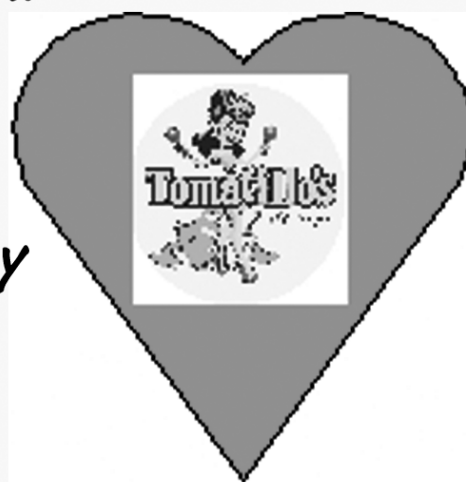


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**trodding the boards ...from M-20**

Tintinabula was Kristin Popich, Panacea was Carrie Daigle, The Geminae were Lacey Fauchaux and Karen Cox and Vibrata was Casey Thompson while Gymnasia was played by Cammie West, all of whom played the role of courtesans with a fine sense of parody and good stage presence.

Bright, colorful, clever, and lovely costumes were designed by the inimitable Linda Fried; the wonderful set of three Roman houses (with a fountain with running water, stage left) was done by Chris Adams. Lovely lighting was supplied by Daniel Zimmer, shining on the athletic choreography by Carrie Black.

Did I like this production. Yes. Don't miss it! It's one of the best regional theatre versions of this show I've seen, full of low and high comedy, with lots of color and a virile cast of very talented, seasoned performers!

**The Sunken Living Room**

**D**avid Caudle's extremely well written play, *The Sunken Living Room* was presented by Southern Rep; and from his web site [www.davidcaudle.org](http://www.davidcaudle.org) the following excellent synopsis and character breakdown were taken (in parentheses are my comments).

Synopsis: A November night in Miami, 1978. His air line pilot father is off on a trip. His mother is out playing bridge. 16-year-old Wade dutifully does his homework and holds down the fort. Then, his 17-year-old brother shows up in the throes of another drug binge, and his brother's girl-

friend tries to seduce him. Wade's ordinary duties escalate to a comically heart-breaking struggle to keep his showpiece living room clean — and his family together — as the world around them changes.

(This is one of the best acted, slickest and most professional productions ever done at Southern Rep.)



The acting is phenomenal, perfect in every subtlety and nuance and each performer can be praised for showing our town just what really fine acting can be.

David Caudle is a skilled craftsman of a modern play. He makes the sunken living room an important character in itself; and his absent characters are as interesting as those on the stage. It is hoped he will revisit this troubled family. And it is

hoped that the goodness of his character Chip will not be in vain.)

Character Breakdown Wade, 16. A scrawny, naive bookworm who is not yet aware that he's gay, or is he? (Performed by John Magaro with such sensitivity and clarity that we were astonished. What a gifted young man. He makes the show his own, lighting up the stage with every move-

all that could have been asked.

Chip, 17. Wade's sexy, athletic, volatile brother. (This role played by handsome young actor, Rudy Mungaray. He did a lot of his role without a shirt on and for good reason. He has a lean chiseled muscular body that is as beautiful as his acting ability. He created the role of a young drug addicted brother with a controlled virility. His stage presence was; like watching a stick of dynamite with a lit fuse.)

Tammy, 17. Chip's sexually-experienced pothead girlfriend. (As played by Staci Robbins, she was a joy to watch. She created a post-hippie character that was vibrant, touching, intelligent, and honest. Her quick moment of nudity was done with taste and purity of effect, as lovely as a butterfly rushing past you.

Ryan Rilette directed the two act play with the precision of a Michelangelo, sculpting the performers and the script into a graceful work of art with high artistic values. Mr. Rilette's undeniable theatrical talent and craftsmanship illuminated this production.

The suburban 1978 era set design was correct and lovely in every detail - from orange-golden shag rug to amber Spanish pendant light - as done by Jesse Dreikosen. Marty Sachs provided the faultless lighting design. S. Rayna Middleton designed the costumes, a sweet touch was Chip's Bert and Ernie T-shirt. Excellent sound design was by Ricky Mungrary - capturing the popular music of the late 70s.

Don't miss this priceless show! Southern Rep's staging is one of the best

[continued on Main-24]

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**trodding the boards ...from M-22**

original high dramas to hit our town and it shines brightly among a score of nearly faultless recent local productions. Not to be missed!!

**And the World Goes Round**

Another great production of Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre in its season of excellent musicals is **And the World Goes Round** a collage of song and dance based upon the music and lyrics by John Kander and Fred Ebb.

With superb musical direction by Brandt "Mr. Musical Midas Touch" Blocker, assisted by another musical genius in our midst, Jonne "Ms. Musical Encyclopedia" Dendinger, the cast of this show is so perfect in selling a song singly or with wonderful harmonies, that we could not find any better or more professional work anywhere. Our devastated post K-town is so resplendent with theatrical talent that the mind boggles. This is a solid gold production from top to bottom!

Performing on a stage beautifully dressed with a stylistic abstract rust colored set by Ed McIntyre mainly consisting of a sliding backdrop with the names of Kander & Ebb featured prominently and the apt word "collaborate" with its written definition there was also a series of tall flat panels stage right and left covered in a collage of torn dictionary pages. The effect is one of crisp intelligence abounding and when the cast does enter or bounds on stage the result is astonishing. Vert beautiful was the use glittering lights at the stage's rear looking like a star studded

sky. Stage haze added the right touch to all of the numbers.

Singing and dancing under gorgeous lighting and gleaming, glittering special effects by Scott Sauber and Earl H. Lennie, III, the show opens with the divine Miss Meredith Long rattling the rafters with her version of And the World Goes Round (New York, New York). The big, beautiful, blonde Ms. Long is a diva with a great stage presence. She can belt out a song; but she also has such range and control. With great drama or her fine sense of comedic timing she can put heart breaking emotion or hilarity in her vocal style as needed. What a talent! She showed off her emotional range in several songs, but I especially enjoyed her How Lucky Can You Get (Funny Girl) which she sings with Patrick M. Mendelson and Tywon Morgan.

However, the same comments can be made about the other ladies in the cast. Trina Beck can also belt out a song or soften it to make your heart weep and she can sell a song with a beguiling resolve. She does a funny and bawdy turn with Arthur in the Afternoon (The Act) with the able assistance of Mr. Mendelson.

Brandi Cotogno, looking like a young earthy beautiful Anna Maganni, also has a vocal range and ability that wows anyone. She delighted me with her version of Colored Lights (The Rink); and she makes each song a theatrical event that embraces the human condition.

Patrick M. Mendelson has a beautiful clear voice that blends beautifully with his fellow performers. His ability to sell a song like a heart-throb pop star was wonderful to hear and see. His handsome stage presence was warm and charming.

Tywon Morgan is a performer that brings to mind the greatness of Sammy Davis, Jr. He is a consummate performer, singing and dancing with grace and purity of effort and result. Yet, he is his own creation, with a commanding and beautiful voice that can go classic and operatic or down a notch with beautiful renditions of the popular genre. I was impressed with his unique version of Mr. Cellophane (Chicago).

After the first act, the second act brings more songs and amazing production numbers from this cast such as Trina Beck and Company doing a rousing version of All That Jazz (Chicago); Brandi Cotogno doing Loopin' the Loop (Chicago); the company ending the show with Money, Money and Cabaret (both from Cabaret) and finally New York, New York (New York, New York) with clever black light use.

This virile company dances and sings their way into your hearts and souls with 14 songs in the first act and 14 in the second. And they do so with such exciting professionalism that you must see this golden example of an excellent, intelligent and delightfully enjoyable theatre.

Our town's own Karen Hebert's fresh and exciting choreography shows us why she remains a major talent; likewise for Judy Claverie's wonderful costumes - basic black with sophisticated or funny touches.

Once again, our town shows off its endless array of shimmering and glittering golden talents in this extraordinary production of the works of Kander and Ebb, whose lyrics and music still and will continue to echo in the hearts, ears and souls of all who love the American Musical Theatre. (Sadly Fred Ebb died September 11, 2004, but his lyrics will live on.) What a totally dazzling show!

**Take Me Out**

"Baseball is a perfect metaphor for hope in a democratic society..." from the play.

Popular demand was so great that To Do Productions did an encore presentation of this curious and compelling play, with mostly the same cast as the first run. This second run of the play was again done in the Marigny Theatre, 1030 Marigny St., N. O., LA.

>From [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com): **Take Me Out** is the Tony Award-winning play by Richard Greenberg which deals with homosexuality in baseball. The play's main character, Darren Lemming, is a popular mixed-race baseball player at the peak of his career when he decides to come out as a gay man. Several of his teammates react strongly, and the drama plays out over the course of the baseball season with tragic consequences.

The play is set in a baseball locker room, and as such has an all-male cast and is usually produced with lengthy full-frontal male nudity.

The drama explores themes of homophobia, racism, class and masculinity in sports.

As sports fans might remember, while Glenn Burke was out to teammates and team owners in the 1970's and Billy Bean came out in 1999 after retiring from eight seasons of playing in Major League Baseball, at the time of the writing of this play no major-league baseball player had ever come out to the public during his career. This play is the dramatic exploration of

**ON THE BOARDS**

**AND THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND: The Music of John Kander and Fred Ebb.**

Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre, 616 St. Peter St., 522.2081 — Brandt Blocker directs this revue featuring songs from "Cabaret," "Chicago," "New York, New York," "Funny Lady," "Kiss of the Spider Woman" and many more. Tickets \$28, \$25 students. 8pm Friday-Saturday, 2pm Sunday. Through Feb. 4.

**BRIGHT IDEAS.** Lower Depths Theatre, Loyola University, 6363 St. Charles Ave., 865.2074 — Macbeth meets MacParenting in Eric Coble's new comedy of homicidal proportions. Benjamin Clement directs this play which The New York Post proclaimed was "funnier than anything on Broadway." Tickets \$12, \$7 for students/senior citizens. 8pm Thursday-Saturday and Monday-Tuesday, 2pm Sunday. February 8-13.

**DRIVING MISS DAISY.** Actor's Theatre of New Orleans, WTIX-FM Building, second floor, 4539 N. I-10 Service Road, Metairie, 456.4111 — Alfred Uhry's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about an elderly Jewish widow who slowly warms to her African-American driver. Rebecca Hale directs Pauline Prelutsky, Timothy Bellow and Mike Schultz. Tickets \$16, \$14 students with ID/seniors. 7:30pm Thursday-Saturday, 2:30pm Sunday. Through Feb.

[continued on Main-26]

what such an event might be like.

Once again the To Do Production Company presented us with an engrossing, well acted, well stage version of this thought provoking drama. This thought provoking drama was directed with sublime sensitivity by Glenn Michaels.

As in its first production, this company utilized a well conceived low-bucks set, the entire play was basically done with two benches. An asset were the baseball costumes. Creatively, the scripts required and mesmerizing shower scenes effected simply: the naked actors stood under blue spots and seemed to be washing themselves with soap and water while the running water sound of shower sound effects poured and splashed from the house speakers. And this minimalist approach worked extremely well because the performances were absolutely hypnotic. There was not a weak link among the performers. (This is probably the best written drama ever to use male nudity without it seeming gratuitous and gimmicky or prurient.)

We can only praise this nearly faultless cast, which included, Carlos Gonzales (Kippy Sunderstrom), Jason George (Darren Lemming), Duck Tennant (Shane Mungitt), Steve Patrick (Skipper/William R. Danziner), Sean Mellott (Jason Chenier), Frederick Mead (Toddy Koovitz), Gemayel Holloway (Davey Battle), Steve Kubrick (Mason Marzac) and Alphonse Bladergroen (Takeshi Kawabata). All of these attractive actors used the words of the script to create men of different characters and sensibilities.

Don McDonald is credited with the excellent sound and lighting, and Dave Fuller did the effective set.

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Detail of La Catrina, 2006, graphite on paper, 75" x 46" Michael Meads



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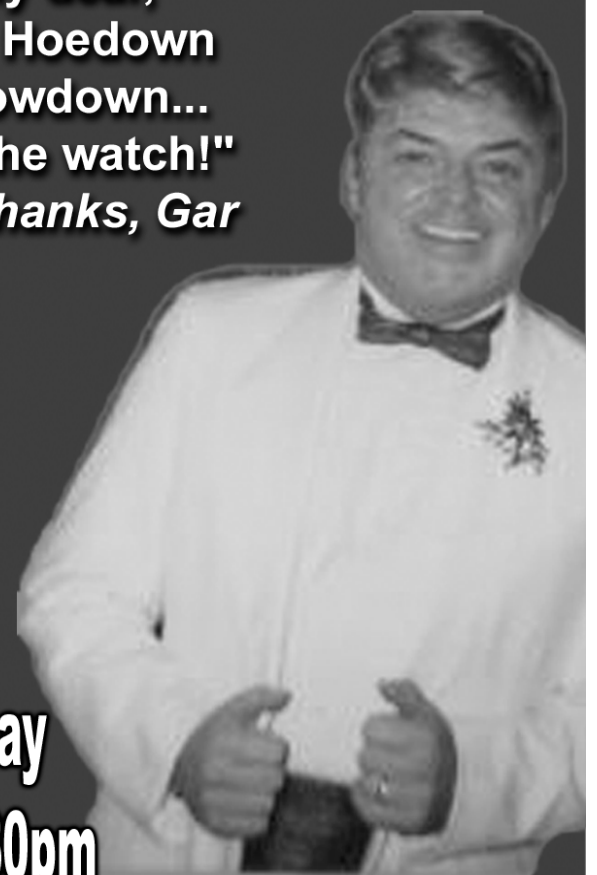
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