



## Paper products

*Kids will love this clown show that uses reams of paper to generate laughter - without the paper cuts*

By Jon Kaplan

Clown shows aren't to everyone's taste, but I didn't see a single person -- adult or child -- who sat bored during Aga-Boom, a 70-minute show that's filling the Bluma Appel Theatre with zany antics, excited kids and lots and lots of paper.

The show's title, in fact, plays with the Russian word for paper (boomaga), and that inversion of the everyday is just what Aga-Boom is about: people juggle suitcases instead of carrying them, a character's arm stretches to 10 times its normal length, a bundle of rope becomes a babe in arms.

The show is all linked together with paper, from the first visual of a crinkled backdrop and a pile of thrown-out paper that won't go away, to the final free-for-all involving paper in various shapes and huge bouncing balls which... well, you have to be there, because the audience gets involved in a back-and-forth game with the performers that leaves everyone grinning from ear to ear.

The three central clowns, trained in the eastern European tradition, know their stuff -- everything from the slyly raised eyebrow to get an audience reaction to the big pratfalls rewarded with guffaws. There's the playful, straw-haired, rubber-faced Boom (Iryna Ivanytska), the towering and only initially menacing Dash (Valery Slemzin) and

Aga (company director Dimitri Bogatirev), a talented juggler who at times keeps so much going that you don't think about the skill necessary for him to keep objects around him airborne. And just watch the comic variations he rings on the simple attempt to fold his arms.

If you've seen Slava's Snow Show, which has played Toronto several times, you'll recognize variations on some of the bits, but they're no less entertaining here.

Aga-Boom is a nearly textless show, but it sure knows how to communicate to its audience, some of whom are pulled onstage to work with the performers. Happily, everyone's willing to take part.

What a treat to watch Soulpepper regular Oliver Dennis, one of this city's finest comic performers, brought onstage and thrust into a film sketch where he had to be taught by Aga how to "die" when shot by the glowering Dash.

It's a great holiday show for the family, but catch Aga-Boom before all the paper's swept away after Saturday's performance.