



THE MUSICIAN'S GAZETTE



No. 13

WALKING BOXES PRODUCTIONS

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE

Born in 1823 and dying in 1913, Alfred Russel Wallace lived a long and eventful life. Truly one of history's more colorful characters, he held an opinion on nearly every controversial topic and expressed an opinion about them in his writings. Many of his ideas were visionary and revolutionary, while others were perhaps a bit ludicrous and short-sighted. Still, if for nothing else, he deserves to be honored for discovering the Theory of Natural Selection, simultaneously and independently of Charles Darwin. Our production, *Wallace & the Dragon*, explores the man and some of the questions raised by and about him. Production notes may be found on pages 3, and 4.

VISIT WALKING BOXES ONLINE

To keep up with all the happenings at *Walking Boxes Productions*, log on to www.walkingboxes.com You can check there for upcoming shows, get on the email list, browse through the show & CD archives, listen to music samples, or even sign up for music lessons (given on a variety of instruments.)

UPCOMING SHOWS

Walking Boxes' radio drama troupe - The Erstwhilists - will be presenting an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story: *The Camel's Back* this October. This story, written in 1919, describes the swinging scene of St. Paul's Summit Avenue high-rollers in the 1910s. Come experience being in the audience of a live-off-the-air radio broadcast with sound-effect gadgets and live music. Look to page 7 for more info. Walking Boxes' artistic director, J Roth, has decided to take a sabbatical from producing his own shows, but he'll still be busy over the next few months with some other shows. Turn to the back page to find out more.

THANKS

Walking Boxes wishes to thank Papa Steve, Malia Burkhart, Paul Cameron, Owen Tonak, Kathleen Lindenberg & the Alexander Ramsey House, all our fine sponsors (please support them with your business), and all the performers involved with the show. Thanks also to all of you who have come out to support Walking Boxes and its collaborating artists over the past year.



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KOMODO DRAGONS

Komodo dragons are the largest living species of lizard, growing to an average length of 2-3 meters (approximately 6.5-10 feet). In the wild, large adults usually weigh around 70 kilograms (154 pounds). They are largely solitary, coming together only to breed and eat. They are capable of running rapidly in brief sprints up to 20 kilometers per hour (12.4 miles per hour). They are excellent swimmers and may dive up to 4.5 meters [15 feet]. They also can climb trees proficiently through use of their strong claws. To catch prey that is out of reach, they may stand on their hind legs and use their tail as a support. Because of their slow metabolism, large dragons can survive on as little as twelve meals a year. Occasionally they have been known to consume humans and human corpses, digging up bodies from shallow graves to do so. Young Komodo dragons spend much of their first few years in trees, where they are relatively safe from predators, including cannibalistic adults, who make juvenile dragons ten percent of their diet. Dragons take about three to five years to mature, and may live for up to fifty years.

Dragons were first documented by Europeans in 1910. Widespread notoriety came in 1912, when Peter Ouwens, the director of the Zoological Museum on Java, published a paper on the topic. In 1826, the Komodo dragon was the driving factor for an expedition to Komodo Island by W. Douglas Burden. Burden returned with twelve preserved specimens and two live dragons. This expedition reputedly provided the inspiration for the 1933 movie *King Kong*.

There are approximately 4000-5000 living Komodo dragons.

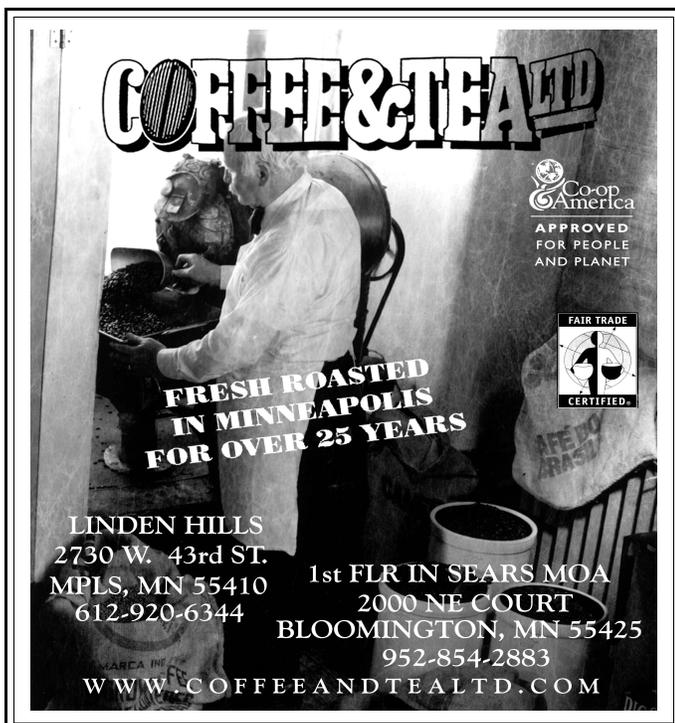
WALLACE & THE ORIGINS OF LANGUAGE

As noted in our play, Wallace published opinions and made observations on a wide variety of topics. One topic, not discussed in the show, was his views on the nature of vocal language. He believed language has an imitative and emotional origin and that the origin of vocal language lies in onomatopoeia. Some of his observations: 1) how curiously the tongue and palate seem to be pulled apart from each other while pronouncing the words "glue" and "sticky" 2) how the motion of breath coincides with the words: "in", "out", "up", "down", "elevate", "depress" 3) how the lips close and contract when saying "come" and open and protrude when saying "go" 4) how when we name "mouth" and "lips" we use labials; for "tooth" and "tongue", dentals; for the nose and things relating to it, nasal sounds.

WALLACE & THE POWERS THAT BE

At the turn of the 20th Century, Wallace wrote a book entitled: *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Failures*. Among his views outlined in that book were: 1) militarism is the curse of civilization 2) kings and kaisers, ministers and generals, nobles and capitalist millionaires are the "true vampires" of civilization always seeking the opportunity to suck the lifeblood out of the people 3) the struggle for wealth accompanied by the reckless destruction of nature was among the greatest crimes of the century.

Also noteworthy: Wallace advocated a treaty against the use of airplanes for the purpose of mass destruction despite assurances by military leaders that such a treaty was unnecessary.



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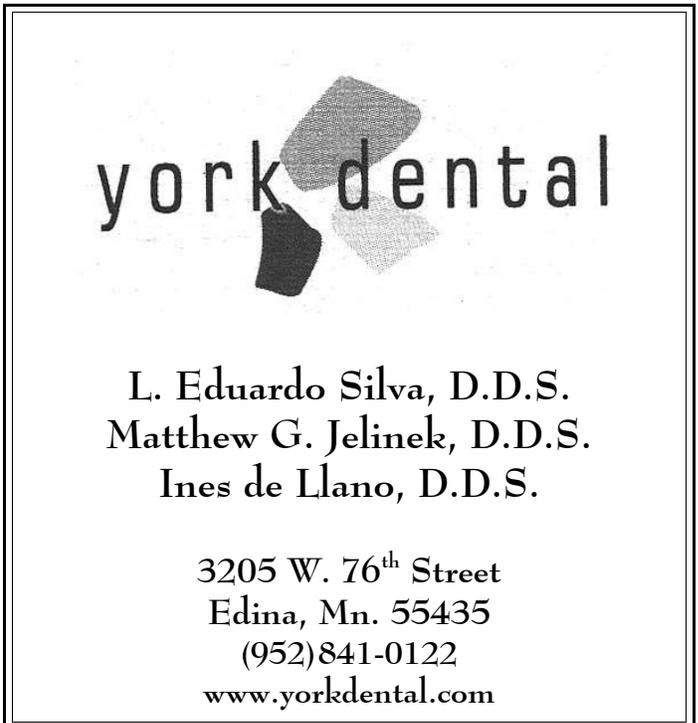
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PRODUCTION NOTES

Cast:

Jeffrey Nordin.....Wallace
David Otto Simanek.....Roberts
James Eckert.....Darwin
J Roth.....Bates
Alli-TigerDragon/Ghost

Original Music by Theatron:

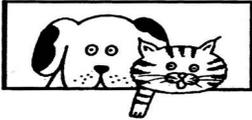
Sir Anthony.....Bass
J Roth.....Piano

Original Story - J Roth
Film Segments - Alex West
Stage Manager - Paul Cameron

FILM LOCATIONS

Standing in for the British Museum (where Wallace & Darwin first meet), is the U of M's Northrup Auditorium (and nearby library.) The discriminating naturalist would have quickly discerned that the jungles of Borneo appearing in the orangutan hunt were nothing of the kind; the forest along the Mississippi River was called upon to replicate those far-eastern jungles. The scene presenting the final meeting of Darwin and Wallace was shot at the Alexander Ramsey House (built in 1872). The scene in which Bates presents his conspiracy theory was also shot at the Ramsey House. That amazing mansion is open for tours: www.mnhs.org/places/sites/arh or call: 651-296-8760

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THEATRON

Sir Anthony & J Roth comprise the musical duo Theatron. Their soundtrack for *Wallace & the Dragon* was three years in the making. It all started with Sir Anthony's song entitled: *Belly-Dance of the Komodo Dragon*. Roth thought the song might work well with a song he'd been saving for a planned staging of *Where the Wild Things Are*. Perhaps it was the Wild Things' hero, Max, and his epic journey, that inspired the creation of this story about Alfred Russel Wallace and his epic journey; perhaps the Wild Things on their island became the Komodo Dragons on theirs.

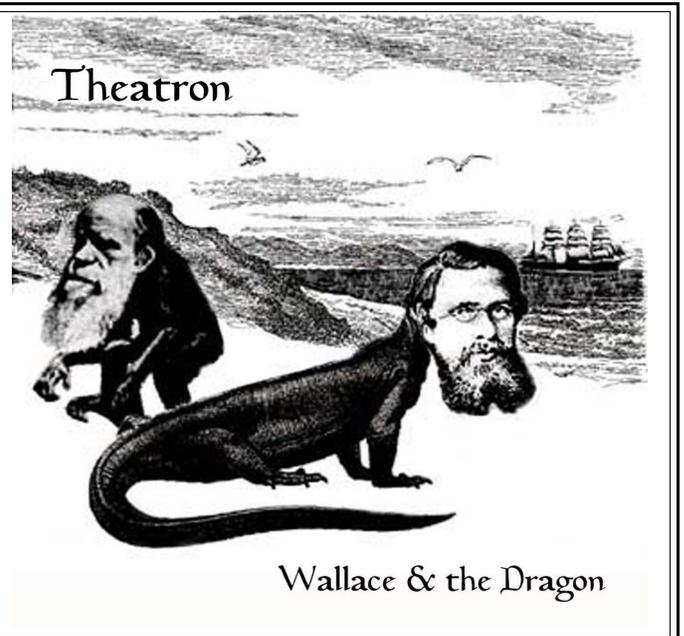
Both Roth and Sir Anthony have a keen interest in "sound-tracking" and have already begun dreaming up their next project together - a biographical sketch of Nikola Tesla, the enigmatic man who put the "AC" in AC/DC.

Sir Anthony has lead a fairly active musical life outside of Theatron and his bass guitar. Check out samples from his solo release at: cdbaby.com/cd/siranthony and anything else he's "up to" at: myspace.com/siranthonyworld

J Roth also is active outside of Theatron, you can listen to samples of some of his other work at: walkingboxes.com/discography.html

CD SOUNDTRACK FOR SALE

If you enjoyed the music of "Wallace & the Dragon", you can buy a limited-edition CD of the soundtrack. Produced by Walking Boxes' own independent studio, the CD contains all the music from the stage show. Other discs featuring the solo work of J Roth and of Sir Anthony are also on sale at a special Fringe discounted price. Look for a sales table in the lobby after the show, ask one of the musicians, or contact info@walkingboxes.com (CD Cover:)



Wallace & the Dragon

MEET THE CAST & CREW

Jeffry Nordin (Alfred Russel Wallace)

This is Jeffry's sixth performance with *Walking Boxes (The Musicker's Lantern, Donovan's Brain, A Christmas Carol, Sorry Wrong Number, Caligari)*. Other past performances include: Summer Set Theatre in Austin, Minnesota; appearing with his father in "My Fair Lady" and "Cabaret"; and performing at The Kennedy Center for the American College Theatre Festival. Jeff has appeared at Theatre in the Round, St. Paul Actors Theatre and The Old Log. Combining performance with a love of history, Jeff has worked with The Science Museum of Minnesota, Compass St. Paul History Theatre, The Sibley and Faribault House Museums, The James J. Hill House, and the Alexander Ramsey House. Jeff is currently appearing for Historic Murphy's Landing with *Professor Wiley's Magnificent Moving Panorama* and Historic Fort Snelling performing early American music and as Col. Josiah Snelling.

David Simanek (Edwin Roberts)

This is David's third performance with *Walking Boxes (Donovan's Brain, Caligari)*. Other theatre productions David's been involved with include Bruce Abas' Seminal Work with the Ebullient Theatre Company, The Queen of Block E, by Heidi Arneson (both part of the Fringe), Cromulent Theatre Company's Cyrano De Bergerac, by Edmond Rostand, Ronin Theatre's production of Othello, by William Shakespeare and Starting Gate Productions of A View from the Bridge, by Arthur Miller. David wishes the best to all of this year's Fringe productions.

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James Eckert (Charles Darwin)

This is Jim's second performance with *Walking Boxes (A Christmas Carol)*. Jim has been performing since he was a teenager. His older brother introduced him to theater at the Old Log in Excelsior. He has acted with several Twin City companies and directed at others. His most recent focus is recreating old radio dramas utilizing some of the quiet elements of theater. The U of M introduced him to broadcasting (perhaps you've seen or heard him as J. B. Eckert) an occupation that still keeps him busy in front of and behind the microphones and cameras.

Alli-Tiger (Dancing Dragon/Ghost)

This is Alli-Tiger's first appearance in one of *Walking Boxes'* main productions. Alli-Tiger, the daughter of the show's co-creator Sir Anthony, has loved to act for as long as she can remember. Her credits include: school & community theater, several of Sir Anthony's short films (keep an eye on YouTube, in the months to come), as well as Theatron's very first trial run of *Wallace & the Dragon* last December as part of the *Flyhard Jenkins Show*.

Sir Anthony (bass) & J Roth (piano)

Look to Page 3, under their group name *Theatron*, to find out more about the musicians and their projects.

Paul Cameron (Stage Manager)

This is Paul's fifth show with *Walking Boxes (Musicker's Tribunal, Musicker's Lantern, Donovan's Brain, Caligari)*, as well as numerous appearances on the *Flyhard Jenkins Show*. This is the first show in which Paul finds himself helping from the tech booth; usually he's on-stage contributing music and/or sound effects.

Alex West (Film-maker)

This is the third *Walking Boxes* show Alex has been involved with (*Caligari, Sorry Wrong Number*). In those past shows his acting skills were employed, but for this show his main passion, film-making, was utilized. Alex is currently working on the final edit of his short film *Speed Graphic*, a historical piece set in 1930s St. Paul. The film features many of the same cast members from *Wallace & the Dragon*. Watch for screenings this fall.

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TRUTH OR FICTION?

The majority of this production is based on the actual events of Alfred Russel Wallace's life. A large percentage of the lines Wallace speaks are direct quotations from his writings. The meetings with Darwin are fictitious, but based on actual meetings that did take place between the men. Their first meeting was at the British Museum; they did meet upon occasion at Darwin's home. Darwin's sentiments in the scene of his final meeting with Wallace are based on letters he'd written and on the reflections of one of his biographers.

The character of Bates (who presents the conspiracy theory that Darwin stole Wallace's ideas) is based on a real person; there was a Bates who did receive a letter from Wallace two weeks prior to the famous letter sent to Darwin (outlining Wallace's theory of natural selection.) There is no record of Bates himself ever challenging Wallace to believe Darwin had plagiarized his ideas, but a number of scholars have put forth that theory (see bibliography to the right) and someone must have at least encouraged Wallace to believe the idea was his first, because he wrote avidly in defense of Darwin's priority.

Wallace did actually have his revelation about evolution in the midst of a malarial fit, but he describes no specific hallucinations in his writings, thus his interaction with the Komodo dragons are a purely fictional element of our tale (though he did sail right past Komodo Island, see Page 6).

The orangutan hunt is an agglomeration of several separate hunting expeditions Wallace recounts in his writings.

The character of Edwin Roberts and his newspaper are fictitious.

CHARLES DARWIN'S GHOST

Traveling to Hastings, Minnesota, one could visit the fascinating historical site where once lived William Gates Le Duc and his family. Like Wallace, Le Duc was swept up in the Spiritualism movement. In 1906, Le Duc published a small text recounting (among other things) his encounters during seances with the spirit of Charles Darwin. This seems particularly intriguing because Darwin had been an adamant opponent of Spiritualism; one would think his spirit would also be opposed to having anything to do with seances.

Le Duc's accounts read at times like a science fiction novel as the spirit of Darwin describes visits to other planets and civilizations. In one account Darwin describes: "...south of the star mapped as Beta Conturina...there be one hundred and thirty inhabited worlds, all in communication with each other..."

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Shermer, Michael. *In Darwin's Shadow; The Life and Science of Alfred Russel Wallace.* (2002). New York: Oxford University Press.
Slotten, Ross A. *The Heretic in Darwin's Court; The Life of Alfred Russel Wallace.* (2004). New York: Columbia University Press.
Wallace, Alfred Russel. *The Malay Archipelago; The Land of the Orangutan and the Bird of Paradise; A Narrative of Travel with Studies of Man and Nature.* (1869). London: Macmillan and Company.

Also consulted were the websites of:
wikipedia.org (regarding Wallace, Darwin, Evolution, Komodo dragons, Malay Archipelago)
wku.edu/~smithch/index1.htm "The Alfred Russel Wallace Page"

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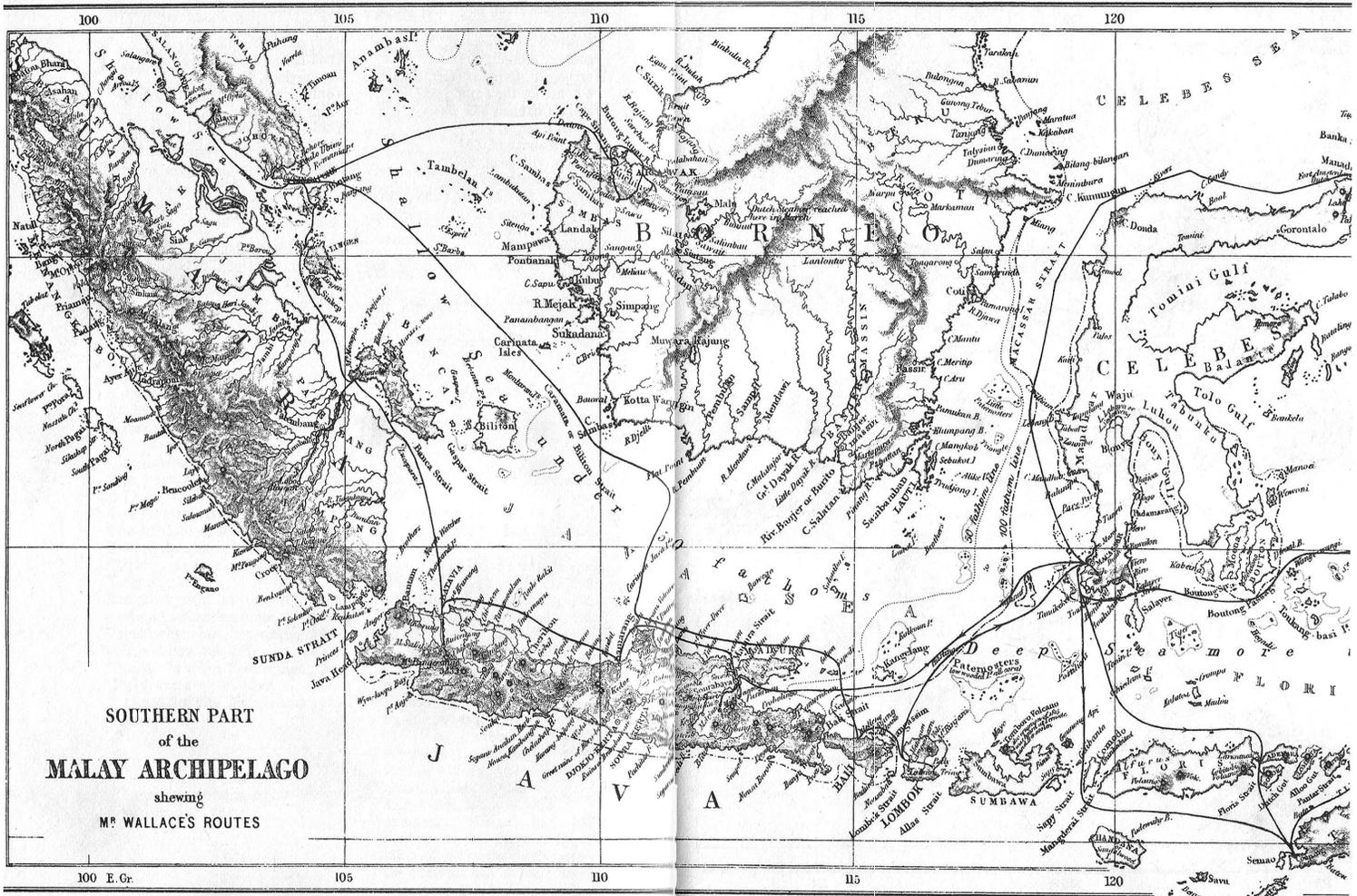
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The map below accompanied Wallace's book: *The Malay Archipelago* (published in 1869, seven years after his return to England). It shows some of Wallace's route through the Archipelago. It can be seen in the lower right (at about 119 degrees longitude) that he sailed right past the isle of Comodo seemingly unaware that the dragons were there. It would be another fifty years before news of the Komodo dragons reached Europe.



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WALLACE'S VIEW ON OUR ORIGINS

Creationism vs. Evolution. The debate is still heated after 150 years. It's not a topic to be brought up lightly over dinner amidst those of differing opinions. It's a topic, which advocates of either side tend to get quite passionate about, quickly lock horns over, and disregard each others' views as those of "ignorance" or "mis-guidance". This debate is explored in our play through Wallace's unique view on our origins. Wallace advocated for Evolution, but as he aged and was swept up in the Spiritualist movement, he grew to believe that natural selection couldn't explain everything and developed an unique view on our origins. He outlined his emerging views in his book entitled *Darwinism*.

Wallace maintained that natural selection could not account for mathematical, artistic, or musical genius, nor metaphysical musings, and wit and humor; and that something in "the unseen universe of Spirit" had interceded at least three times in history: 1. The creation of life from inorganic matter. 2. The introduction of consciousness in higher animals. 3. The generation of the above-mentioned faculties in humankind.

These views greatly disturbed Darwin in his lifetime, who argued that spiritual appeals were not necessary and that "sexual selection" could explain apparently non-adaptive phenomena.

Could Wallace be considered one of the earliest advocates of what today is called "Intelligent Design"? Wallace discusses this in the production (the term was used in the mid-1800s, but the Intelligent Design movement didn't actually begin until the 1980s.) It seems unlikely he would have mingled well with today's strongest proponents of the "Intelligent Design" theory, most of whom ascribe the designing to the Christian God. Wallace would not have been so specific.

ERSTWHILISTS' NEWEST RADIO DRAMA

The Erstwhilists who previously brought you the classic *Suspense* radio dramas *Donovan's Brain* and *Sorry, Wrong Number* as well as the silent film *Caligari* with live dialogue, will be performing in a new and different kind of radio drama. They will be presenting an adaptation of Minnesota's own F. Scott Fitzgerald's short: *The Camel's Back* this fall.

Written in 1920, this was the third story of Fitzgerald's published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Fitzgerald was home for Christmas break in 1919 and heard about a wild night at the Hill's (family of railroad tycoon James J. Hill) annual Christmas costume party. Those events inspired the tale.

Like all of the Erstwhilists' radio drama productions, this show will give the audience a rare opportunity to view the myriad of sound effects gadgets at work alongside the vocal artists. A live music accompaniment will also be part of this show.

The first run will be taking place at the Sibley House Historic Site. Go to: www.events.mnhs.org/calendar/index.cfm?VenueID=18&bhcp=1 or call 651-452-1596 for tickets/info.

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MALIA BURKHART'S "SURVIVAL PAGES"

Malia Burkhardt, who designed the black dragon mask for our production, is busy creating her own show which will be appearing at Intermedia Arts on November 8-10. The show, titled "The Survival Pages" is part of the 2007 Naked Stages Program through the Jerome Foundation and Intermedia Arts. Through theater, Butoh dance, puppetry, and video collage, Malia explores the complex and shifting relationship between humans and nature.

Malia writes: "Are humans and nature separate? One theme touched upon in *Wallace and the Dragon*, is that the way we view 'creation' is fundamental to how we interact within it. Are humans really the pinnacle of evolution, therefore exempt to laws that seem to govern the rest of nature? Do we humans interpret, "Survival of the Fittest," as granting us the license to do whatever we wish to the planet? It seems we have set ourselves apart and above all other life forms. And yet our hubris is rapidly backfiring upon us. Will we be able to shift our ways of relating to nature in time to avert environmental crisis?"

J Roth will be contributing to the musical soundtrack of Malia's production.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE: HARMONY THEATRE

J Roth will be busy over the next few months working with Harmony Theatre and their upcoming productions. Harmony's director, Elena Khalitov, saw J in his Fringe show last year (*The Musicker's Balalaika* in which J played a Russian-Gypsy during WWII) and she invited him to co-direct her troupe.

Harmony Theatre is a group of first and second generation immigrants from the former Soviet Union who share in common the Russian language and a love for theater. The troupe is primarily made up of children, but adults do participate in many of the shows. The shows bounce from Russian to English so audiences can follow along in either language. Their upcoming season offers three interesting productions.

Around New Year's Eve will be "Baba Yaga Strikes Back" – a show featuring traditional Russian folk characters (Grandfather Frost, the Snow Maiden and Baba Yaga) with an untraditional twist. Last year's Yolka show was a big hit in the Russian-speaking community of the Twin Cities.

On February 10th in St. Louis Park, Harmony will be presenting a play based on legendary Polish/Jewish doctor, educator, and writer, Janusz Korczak, and his orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto during World War II.

Next May at the Center for Independent Artists, Harmony will present: "Skazki: Folktales from the Former Soviet Union", a show which will highlight the diverse cultural richness of those peoples Americans usually just think of as "Russians".

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