Thursday, May 10, 2001

ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: COMING UP NEXT ON AROUND TOWN: PROJECT Y SEEKS HIGHER GROUND IN TED TALLY'S TRAILBLAZING DRAMA, "TERRA NOVA"; CHASING WINDMILLS WITH THE STANISLAVSKY THEATER STUDIO; A RED-HOT TRIBUTE TO LEGENDS OF LATIN JAZZ; AND, CHECKING OUT SOME "BEAUTIFUL BODIES" ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART. DON'T GO AWAY - IT'S TIME FOR YOUR WEEKLY DOSE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN.

ANNOUNCER: AROUND TOWN is made possible by the members of WETA. Additional Funds are provided by the Lichtenberg Family Foundation.

ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: AT SOME POINT, MANY OF US GOT A HIGH-SCHOOL HISTORY LESSON ON BRITISH EXPLORER ROBERT SCOTT'S HISTORIC RACE TO THE SOUTH POLE AGAINST NORWAY'S ROALD AMUNDSEN. IN PROJECT Y'S LATEST PRODUCTION, "TERRA NOVA," PLAYWRIGHT TED TALLY IMAGINES THAT JOURNEY TO HAVE BEEN A CONFLICT OF THE IDEOLOGIES OF TWO PROUD MEN - NOT TO

http://www.weta.org/productions/aroundtown/transcripts/at20010510.html
MENTION AN INCREDIBLY ARDUOUS AND PERILOUS ADVENTURE. HERE'S A LOOK:

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ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: Speaking of details it was the Washington stage Guild that did this play a few years back.

BOB MONDELLO: I think what is remarkable about this production is this company and where it's come from and what it's arrived at. This is a company that started out as sort of an offshoot of the Potomac Theatre Project, which I've long thought is one of the more intelligent theatre companies in the city. They always do political material. This group is aimed at 20 something. That's where they've said they want to go. They are real articulate in terms of their actors. They usually have 20 something actors on the stage and that's true in this case.

ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: So, we should see these plays twice.

BOB MONDELLO: Two and a half times. The idea is that they've really come along and a few years ago we looked at the Potomac Theatre Project in this way, that okay when they get their acting together everything will be okay or, gee the directing's cool. And actually I don't mean that so much about them as about any theatre company — has a initial part where it isn't really doing as well as you'd like it to do. But you can see that there's promise there. It seems to me that these guy are now fulfilling promise.

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JANE HORWITZ: I'm from Chicago, but didn't live there when Steppenwolf was starting out. But they have that kind of energy that Steppenwolf became known for. Sort of just throwing themselves headlong into the platinum. I have always loved Terra Nova anyway. I saw it when I lived in Texas in the early 80s or late 70s. And I've always loved the play. But they've taken this play and they've not only made it incredibly an action — a very action oriented play — but also they've set up the dichotomy, the sort of dual philosophies of life in a really clear cut way. Amundsen is the pragmatist and Scott is the idealist. Only his idealistic romanticism killed off everybody in his expedition. They used the sled dogs to pull their sled and as the sled got lighter, they would kill them and eat them and that's how they survived and managed to get back after reaching the South Pole. But Amundsen is really a nemesis in this. He really — Scott sort of hallucinates Amundsen. I love the play because it's linear and yet it also goes back into dreams.

PETER FAY: To pick up on what you're saying, Jane, in the play what Tally does is he gives you the real impression of being out there in this white wilderness. The mind begins to wander. You begin to lose the hinge on reality. And I think that's what's happening with Scott. We see this whole idea of this very idealized sensibility of exploration was about and this is on the cusp of really the scientific approach to scientific discovery. I think the exploration is what makes this play really sing for me.

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JOE BARBER: The whole production just blew me away. Scott McKenzie as Scott and *Tyson Lean as Amundsen are just excellent. And while Amundsen comes off as something of a demon, he's also compassionate as well. And those mental conversations between the two of them are fascinating. What I want to say about this production, particularly the sound work done by Dave McKeever and the set design by *Matt Soul and Alex Kramer is amazing. They really make you feel as if in the middle of summer, you are at the South Pole.

One last thing, particularly this season, a lot of our larger theatres would do well to go see what these young people are doing and emulate their energy and their willingness to take risks.

BOB MONDELLO: And the spareness.

JANE HORWITZ: This is what theatre is about. This set cost $250. It's got indoor/outdoor carpet and a big piece of cheese cloth on which they project some images from the real Scott expedition.

BOB MONDELLO: And the aurora australis.

ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: "TERRA NOVA" RUNS UNTIL MAY 20TH. FRESH FROM WINNING A HELEN HAYES AWARD FOR CHOREOGRAPHY LAST MONDAY NIGHT, THE STANISLAVSKY THEATER STUDIO IS BACK ONSTAGE WITH AN ADAPTATION OF THE CLASSIC NOVEL "DON QUIXOTE" — INFUSING THE WORK WITH THEIR TRADEMARK VISUAL STYLE. HERE'S A LOOK AT CERVANTES' FAMOUS KNIGHT - JOINED BY HIS
SIMPLE SQUIRE, SANCHO PANZA - AS HE PREPARES HIMSELF TO DO BATTLE WITH A WINDMILL:

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JOE BARBER: This is another fine piece of work by one of the most interesting and courageous young troops we have in Washington. And I had a great time with this. The second half is probably more visually stimulating than the first half, but it's still all very well done. The acting, particularly by Paata Tsikurishvili as Don Quixote — he's both a mad man and a hero and those qualities come through. Andrei Malaev-Babel as Sancho Panza is funny, but he also makes a great deal of sense. It's just so well done.

ROBERT AUBRY DAVIS: It's a work from 1605. It's so completely contemporary to 2001. There's so much political reality in this.

PETER FAY: This is transition from the Middle Ages to the renaissance. This is where all of the old mythologies are disappearing or have they really disappeared. Or is there something worth preserving there. And the cynicism of the modern age is held up to such ridicule. And the interesting thing is that this script is a piece of magic all by itself. *Roland Reed and Andrei Malaev-Babel have done a fabulous job of recreating this. There's excitement on this, but, *Eurina, who is our winner for choreography, just when I thought she had done everything she could do with a piece of cloth, she came up with something which is so extraordinary. I had my entire family there and all six of us were riveted

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