

WEEKEND DIARY WHO WILL BUY THIS BEAUTIFUL LADY

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BY MICHAEL POSNER

Loveryly little Canadian bidding war brewing for the smash hit of London's theatre season — the National Theatre's revival of *My Fair Lady*, directed by **Trevor Nunn**. Rights for the show are controlled by Mr. Theatre, Cameron Mackintosh (*Miss Saigon*, *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Oliver!*), who is moving it next month from the National to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, where it received its first British production in 1958 (and ran for more than six years). First week of ticket sales there: a staggering 4.6-million — we're talking pounds — about \$9.5-mill Canuck.

So here's the deal. Toronto impresario **David Mirvish** would *love* to have this show for the Pantages (soon to be renamed the Canon Theatre), circa fall, 2002. And Stratford's **Richard Monette** would *love* to have it for the festival's 50th-anniversary jubilee next sea-

son, perhaps with **Christopher Plummer**, a Stratford original, in the Henry Higgins role. In recent years, Stratford has scored success staging musicals no one else would touch — *Camelot*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Sound of Music*. But now, serious dollars are at stake. So is Mackintosh sentimental enough to buy the 50th-anniversary schmaltz, and license the *Lady* to Monette? It'll take more than a Little Bit O' Luck. Logic says it's Nunn's production that spins the big money and the Mirvish method would spin substantially more.

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Speaking of the soon-to-be-late **Pantages**, what emotions must have been pumping through the cardiac region of **Garth Drabinsky** when he heard that the theatre on which he lavished uncounted millions of restoration dollars and thousands of Garth-hours — the jewel in the crown of his now-defunct Livent empire — was to be renamed the Canon as of Sept. 1? His one-time adversary David Mirvish said this week that he was delighted to whizz the Pantages name, since it had been initially as-

sociated with low-brow vaudeville and later with the cinema. More generously, he also said Drabinsky's achievement in refurbishing the theatre in 1989 would "never be taken away from him." But my hunch is Garth won't mind the name change at all. Upset to lose the theatre? Absolutely. That's old news. But the name? Hell, anyone can name the theatre (and the lobby and the coat racks). Just show us the money.

Say what you want about the evils of corporatizing public space, **Canon's** decision to pour several millions into arts sponsorship is smart for it and good for everyone else. What's in a name? It's the smell of the rose or, in this case, the quality of the production, that matters. And maybe other corporate citizens will get the message and step up to the much-neglected funding plate.

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Has **Al Waxman** become more popular in death than in life? There's an \$80,000 life-size bronze statue of the actor, who died in January after heart surgery, which a cadre of Al's friends wants to erect in Toronto's

Kensington Market district. (Al, of course, was *The King of Kensington*.) He won a posthumous Jewish Canadian Book Award for his memoir, *That's What I Am*. The Kensington Health Centre this year dedicated its annual golf tournament to his honour. The Toronto police, of all folks, have created the Al Waxman Award for excellence in forensic identification (okay, Al did play a cop on *Cagney & Lacey*, but really . . .) And the Ontario Media Development Corp. has renamed a fund for young filmmakers the Al Waxman Calling Card program. Incidentally, the first short film thus financed, *You Might Be the Youngest*, starts shooting in Toronto this week, starring Jonas Chernick (*Inertia*) and Valerie Buhagiar (the redhead in Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61*). Directed by Joshua Wilder, it's billed as a stream-of-consciousness journey through the mind of a man en route to a funeral — not Al Waxman's.

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Rock legend **Lou Adler**, producer of the Mamas and the Papas, Carole King, Jan and Dean and many more, breezed into Toronto this



JOHN HIRYNIUK/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Joni Mitchell and Lou Adler, hanging out in Toronto's Yorkville.

week to see *Dream a Little Dream*, former Papa Denny Doherty's musical tribute show to the band. (Some of Lou's many millions are backing the show). By chance, he bumped into old pal **Joni Mitchell** in Yorkville (see photo). She was in town discussing the forthcoming

homage to her at Harbourfront's Festival of Creative Genius (Oct. 19). The two met while Adler was recording King's *Tapestry* album and he corralled Mitchell into singing backup on some tracks.

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