

Kanata Theatre

presents

# The Miss Firecracker Contest

by Beth Henley

## CAST

in order of appearance

CARNELLE SCOTT	Chissy Hollands
POPEYE JACKSON	Jennifer Scrivens
ELAIN RUTLEDGE	Shann McGrail Duncan
DELMOUNT WILLIAMS	Carl Kearley
MAC SAM	Mark Bazerman
TESSY MAHONEY	Amy Adams

The Play directed by  
Jim Holmes

## The Miss Firecracker Contest

by Beth Henley

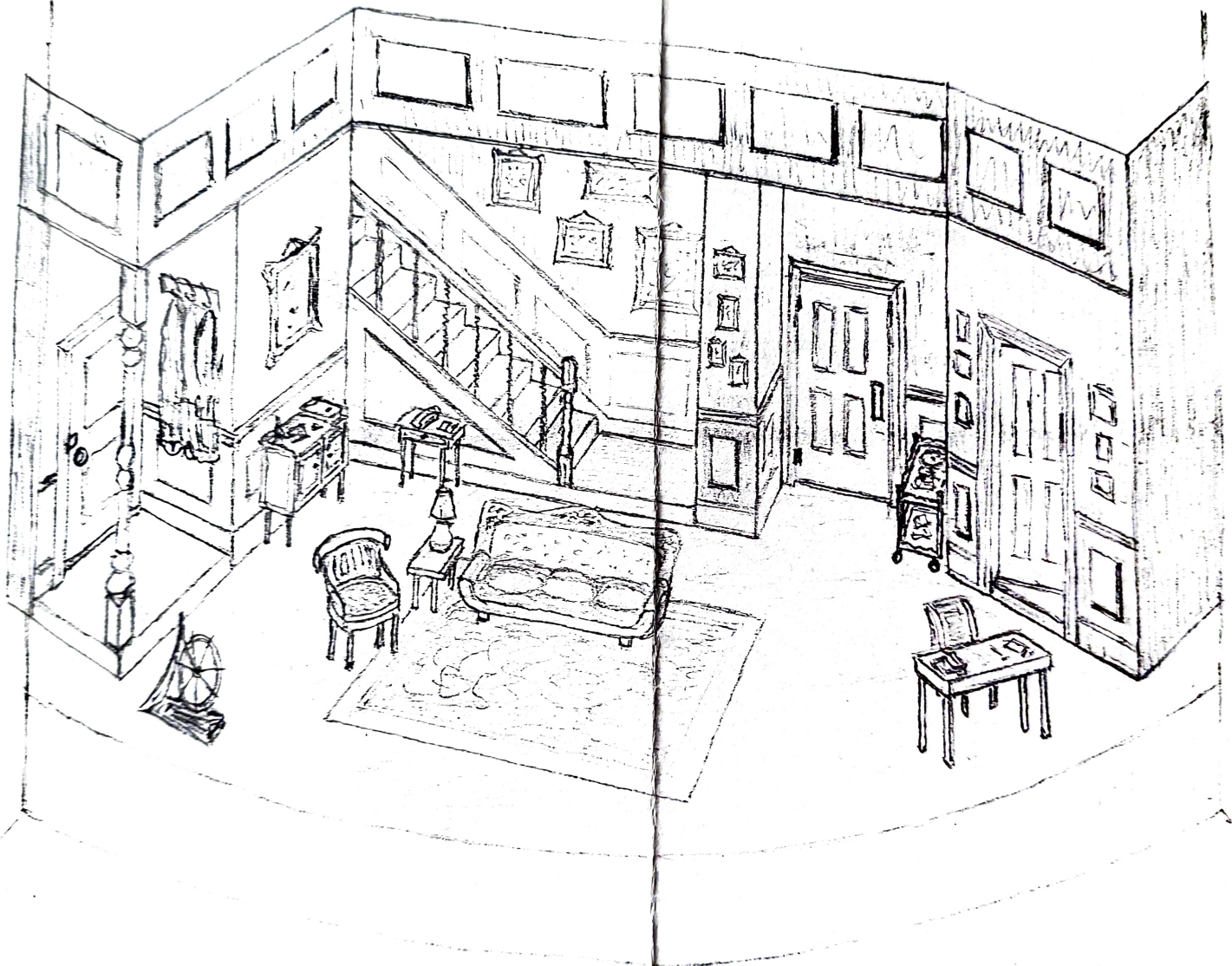
Directed by Jim Holmes

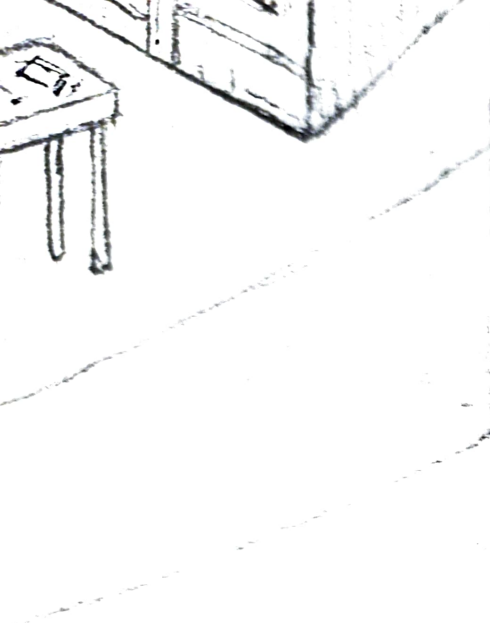
## CAST

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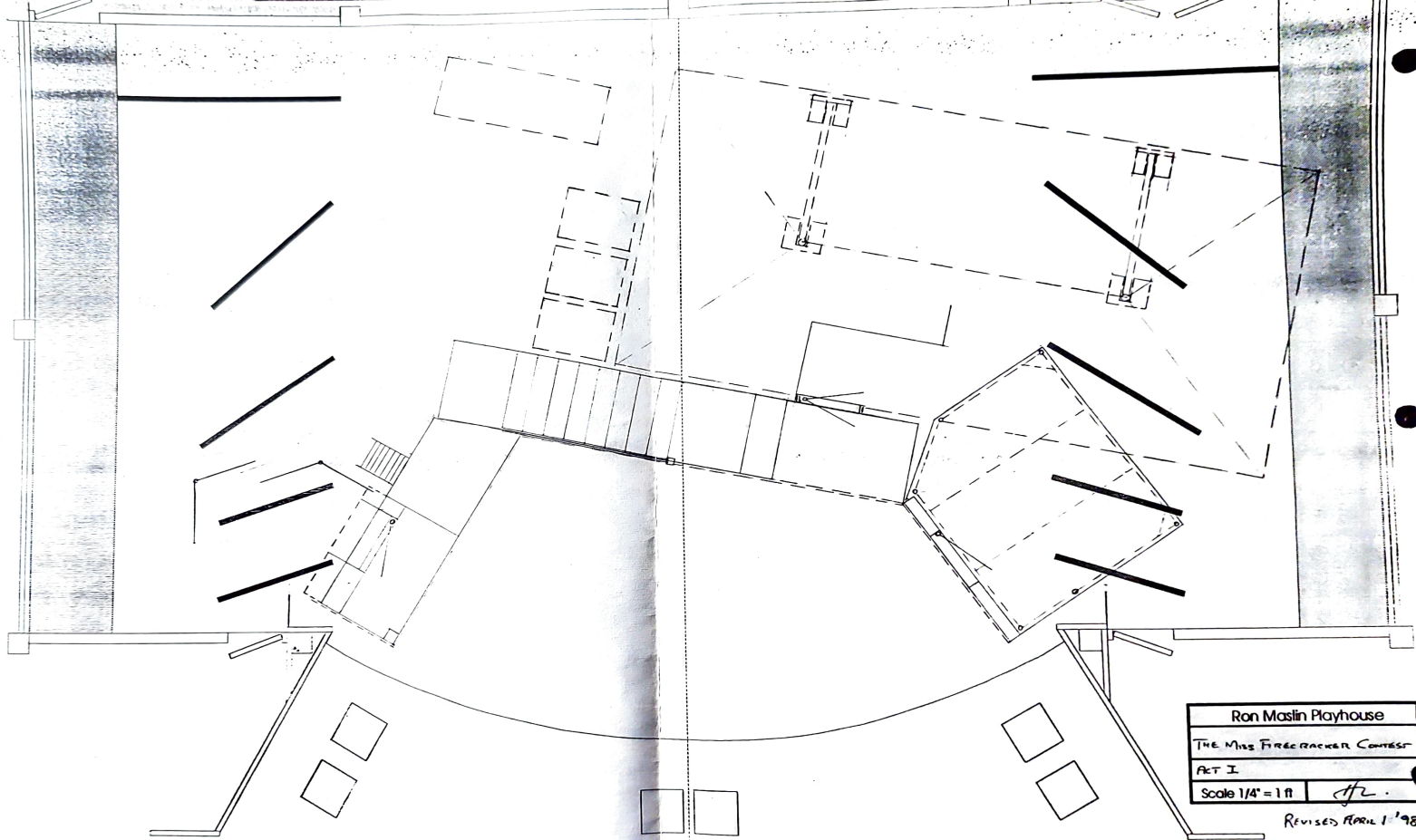


# THE MISS FIRECRACKER CONTEST

ACT I .

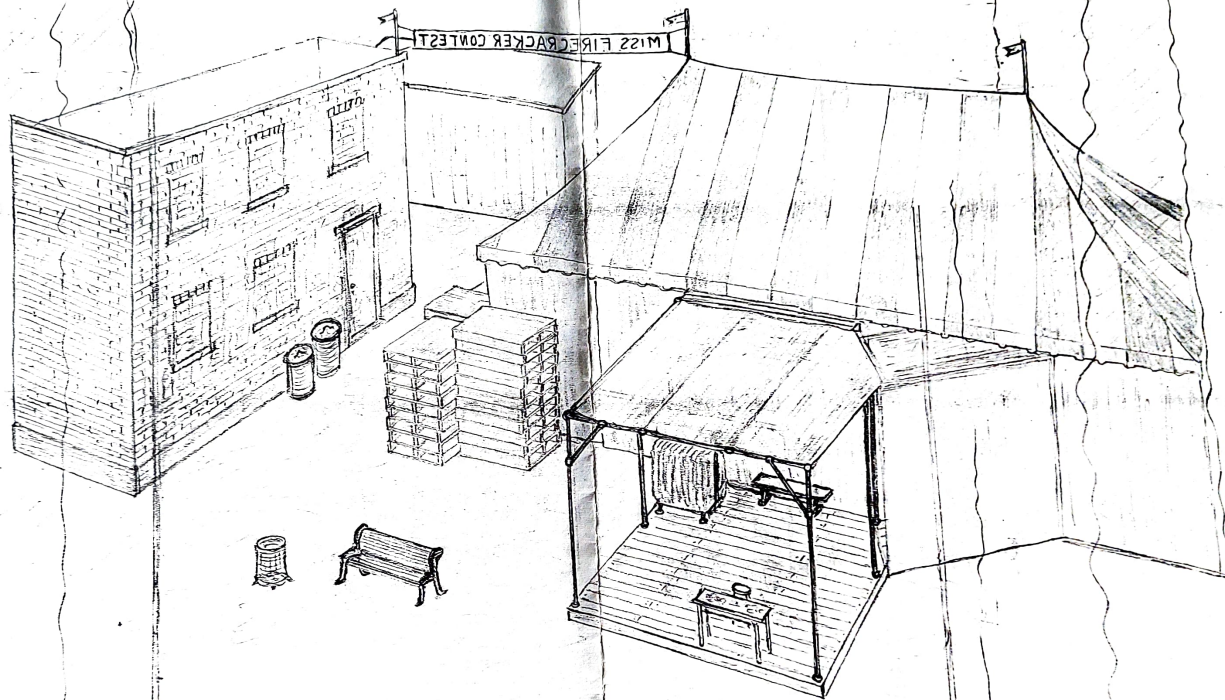
Revised : April 1 '98





Ron Maslin Playhouse	
THE MISS FIRECRACKER CONTEST	
ACT I	
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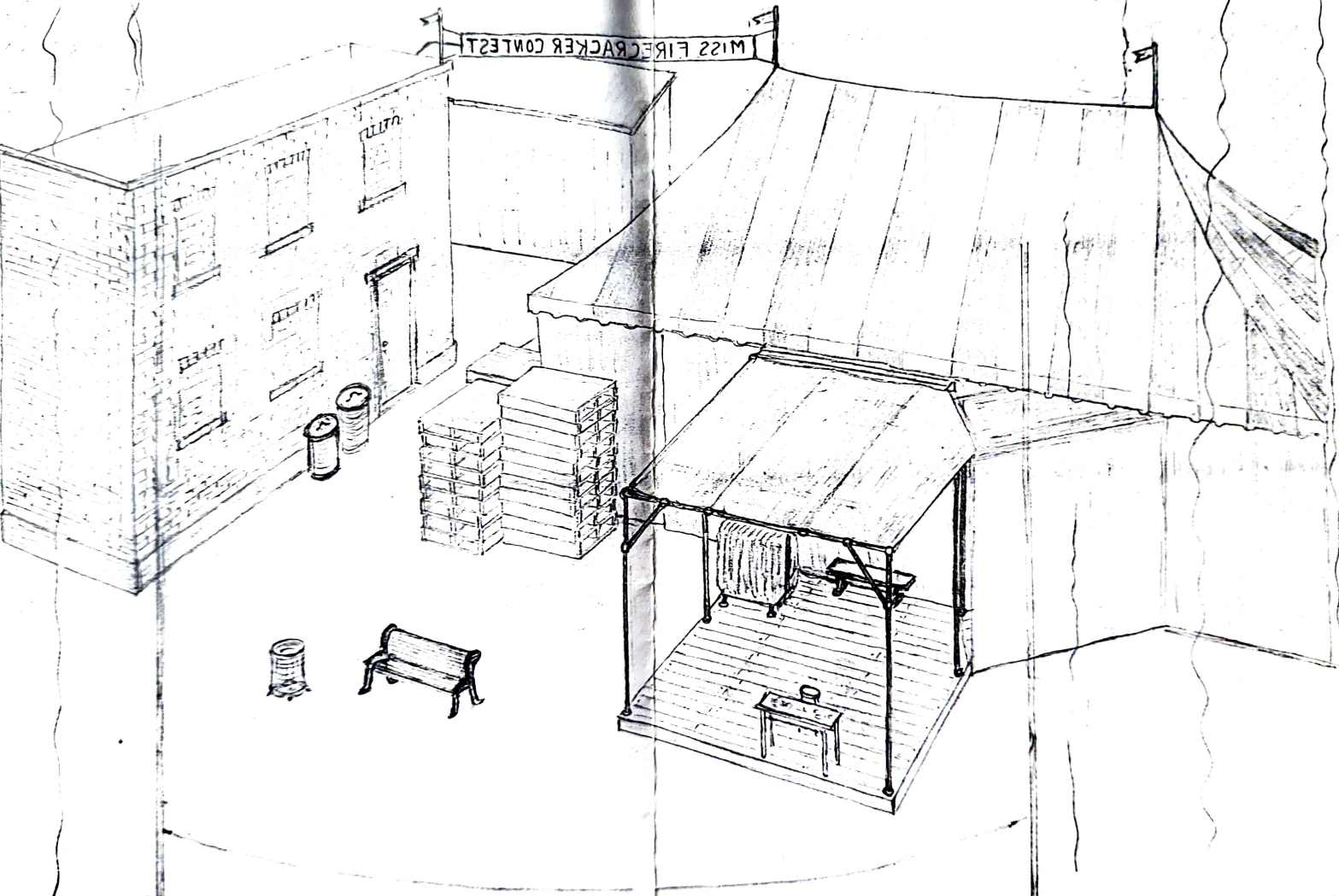
REVISED APRIL 1 '98



THE MISS FIRECRACKER CONTEST  
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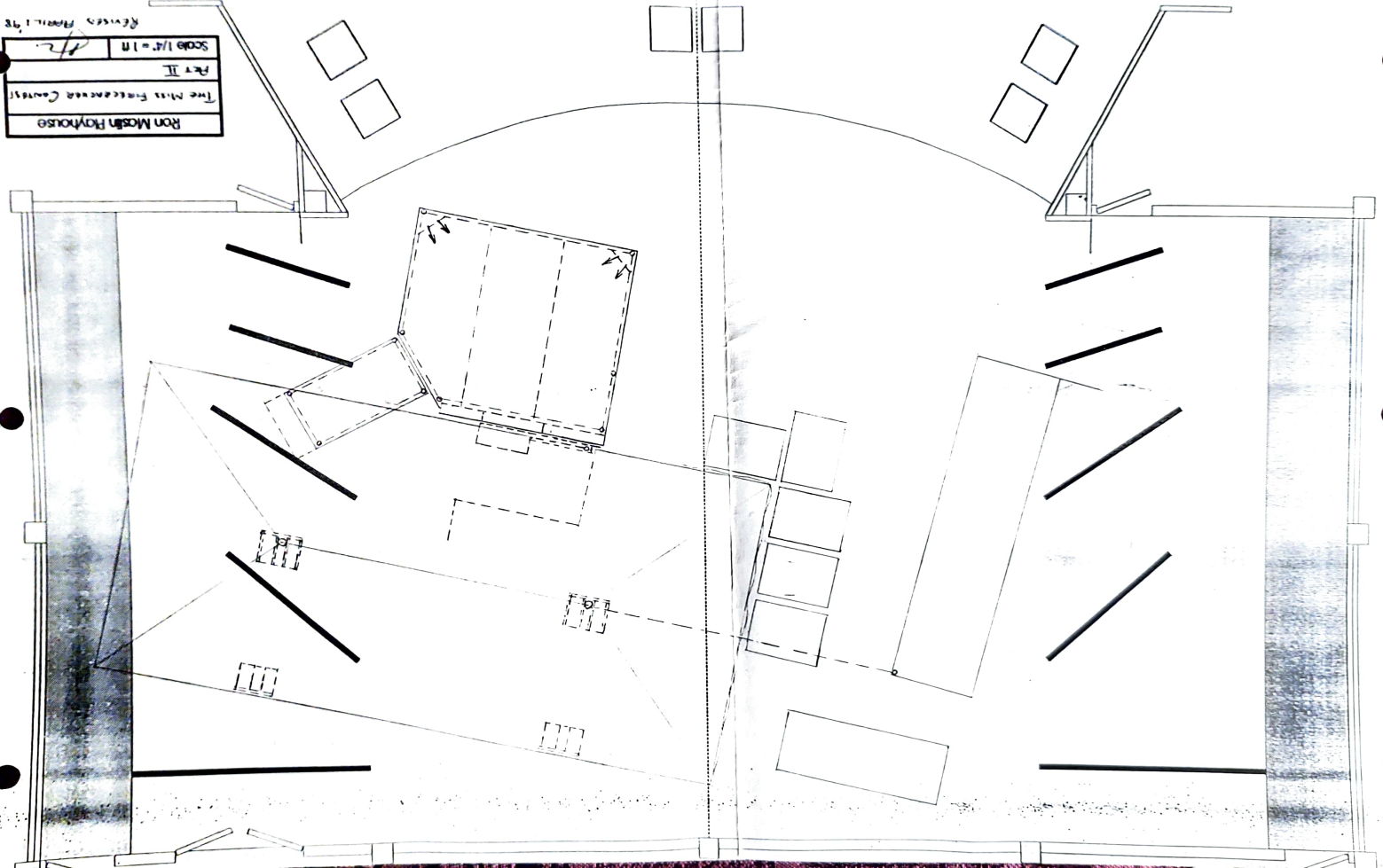
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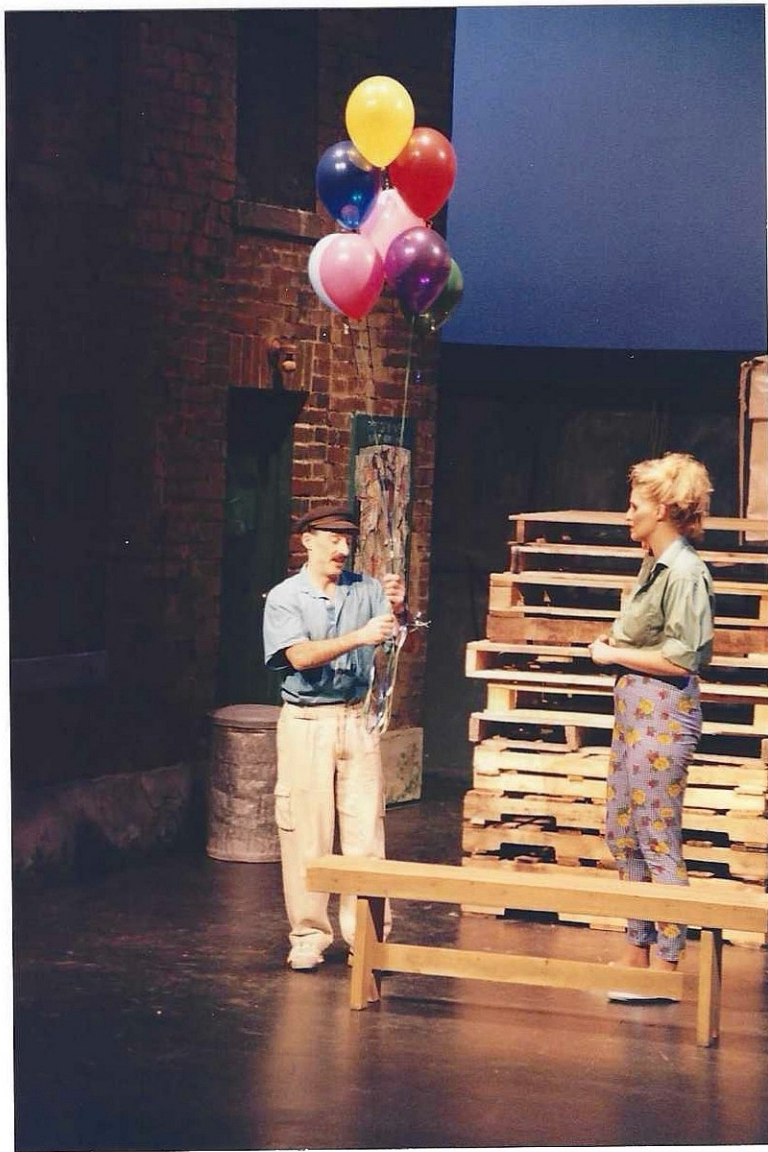
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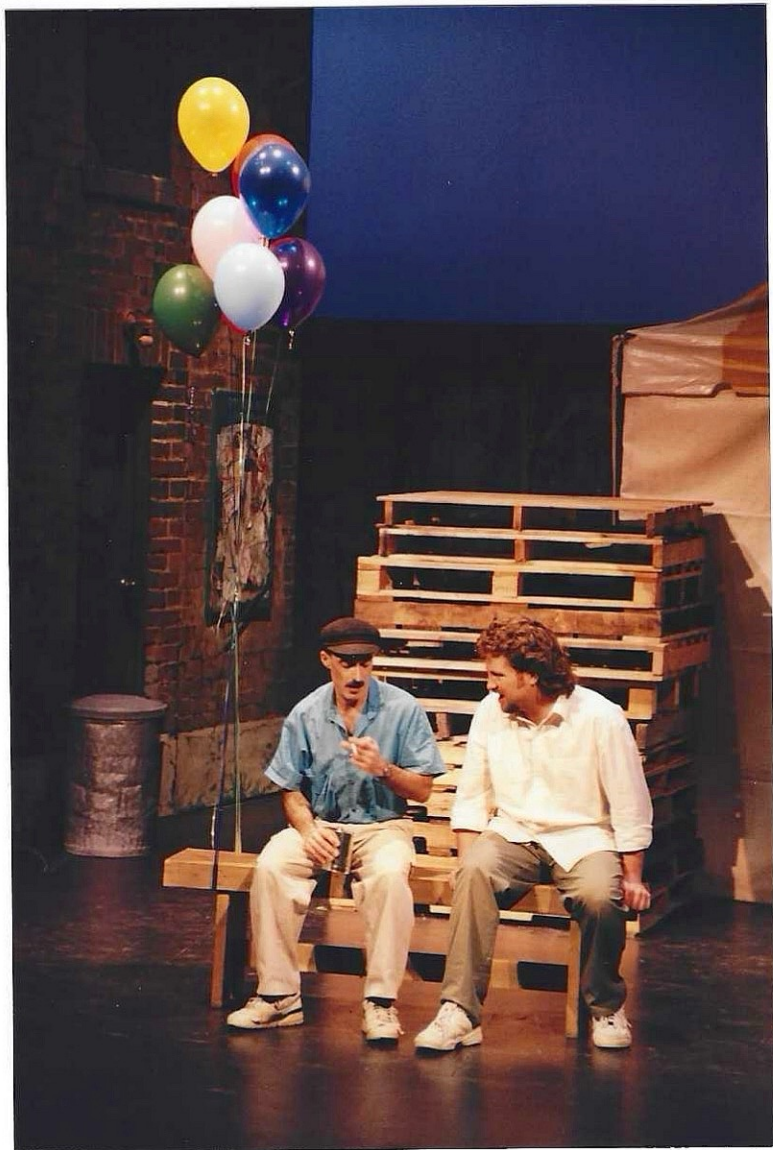
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# ARTS

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, MONDAY, MAY 25, 1998

Page E5

Editor: Brian Gorman, 596-8599  
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**Paddy Mann, centre, designed the costumes for the play *The Miss Firecracker Contest*. Actors Christine Hollands, left, who plays Carnelle and Jennifer Scrivens, right, who plays Popeye, are wearing pieces designed by Mann.**

PATRICK DOYLE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

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# Top designer puts spark in Firecracker

## Paddy Mann designs wardrobe for Kanata Theatre production

BY IRIS WINSTON

A play about the harsh world of beauty contests in the Southern U.S. seems far removed from the quiet elegance of Paddy Mann's haute couture studio in Pakenham.

Yet when the curtain goes up on the Kanata Theatre production of Beth Henley's *The Miss Firecracker Contest* on Wednesday, the cast will be outfitted in Paddy Mann designs.

"I'm a feminist, so a beauty contest is about as far from my life as you can possibly get," says Mann, who was named top fashion designer in Canada in 1983, and continues as one of the stars of the fashion world.

Perhaps the remoteness was part of the challenge for an artist who always has a wearer in mind for her creations.

"There are two things involved in design," she says, "the garment and the person wearing it. You have to get that marriage right. If you don't think about the person or where she (or he) is going to wear the clothes you've designed, you are not doing your job (as a designer)."

Clothing announces intent, she points out. ("When I wear jeans, the message I'm sending is that I'm going to work at my cutting table today.")

"Clothing is also a social issue for me," she says, pointing to past eras when such

restrictive clothing as tight skirts and stiletto heels inhibited both women's movements and promotion prospects.

She sees her work in terms of using form and colour to communicate "who the wearer is and a little about who the person wants to be. I like people. I like to dress people and make them feel good." That includes making sure her subjects are comfortable in the garments she creates for them. "If you're comfortable, everyone wants to be around you," she says. "Clothes should be soft. They should swish and be nice to touch, because human beings are tactile (creatures)."

"I don't really fit into the designers' club," she says with a smile and an admonition not to make her sound too serious (even though she was once a philosophy student at York University). "I've been called a dinosaur in the dress-making business. I suppose in a way I am, but I don't understand the people with tunnel vision who think only of the garment when designing clothes."

It follows that when director Jim Holmes asked her to design the costumes for *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, she not only studied the script, but also met the actors and watched a couple of rehearsals.

See **FIRECRACKER** on page E6



PATRICK DOYLE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Christine Hollands, who plays Carnelle in the play *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, is wearing a costume designed by Paddy Mann.

**THEATRE REVIEW**



PATRICK DOYLE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

**Jennifer Scrivens is touchingly convincing as Popeye in the Kanata Little Theatre production of *The Miss Firecracker Contest*.**

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# Snap, crackle, fizzle

## Miss Firecracker moves at snail's pace

BY IRIS WINSTON

A young woman in a mauve leotard that clashes with the unlikely red of her hair clumps her way through an awkward tap routine. She is practising for the talent portion of a beauty contest.

The opening moments of the Kanata Theatre production of Beth Henley's *The Miss Firecracker Contest* underline that we are not looking at a winner in action here. In fact, the underlying irony of this slight drama about a group of losers is its small-town beauty pageant backdrop, in which winning means so much. But, moving at the snail's pace of an afternoon TV soap, the sizzle of the script stops here, well short of a rocket or even a good sparkler.

Among the challenges of Henley's play, which wavers awkwardly between comedy and tragedy, are creating an element of suspense about the outcome of the beauty contest and bringing some reality to the two-dimensional folks of the play.

Aided by Philip Cople's workable set design and Paddy Mann's costume design, director Jim Holmes and his cast work hard to do just that, but with only limited success.

The script sketches enough of the main character's history to give actor Chrissy Hollands a good chance of breathing life into Carnelle; and she knocks herself out showing how desperately Carnelle wants to win the contest, leave town in a blaze of glory and blot out her past as the town's promiscuous "hot tamale." Her characterization and Southern accent are convincing, but in the end she is scuttled by the play's attenuated and anti-

climactic ending.

Jennifer Scrivens, in a consistently effective performance, delivers a fine characterization of the simple, giggly and lonely Popeye. Pathetically grateful for small kindnesses, anxious to please and innocent of malice, she brings both charm and consistency of persona to a potentially undynamic role.

As Carnelle's Southern belle cousin, Elain, Shann McGrail Duncan is convincing in her tailored outfits and pouting vanity as she repeatedly pats her hair and wallows in compliments. Partly because the script only sketches why Elain and her brother, Delmount, carry years of angry baggage, Duncan is less believable in her high-pitched shouting matches with him.

As the emotionally disturbed Delmount, Carl Kearley has even more problems with the unnatural dialogue required of him. His low-key performance is periodically at odds with the stylized language, which has the best chance of making an impact if the presentation is equally stylized.

Long pauses and slow entrances also detract from any crackle. And although the production of *The Miss Firecracker Contest* establishes the slow rhythm of the South, it is too earnest to light up the sky with fireworks.

The Miss Firecracker Contest plays at the Ron Maslin Theatre on Terry Fox Drive, Kanata, tonight, tomorrow and June 3-6 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$12.



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