songwriter Carrie Ferguson, who composed the music for the play — Mirin 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 hammers out a boogie-woogie beat and sings as Mirin 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 Mirin 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



CAROL LOLLIS

### Jonathan Mirin, Carrie Ferguson and Godeliève Richard with puppets used in "To Bee or Not to Bee."

products of lawns. Mirin says local partners in the campaign include the environmental group Greening Greenfield and two businesses specializing in organic seeds and herbs.

### Overseas engagements

Mirin and Richard, who is originally from the French-speaking region of Switzerland, formed Piti 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.

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

Mirin 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 lawns, 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, Mirin 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.

Steve Pfarrer can be reached at [spfarrer@gazettenet.com](mailto:spfarrer@gazettenet.com).

"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 [ptco.org](http://ptco.org).

# The Boston Globe

Thursday, April 30, 2009



DAVE ROBACK

## 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](http://www.ptco.org)*

# The Boston Globe

April 5th, 2010



MATTHEW CAVANAUGH FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Jonathan Mirin has written a play, "28 FEET," about Crohn's disease. He was diagnosed with the disease in his late teens.

G FORCE | JONATHAN MIRIN

## Growing up with Crohn's

**J**onathan 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 cliché, 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.ptco.org/solo](http://www.ptco.org/solo).*

# The New York Times

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2004

## 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: "Limousines, 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



Robert Spencer for The New York Times

Jonathan Mirin, like many other investors, lost money when the technology bubble burst. But he at least found theatrical inspiration in his Wave Systems experience.

the technology bubble, Wave Systems attracted a devoted throng of investors from across the country who called themselves Wavoid. 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-

*Continued on Page 2*

# The Boston Globe

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2008

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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 Piti 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., 617-353-5899. [ptco.org](http://ptco.org) [M.G.]

# Sidewalk