

Joe Spano

UNVEILS “BUCKY” MYSTERY

By Julio Martinez

ACTOR JOE SPANO has developed quite a TVQ over the last few decades, having enjoyed being a series regular or recurring status on such landmark dramas as *Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue* and the current *NCIS*. “I am grateful for the work and the money but I am first and foremost a stage actor,” Spano affirms.

in the late 1800s. While we were working on that, he said he had this Buckminster Fuller play. I told him I’d love to read it. I did read it and here we are.”

As staged by Jacobs and performed by Spano, the production aims to capture the larger-than-life persona of the architect who invented the geodesic dome. In his lifetime, he was both libeled as a crank and praised as the Leonardo da Vinci of the 20th century. Eschewing a linear biographical survey of Fuller’s life and work, Spano will serve as ringmaster to a kaleidoscope of testimony, lecture, poetry, physical comedy and audio-visual projections.

Spano chuckles when asked how familiar he was with Buckminster Fuller before becoming involved with this play. “I have never referred to this work by its full title. It’s always been ‘The Bucky Show’ to me. I never studied him in depth but it seems I have been aware of him most of my life. Of course, I read about him in college. He was a very important figure at Berkeley during the ‘60s and thereafter. Over the years, however, I think my knowledge of him has been limited to the media high points of his life.”

There were enough high points to warrant a stage work on his life. Richard Buckminster Fuller (July 12, 1895-July 1, 1983) was an American visionary concerned with the question, “Does humanity have a chance to survive lastingly and successfully on planet Earth, and if so, how?” This question led to perusing his life as a designer, architect, poet, author and inventor. He was the second President of Mensa.

Without ever obtaining an academic degree, Fuller authored more than 30 books, coining such terms as “spaceship earth,” ephemeralization and synergetics. He also worked on the development of numerous inventions, chiefly in the fields of design and architecture, the best known of which is the geodesic dome.

“He was quite a character,” says Spano. “He met opposition from the establishment in just about every field he entered. He was accused of being out of touch with reality or dismissed as being a hopeless utopian. Yet, his geodesic dome design has been proven to be the most efficient, structurally sound building concept in the use of space and materials ever conceived.”

For Spano, one of the happiest aspects of staging this “Bucky” chronicle is his return to the Rubicon Theatre, where he most recently co-starred in the critically acclaimed revival of *Waiting for Godot*.

(continued on next page)



MARTIN S. FUENTES

Joe Spano as
R. Buckminster Fuller

Indeed. Since graduating from UC Berkeley in the late ‘60s, the San Francisco-born classically trained actor has trod the boards in theatres nationwide. Currently, Spano is preparing to occupy the stage as the sole performer in the Rubicon Theatre presentation of *R. Buckminster Fuller: The History (and Mystery) of the Universe*, written and directed by D.W. Jacobs based on the life, work and writings of one of the 20th century’s most iconic personalities.

“I’ve known Doug Jacobs for a very long time,” says Spano, “since he was the Artistic Director of San Diego Rep although we never worked together then.” The two finally teamed up at the Z Space Studio in San Francisco. Spano recalls, “I worked on a play Doug had in development, an adaptation of a utopian novel, written

R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER: THE HISTORY (AND MYSTERY) OF THE UNIVERSE

Produced in association with
The Z Space Studio
Performs Jan. 17-Feb. 10

Brian McDonald

DRIVES BUS AT RUBICON

By Julio Martinez

ABOUT TO DIRECT *BUS STOP*, one of the American theatre's most well-known stage works at the Rubicon Theatre in Ventura, Brian McDonald casually comments, "I've never seen the play or the 1956 film starring Marilyn Monroe. I am concentrating on digesting the words, getting as familiar with playwright William Inge's characters as possible.

"It is a fascinating journey to travel through the mind of the playwright, formulating my own concepts about how to combine Inge's vision with mine. That fascination only builds as each aspect of the production comes together, leading to opening night. Of course, as soon as it opens I'm going to rush right out rent the movie."

McDonald may not be too familiar with the 1955 Tony Award-winning play but Rubicon Theatre audiences are sure familiar with him, especially if they have school-age children interested in live theatre. "For the last five years I have been very involved with its educational outreach programs," says McDonald.

In fact, as the Rubicon's Director of Education, McDonald has been the driving force behind the theatre's acting programs for high school/middle school students and the founder of The Jack Oakie Summer Musical Theatre Camp. "I love teaching but I certainly didn't come to the Rubicon with the idea of becoming involved in arts education. I am a performer and will always be drawn to be on stage."

McDonald certainly has the credits to prove it. A graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music, Dance and Theatre, he has appeared in over 60 plays including the national tours of *Miss Saigon* and *Forever Plaid*. He was honored with *LA Weekly's* 2002 Best Supporting Actor Award for his performance in the Circle X staging of Brecht's *Edward II*, the same year he staged *Forever Plaid* at the Rubicon. His most recent appearances there include *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Man of La Mancha*.

"The Rubicon has been an ideal theatrical home for me," McDonald affirms. "I am also an Associate Producer here and get to be involved in the whole process of producing, directing, teaching and performing. I am really enjoying the best of all worlds." ■



Director Brian McDonald

ZACK NEELEY

(SPANO continued from previous page)

"I love this theatre," says Spano. "I was introduced to the Rubicon by Linda Purl a few years back. I was in a theatre group with her and she had worked at the Rubicon quite a lot. They were doing a production of *Little Foxes*. They lost one of their cast members close to the opening and asked me if I could step in. At the time I couldn't do it but the contact had been established.

Later, I did a reading of an A.R. Gurney play and then a full production of Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*. It is definitely a happy place to work." ■

BUS STOP

Performs Feb. 21-March 16
Both productions
play Wed., 2 & 7 pm;
Thurs.-Fri., 8 pm; Sat., 2 & 8
pm; Sun., 2 pm
Tickets: \$29-\$52
Rubicon Theatre
1006 E. Main St., Ventura
805.667.2900 or
www.rubicontheatre.org