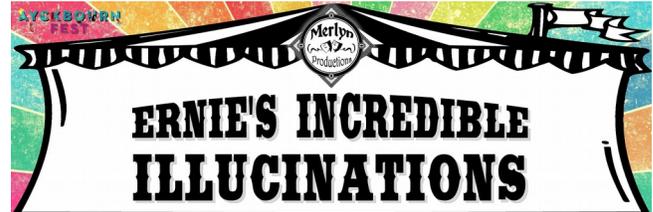




PRESS RELEASE: FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMEDY FOR AYCKBOURNFEST!

Merlyn Productions Theatre Company will present Alan Ayckbourn's most-produced play of the past 20 years with **"ERNIE'S INCREDIBLE ILLUCINATIONS"** – a zany, FAMILY-FRIENDLY British comedy for all ages, playing February 12 to 16 at the Forrest Nickerson Theatre.



Ernie Fraser is a dreamer with a difference. Ernie's fantasies have the habit of turning into reality! Concerned about his "illucinations", Ernie's mum and dad bring him to the doctor... But what happens if the illucinations turn out to be real!?

Penned with young people in mind, this one-act romp is a part of the RMTTC's **AyckbournFest 2016** Master Playwright Festival, and could be described as what might happen if "flying circus" characters suddenly emerged from the imagination of a young boy!

Directing the play is Merlyn Productions Artistic Director JOHN CHASE, who has worked on more than 110 local productions. Mr Chase is a veteran of theatre for young audiences, having staged classic children's theatre titles for the past 7 years, and served as cast and staff at *Fantasy Theatre for Children* for 20 seasons.

The all-local cast of 22 performers is a the largest yet for *Merlyn Productions*, featuring 10 & 11 year old actors LIAM GREYEYES and LUCA VILLACIS sharing the role of Ernie, JORDAN PHILLIPS as the Doctor, TIM BEAUDRY as Dad, ALISON KOLISNYK as Mum, ARDYTH JOHNSON as Auntie May, and a diverse ensemble aged 10 to senior, consisting of KENDRA BAUER, HEATHER BJORKLUND, BRIAN DOUGHERTY, ANIKA DOWSETT, CHANTELE DUBOIS, HELMUT FRIEDRICH, BORIS JOVANOVIC, VANESSA MANCINI, AMANDA NICKELS, FILIP PETROVSKI, JUSTIN REMPEL, TIM SAYEAU, HUDSON THIESSEN, XIAM WEBSTER, XIMON WEBSTER, and TOM E. YOUNG.

Stage managed by KALYN BOMBACK. Scenic & lighting design by DARRYL AUDETTE. Costume design by KAITLIN KLASSEN. Properties by HEATHER FORGIE. Fight choreography by RACHEL HIEBERT.

TITLE: ERNIE'S INCREDIBLE ILLUCINATIONS, by Alan Ayckbourn
VENUE: Forrest Nickerson Theatre – 285 Pembina Hwy (South of Confusion Corner)
SHOW TIMES: Friday, February 12 at 7:00 PM * Saturday, February 13 at 1:00 PM
Sunday, February 14 at 1:00 PM * Monday, February 15 at 1:00 PM & 7:00 PM
Tuesday, February 16 at 7:00 PM
TICKETS: \$12/\$10/AyckbournPass * Group rates available for 10 or more.
RESERVATIONS: Online at MERLYN.BIZ or by phone at 204-415-2714

Interviews and comps for contest give-away are available upon request.

For further information, please contact Merlyn Productions at 204-415-2714 or info@merlyn.biz.

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Additional Interesting Production Facts

- *Merlyn Productions Theatre Company* has presented four productions in three previous Master Playwright Festivals: “*The Astonished Heart*” in CowardFest 2015, “*A Marriage Proposal*” and “*The Anniversary*” in ChekhovFest 2014, and “*Augustus Does His Bit*” in ShawFest 2012.
- Although well-known for its children's theatre productions, this will be the company's first time presenting a show intended for young & family audiences in the Master Playwright Festival.
- Eleven of the 22 performers are new members to the company, who auditioned for *Merlyn Productions* either via public casting call, or as students at the *Winnipeg Theatre School*. The script's “large ensemble cast” format allowed many more opportunities than usual for additional local talent to be cast.
- We are pleased to note various child and adult *Winnipeg Theatre School* students & alumni amongst the cast – including one of the 'Ernie' performers, who is currently enrolled as a Junior Acting student. The *Winnipeg Theatre School* – formerly The Theatre School at *Fantasy Theatre for Children* – is currently in its 35th year of operation, and its 5th under the auspices of *Merlyn Productions*.
- Coming up next at the Forrest Nickerson Theatre, the *Winnipeg Theatre School* will present its year-end showcase of student scenes and monologues on March 22nd. *Merlyn Productions* will also be returning to the Winnipeg Fringe Festival Kids Venue with another classic fairy tale (title TBA) this Summer!

About The Company

Merlyn Productions is a live theatre production company that also operates the *Winnipeg Theatre School* (WTS) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Each year, the theatre company presents a full season of stage plays for both general & young audiences, while the theatre school offers acting classes for ages 10 to 55.

Merlyn Productions was founded by Artistic Director John Chase as the successor to *C.G. Productions*, which staged plays from 1997 to 1999. Performers of many ages and skill levels from the greater community are welcomed into its cast and staff, who dedicate time for the love of their art form, and are committed to fostering local live theatre.

The *Winnipeg Theatre School* became part of the organisation in 2011. With the motto that “*some companies use professionals – we create them*”, its 35-year-old brand came from *Fantasy Theatre for Children* and *The Theatre School*, to continue in FTC's tradition of quality training for all ages.

The company is producing its eighth consecutive season of plays for 2016, and performs at the Forrest Nickerson Theatre inside 285 Pembina as its mainstage venue.

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