

Some serious

Aga-Boom's childlike artistry dispenses with

There are some among us who simply don't enjoy watching grownups clown around and make fools of both themselves and everyone around them, regardless of how talented those doing the clowning might be. And, frankly, *Aga-Boom*, isn't likely to make our comedically challenged brethren think otherwise.

As for the rest of us, we should head off, lickety-scoot and without delay, to the Bluma Appel Theatre to catch *Aga-Boom*, the latest in a string of theatrical clown shows to hit Toronto stages that have ranged from *Slava's Snow Show* to *The Blue Man Group*.

Presented by Show One

Productions, the Theatre of Physical Comedy's *Aga-Boom* opened Tuesday and runs only through Saturday at the Front Street Theatre.

Created and directed by Dimitri Bogatirev, who made his name clowning around with *Cirque Du Soleil* in shows such as *Alegria* and *O*, *Aga-Boom* takes its name from the show's principal characters — Aga, played by Bogatirev, and Boom, played by his sidekick (and in a more adult guise, also his wife), Iryna Ivanytska.

Title notwithstanding, it is left to Ivanytska's Boom to open the show, a task she accomplishes with deceptive ease, using little more than a

broom, a pile of paper, a bit of manufactured smoke and the obligatory winsome clown face to capture her audience and launch them on the trail to adventure.

And though it may take a while for audiences to realize it, this is not a big bold adventure of discovery, but rather a more constrained trip of rediscovery. Bogatirev and Ivanytska and their cohorts demonstrate once again the delight and power of keeping things simple, eschewing the sleight-of-hand silliness and the manufactured excess that pass too often as clowning today. Instead they embrace the rigours of everyday life, milking every single one of them to extract the last possible laugh.

The true test of a clown, it seems, is not in discovering new stories to make an audi-

clowning here

the old seltzer-down-your-pants style of goofiness

ence laugh, but rather in sorting through the old and familiar aspects of our lives and making us look at them in such a way as to make us laugh. In this, the *Aga-Boom* team is masterful indeed.

Joined by Valery Slemzin and by little Olya Slemzin, they conspire to make us look at the world around us through the eyes of a child. Their success can be measured at every turn by the shrieks of laughter their antics elicit from the younger members of their audience — shrieks, it might be added, that are almost drowned out by those from the adults as they move further and further into the

depths of the 90-minute show.

From the almost fatal attraction to be found in a button that bears a cautionary "Do Not Touch" sign, through a silly send-up of movie making (that on Tuesday night saw one of Toronto's finest actors drawn into the melee), through to buzzy little airplanes and the over-the-top free-for-all that ends the show with happy memories

of the aforementioned *Slava* and *The Blue Man Group*, *Aga-Boom* offers up simple delight that is — well — simply delightful.

★★★★

Aga-Boom

The Bluma Appel Theatre

Starring: Dimitri Bogatirev, Iryna Ivanytska, Valery Slemzin

Director: Dimitri Bogatirev

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STAGE

