

“We just wanna entertain.”

By Sebastian Baglole
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There was a happy chance the Post had to track down Chris Doiron, a self-trained actor, seasoned in regular plays over these past few years. He's taken part in local theatre troupe Sheep-For-Wheat, whose ensemble debut, Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, drew substantial herds to the Guild and received some pretty fine reviews for the dark classic absurdist piece.

In April we'll see Doiron's group coming together again to present Romanian-born Eugene Ionesco's 1951 play *The Lesson*. The play is a one-act tension management course, following Doiron's neurotic and self-obsessed professor as he spends some quality one-on-one time with a pupil, played by Meaghan Blanchard.

Ionesco was part of the absurdist theatre movement with peers Samuel Beckett and Pinter, among others. Here's what Chris had to tell us.

Most of it revolves around me pacing back and forth giving the pupil a lecture.

So it's very much character-based, like in action, dialogue, expression?

The dialogue doesn't make sense, most of the time. It's a very strong character play, the professor is this massive character, you know.

So the one-act idea is trying to move away from



the idea of the well-made play.

It's a really concise way... theatre tends to be drawn out, and there's nothing wrong with a snappy little 15-minute play, it can be just as interesting I think, if not more so. In a way, you're challenged to keep people in it ... and you have to have this arc in 50 minutes.

To avoid the commercial break feel.

We like the idea of one-acts for a number of reasons. One, because we're a small production company, we've only got a few actors... We don't have money to build sets and so logistically it works out very well, but artistically too I think we like the idea of a really concise work that can be done in 50 minutes, an hour.

The first show was me, Ben, and Fraser and Cher

and Kelsey and Keith on music, always. For this play we took on Meaghan and lost Ben, who's in Paris. And we took on Ashley Clark, who is stage managing. It's a pretty tight-knit group.

How did you find the play?

I hate finding plays. The Confed Library – they have a lot of plays, but they don't have a lot of plays, if you know what I mean. We're anti-sentimentalist; I am, anyway.

So, no Romantic plays we'll see from Sheep-for-Wheat.

Not as long as I'm involved. [laughs]

What can you tell us about yourself as an actor?

My first show was our high school musical. I played Billy Bigalow in *Carousel*. [sings an excerpt]. I can keep going if you want.

I'll get a performance from you on that later.

I had never ever done theatre before that. And then, you know, loved it, wasn't very good, but loved it. And then some of us got together that summer and put on our own show. I basically did a show each summer through university I think. And it was always just fun to do, you know? I was never schooled at all in theatre, so it's only been through shows that I've gained any sort of chops.

Your character has to be more than the script. You've gotta have a whole story, a whole life, you gotta build this life for your character, because if you don't do that, you can't really “live” a character.

In film and theatre I'm more interested in characters. Content for me can be secondary [laughs].

So just going back to what you were saying about this play itself being character-based... what can you tell us as a preview about the play, how do the characters interact?

OK, so essentially it's a really odd exchange between a professor and a pupil, which is Meaghan [Blanchard]'s character. Traditionally for this play the professor is an older, retired professor, obviously very esteemed at one point, you know, he might've been a professor at Cambridge for years. Anyway he's at the end of his career in terms of professorship, and starts to take on students, like privately tutors students to prepare them for whatever they have plans, their “total doctorate,” which is kind of... [mild professor voice] “Which doctorate would you like to take on?” [switches to impish girl voice] “Um... I don't really know!” Then my line is: “Physical sciences, or in moral philosophy?” Like those are the only two doctorates you can qualify for! So it just sort of pokes fun at the institution of formalized education.

And Kelsey [Moore]'s character?

Kelsey's character is the maid. She's offstage for most of the play but she comes in at very key moments in the play because the whole play is really this build for the professor, he almost seems a little confused... As the lesson progresses and progresses you see this man who is taken by his

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