

Buddies giving recession the raspberry

Buddies In Bad Times Theatre is again swimming against the current of the times.

At a time when many financially strapped companies are retrenching to cope with recessionary pressures, Toronto's only professional gay and lesbian theatre company has undergone a significant expansion.

Buddies recently moved its offices to a former TV studio at 142 George St. The location has been renovated to include a 150-seat theatre.

The first thing visitors see when they enter the building is a lobby decorated with colorful murals, immediately conveying the positive outlook of the company.

"I guess you could say we're confident and optimistic," says **Suzy Richter**, the company's recently named associate artistic director.

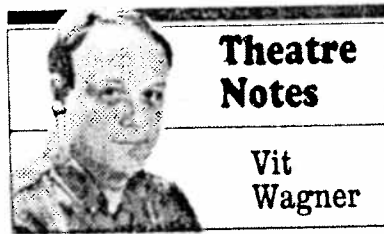
"I think there's a lot of support for alternative theatre in the number of people who are interested in it and come out to see it. But in terms of available spaces, there just aren't enough."

Any improvement in that situation, however slight, is noteworthy.

In addition to being a home for Buddies-run productions and festivals, Richter says the theatre will be made available at reasonable rates to other alternative companies.

Three troupes — Platform 9, DNA Theatre and the Augusta Company — actually share in the responsibility of programming the theatre.

The theatre, an adaptable space that can accommodate various



Theatre Notes

Vit Wagner

the opening of Buddies' 13th annual *Rhubarb!* festival. The event, which features innovative short works, runs to Feb. 17.

Richter — an underground filmmaker and member of the local musical group, the Nancy Sinatras — stresses that, contrary to Buddies' wider mandate, *Rhubarb!* has no specific sexual orientation.

The emphasis this year is on young artists, including seven newcomers who are making their writing or directing debuts.

The opening week program (Wednesday to Feb. 3 at 8 p.m.) includes *Gilligan's Thailand*, written by **Death Waits** and performed by **Candid Stammer Theatre**; *Chaos*, written and performed by **Jordan Patterson**; *Blond*, written by **Mary Lou Zeitoun** and **Sara Meurling**; *Hulla Baloo*, written and performed by **Susan McLay**; and *Dead Man's Penis*, written and performed by **John and Mike Erskine-Kellie**.

The second week (Feb. 6-10 at 8 p.m.) will feature *Empress Productions' Slow Thunder*, written and performed by **Diane Flacks**, **Victoria Ward** and **Wendy White**; *Summer Snapshots*, written and performed by **Michael Totzke**; **Allan Merovitz' Bubbles And Oblivion**; **Stan Rogal's Sunny Boy Recites From Fog, Hunger &**

Smoothie Chops.

The third week (Feb. 13-17 at 8 p.m.) has *Fergus, Ontario*, written and performed by **Glenn Christie**; **Jason Sherman's League Of Nathans**; *Scorched Earth*, written and performed by **Paul Couillard**; **David Roddis' Hot, Hungry And Horny**; and **Laura J. Forth's Quantum Kumquat And The Chaos Game 3**.

Rhubarb! also will offer a new "Late Night Avant-Garde" program featuring **Edward Roy's Creatures Like Us** (Wednesday and Feb. 1-2 at 11.30 p.m.), **Cheryl Cashman's Excerpts From The 10,000 Year Old Woman** (Feb. 8-9 at 11.30 p.m.) and **Mark Christmann in Helen Posno's Crime In The Wilderness/Gutter Utterings** (Feb. 15-16 at 11.30 p.m.).

Also, critic **Robert Wallace** will moderate a free discussion on the current state of theatrical innovation in Toronto, Feb. 10 from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m.

Tickets for *Rhubarb!* are \$10.75-\$12.15 and \$5 for late-night shows. A festival pass costs \$30. Prices do not include GST.

For reservations and information, call 863-9455.