

The Virtual Truth

Spring 2011 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

the new *real* newsletter of The Virtual Stage Arts Society

DOUBLEPLUS GOOD

Back-To-Back Premieres Set To Open

1984 at The Cultch

Thompson Adaptation's World Premiere



Alex Lazaridis Ferguson as Winston Smith in *1984*.
David Cooper photo (davidcooperphotography.com).

On stage next: the world premiere of Andy Thompson's new multi-media stage adaptation of George Orwell's timeless and prophetic masterpiece opens at the renovated Historic Theatre at The Cultch this March. *1984* revolves around Winston Smith's dangerous, forbidden love affair with Julia. In Orwell's dystopian world, true love is forbidden and punishable by death.

Named one of the top theatre directors in the country two times by The Siminovitch Prize, Ron Jenkins (multi-award winning director of *The Black Rider* and *Bash'd*) helms *1984*. The production is presented by The Cultch and co-produced by The Virtual Stage and Langara College's legendary professional theatre school Studio 58 and stars Alex Lazaridis Ferguson as Winston Smith and Andrew Wheeler as O'Brien.

Easily one of the must-see shows of the season, this innovative interpretation of Orwell's famous novel is not one to be missed!

No Exit: San Francisco

The Virtual Stage's International Debut



Andy Thompson, Jonathon Young and Laara Sadiq in *No Exit*.
Tim Matheson photo (tmatheson.com).

The Virtual Stage's American and international touring debut will take place in April with our production of *No Exit* (co-produced with Electric Company Theatre) in San Francisco!

When a mysterious valet ushers three people into a shabby hotel room, the door locks behind them and an eternity of damnation lies ahead. What they soon discover is that hell isn't fire and brimstone at all - it's other people. Our award-winning live-cinematic interpretation of *No Exit*, fresh from a highly successful three-city Canadian tour to Kamloops, Calgary and Toronto last season, lands in the Bay Area for a month-long run at American Conservatory Theater.

One of the standouts at Vancouver's annual Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards, winning Outstanding Production and the Critics' Choice Innovation Award, *No Exit* has been hailed as "a new standard of brilliance" for productions of Sartre's dramatic masterpiece.

the
Virtual
stage

1984 @ The Cultch, Vancouver
March 24 - April 3, 2011
tickets.thecultch.com
604-251-1363

No Exit @ The Geary, San Francisco
April 7 - May 1, 2011
act-sf.org
415-749-2228

thevirtualstage.org

Creativity: In No Time

Fast films, fast plays and the art of not being precious

It was a busy fall for Andy Thompson, The Virtual Stage's Artistic & Managing Director, with his entries in three fast creation festivals in the span of a few months. The result was the production of two short, award-winning films for Thompson and a promising new play for The Virtual Stage.

“Doing these fast-creation contests helps me hone my skills as a director that I can then take in to my work with The Virtual Stage,” Thompson explains. “When there is no time to think, it forces all the artists to work together as efficiently as possible and just make decisions. It’s a creativity pressure-cooker. If you have the luxury of time, sometimes you spend that time second-guessing yourself. That’s not always a good thing. I guess that’s why I find these contests and festivals so rewarding.

In chronological order, here is what went down *in no time*...



Michelle Marchuk, Pandora Morgan, Brad Weins, Chantale Thome and Billy Marchenski in *Mayor Mulligan (Makes a Mistake)*.
Photo by Michael Julian Berz (access2dance.com).

Mayor Mulligan (Makes a Mistake)

Creation time: 24 hours (2010 FilmRace Vancouver)

Inspiration Package:

- Theme: “impossible”
- Surprise Element: a kiss

Written, shot, and edited in a mere 24 hours during the 2010 Vancouver Film Race, this 4-minute gem may have been the final film to ever be shot at the infamous 2400 Motel on Kingsway. Directed by Thompson and starring his hilarious childhood friend Brad Wiens, *Mayor Mulligan* is about a desperate politician on the campaign trail for re-election who inadvertently stumbles into a brothel and the absurd plot of three politically savvy French-Canadian prostitutes and their pimp. The short film won Best Costumes & Best Set (Enigma Arcana), Best Writing (Daniel Arnold, Jono Fredrix, Medina Hahn & Thompson), as well as the runner up for Audience Favorite Award.

“The choice to cast Brad was a risk,” said Thompson, “but it was one that really paid off. Brad is not a professional actor. In fact, he’s a parole officer. But I know him as a naturally funny guy. I needed a non-union lead actor in the film, due to the contest rules. His comic chops really leapt off the screen. I hope Brad gets the opportunity to continue to explore acting. He’s a natural.”



Jacob Barker, Michael Julian Berz and Andy Thompson shoot *Mayor Mulligan (Makes a Mistake)*. Photo by Bettina Strauss (best-foto.com).



John R. Taylor as Doctor Applebe in *The Provider*. Photo by Kevin Su (kevinsu.com).
Makeup by Suzie Klimack (suzieklimack.com).

The Provider

Creation time: 48 hours (Bloodshots Contest)

Inspiration Package:

- Horror sub-genre: post-apocalyptic
- Weapon: box cutters
- Surprise Element: a white cat
- Line: "I thought I saw something in the mirror."

Thompson's next fast-creation project was an entry in the 2010 Bloodshots Canada contest, allowing twice the time (a whopping 48 hours) to write, shoot and edit a short horror film. The result was an alternate-history short *The Provider*, starring Gabrielle Rose and coproduced by Thompson and Brianne Nord-Stewart. It went on to take home the top honours, winning the Jury Prize "Best Film" and "Best Costumes" (designed by Enigma Arcana) awards before being crowned the "Overall Best Film" award and the grand prize of \$1,000 by famous English film director Neil Marshall (*Centurion*, *Doomsday*).

"*The Provider* is ambitious and made with great style and wit."

- Neil Marshall, Bloodshots Judge

The producers were thrilled to receive this honour and the \$1,000 – which went toward their credit card debt accrued to finance the film.



Benjamin Elliott teaches Andy Thompson how to be interesting in *An Interesting Man*. Still taken from a Jesse Toso video (jessetoso.com).

An Interesting Man

Creation time: 2 days (Theatre Under the Gun)

Inspiration Package:

- a screwdriver & a box of dirt
- a Tweet from Vancouver Mayor Robertson

The last of the trilogy of Thompson's fast projects was a piece The Virtual Stage produced at "Theatre Under the Gun" in celebration of our 10th year anniversary. The challenge was initially daunting for Thompson and co-playwright / performer Benjamin Elliott. They were given their inspiration package and tasked with writing and rehearsing a short play around these items and performing it to a full house only two days later.

After a great deal of brainstorming, Elliott and Thompson wrote *An Interesting Man*: the story of a young egotist who is declared "The Most Interesting Person on the Planet" by Time Magazine, who then secretly manipulates the most boring person he can come across in an attempt to find a cure for mediocrity. The artists adopted the guiding principle of always choosing the most "interesting" and fun choice in the creative process, no matter how bizarre. The result is a comedic and refreshing take on the subjectivity of artistic taste, the fragility of intellectual snobbery and the dangers of becoming famous. The audience loved it. The feedback was so encouraging that a full production of the play is envisioned for The Virtual Stage. Stay tuned!



Hell may be other people, but you're awesome!

Yes! You're awesome! I want to help make things happen for The Virtual Stage! I know it will make me a happier and more well-rounded individual (and that I'll also get a charitable tax receipt...)

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Donations can also be made via CanadaHelps.Org and our website!

www.thevirtualstage.org

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cheques can be made payable to:

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Vancouver, BC V6B 3X6
p. 604-876-0977 f. 604-909-4735
e. info@thevirtualstage.org

Founding Member Tickets!

The original 225 founding members of The Virtual Stage Arts Society are offered free tickets to the opening weekends of most of our productions. We are only able to offer this, however, when we operate the box office. *1984* and *No Exit* (San Francisco) are both presentation arrangements run by independent box offices. That said, we are giving away a limited number of comp tickets to our members on opening night (March 25) of *1984*. Send an email to rsvp@thevirtualstage.org with "1984" in the subject heading to be eligible. Act quickly! These tickets are sure to go soon!

The Virtual Stage Turns 10!

They say time flies when you're having fun. Well, we seem to have been doing that for a decade now! Ten years ago we incorporated and produced the Canadian premiere of Don DeLillo's *Valparaiso* at the Presentation House Theatre in North Vancouver. Since then, there has been no looking back. Thanks to all our supporters over the past ten years! If you would like to be a part of The Virtual Stage and be on our board of directors, we are always looking for new energetic people. Let us know!

NO EXIT: Canadian Tour Reviews

"Theatrical perfection... Spectacularly brilliant... The actors are uniformly terrific... One of the finest theatrical achievements in recent memory..."

- Bob Clark, Calgary Herald (5 out of 5 stars)

"Heavenly direction in Sartre's hell... A vibrant, very modern theatrical experience... Extremely skilful and focused."

- Robert Crew, Toronto Star (4 out of 4 stars)

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