

Knowing the score

The score: it's in your genes

The Electric Company Theater Society

Directed by Kim Collier

Produced by David Hudgins

Waterfront Theatre, Granville Island, Vancouver

April 7–16, 2000



While he was organizing the Human Genome 2000 conference this spring, Dr. Michael Hayden of Vancouver's Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics was looking for innovative entertainment that would help the public keep up with the galloping pace of genetic research. His solution was to commission Vancouver's Electric Company Theater Society to create a play: the result, *The Score*, was a dynamic fusion of drama, song and dance played against striking black-and-white sets and original music.

Using multiple creative elements with a humorous flair, the play touches on a wide range of social and ethical concerns as it tells the story of Lynn Magnusson, a tyrannical geneticist running a small laboratory on the fast track to a groundbreaking discovery. A rival French laboratory is hot on her heels,

and the competition is intensified by the prospect of a \$3 million drug company investment with the potential to cut the time to discovery by five years. But time is also running out for Magnusson in the personal sphere. Her mother died of Huntington's disease, and Magnusson is unexpectedly forced to confront the possibility of carrying the gene herself when she discovers she is pregnant.

The public perspective on genetic research is conveyed through a mockup of Rex Murphy's CBC radio program, *Cross Country Checkup*. Concerned callers ask Magnusson about the implications of genomic knowledge on obtaining insurance and express fears about cloning and gene patenting. There are protests that "a sacred world has been breached" and that "the sanctity of human life has been devalued" by Magnusson's cutting-edge

work. She responds that humans have always "tinkered" with their species through medical research and that genomic research will ultimately offer more benefits than drawbacks.

Back in the laboratory, tensions run high. Magnusson's team tries to outpace the French group; there is infighting over credit on scientific publications; and researchers fear the loss of their careers in the corporate culture of patenting. Ultimately, Magnusson's lab collaborates with the French group, which later pulls out and publishes their findings alone.

Magnusson, meanwhile, has tested herself for the Huntington's gene and discovers the results are positive. Her angst plays out in front of stage-sized slides of cells and gene micrographs, enhanced by musical and dance interpretations of her torment. In the end, her pregnancy and the discovery of her genetic destiny bring perspective to Magnusson's obsessive pursuit of mutations in her lab — which she leaves to her colleagues, still fiercely competing among themselves.

Heather Kent
Vancouver, BC

Lifeworks

Night thoughts

The Winnipeg Art Gallery takes on an evocative theme with *Nocturne: From Twilight Until Dawn*, an exhibition of 47 paintings, drawings and prints by Canadian and international artists on view until Sept. 30. The gallery's permanent collections of historical, contemporary and Inuit art are tapped to explore, as curator Mary Jo Hughes writes, the many metaphors of night: "night as death, night as fear, night as loneliness, night as peace, and night as the seat of our unconscious."

The canvas reproduced here, *The Errors of the Moon*, is by Manitoba artist Tom Lovatt, who describes the work as part of a series of paintings "related to the same body of images." The moonlit



Tom Lovatt, *The Errors of the Moon*, 1992. Oil on canvas, 5' × 10'. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Acquired with funds from the Volunteer Committee to the Winnipeg Art Gallery.