



Courtesy Photo

Ian Sinclair and Morgan Justiss star in "The Nibroc Trilogy" at the Bath House Cultural Center.

Pulling Back the Stage Curtain

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Echo Theatre, Dallas' award winning feminist theater, which only produces plays written by women, is poised to mount its most ambitious project yet. Will they ever learn? Thankfully, no.

The production company next month presents the prestigious "The Nibroc Trilogy," by Arlene Hutton, running in repertory at the Bath House Cultural Center.

Repertory means three plays running at the same time with the same actors — all in three weeks. Crazy, huh?



Courtesy Photo

Susan McMath Platt (Mrs. Brummett) and Kristin McCollum (Treva) catch up before rehearsal.

night.

It is a little less than two weeks 'til opening night, and the cast prepares for rehearsal. Ian Sinclair, who plays Raleigh, and Morgan Justiss, who plays May, appear in all three plays — "Last Train to Nibcoc," "See Rock City," and "Gulf View Drive." With four hours of lines to memorize, how does an actor tackle a project like that?

"It's kind of a funny story," Justiss said. "When I was cast as May, I knew we were going to do all three plays, but I didn't realize that we were going to do them all within three weeks. My thoughts were that we would do the first one and then the next a few weeks later. When I saw the production schedule, I just went, 'What?' Then I calmed down and said to myself, 'OK, this is good, get yourself pumped.' "

When rehearsals started, Sinclair was working on another show. He would work on "Nibroc" during the day while playing a different role at

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"Morgan and I knew we could work on the first play anytime since it is just the two of us," he said.

"We worked a lot on our own when Ian was available," Justiss said. "We would discuss the characters, things like what happens to them in the year between scene one and scene two."

Susan McMath Platt, who plays Raleigh's mother, Mrs. Brummett, said she hasn't done shows in rep since college. Improvisational work is in her past and, "I may do improv with this," she quipped.

"The whole process is better than I thought it would be. It is getting me back in touch with my grandmas. They farmed around Denton, lived through the Depression, and were Rosie the Riveter."

Nancy Munger, a familiar face on the Dallas Children's Theater stage said, "I've hung around with these Echo girls a long time. To do two shows is great fun. And unlike children's theater, I do not wear a funny hat."

Kristin McCollum, who plays Raleigh's sister, Treva, completes the cast of five and appears only in "Gulf View Drive." When asked what she thinks about her castmates' workload she deadpanned, "I don't pity them at all."

McCollum said the cast clicked from the start.

"The audition was electric; really, really neat. And this character is one of the most complete; her intentions are clear. Treva is a trip to play."

Through the rehearsal process, the cast has grown tight.

"I knew it would be wonderful," Munger said. "We certainly have had time to build this little family because of the way the plays are written — with clear conversation and with such heart. We built this family and carry that offstage with us."

"There are five characters, and you get to know them really well when you are seeing them through three plays," McCollum said. "The audience feels close to them. They know their quirks, what sets them off. In each show, new characters are added and that makes it more fun."

"Sometimes, when I'm offstage, I just love listening to them," Justiss said.

And Sinclair seems to be adjusting well to being the only man in the production.

"I've only had to defend the 'man race' a few times," he said with a laugh. ■



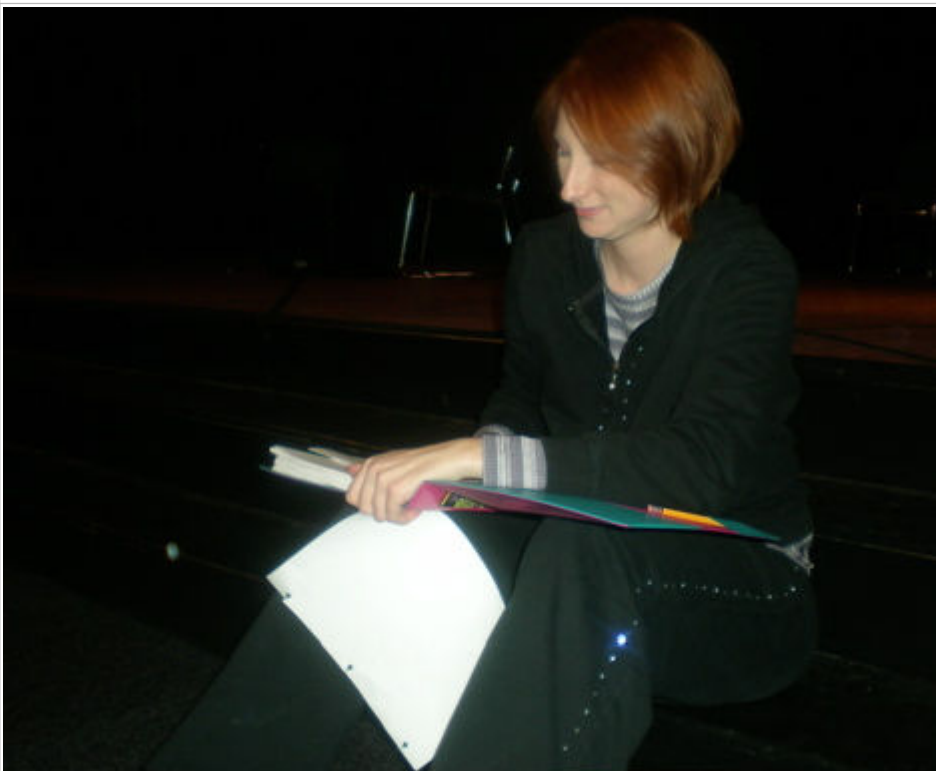
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Nancy Munger (Mrs. Gill) confers with director Ellen Locy.



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Ian Sinclair (Raleigh Brummett) shines.



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Morgan Justiss (May Gill) studies some of the four-hours worth of lines she must memorize.

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