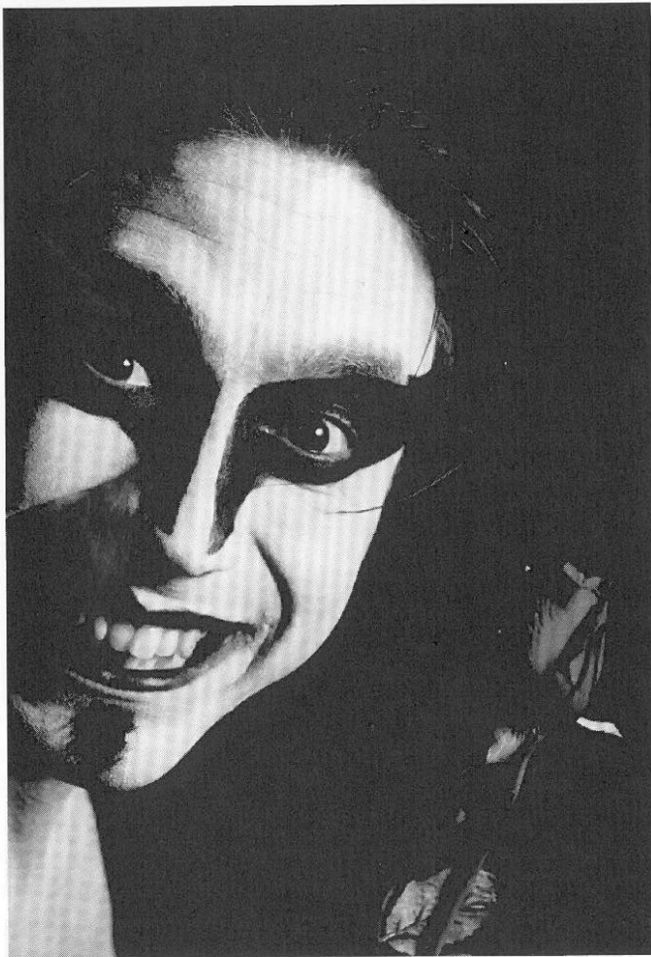


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## canadian theatre review

One show that was impatiently awaited by fans of Tom Waits was *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*. Produced by November Theatre of Edmonton and directed by Ron Jenkins, the show lived up to the company's own billing as "committed to producing challenging works in a heightened performance style." Created by Tom Waits, William S. Burroughs and Robert Wilson in 1990, the English version was premiered by the November Theatre at the Edmonton Fringe in 1998. With a three-piece band on one side of the stage, the Reid Theatre appears almost stark in design. But when the exhilarating six cast members belt out the first musical number, you quickly realize that this production is unique. Billed as "part German cabaret, part American carnival," *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets* is characterized by extraordinary music, effortlessly performed by six very talented actors/singers/dancers/gymnasts. The result is a dynamic evening's entertainment.



*Black Rider 20*; Michael Scholar  
Photo By Ian Jackson

The story is simple. Young love is thwarted by lack of parental approval. However, magic bullets in the hands of the former non-hunter mean parental approval, and the wedding date is announced. Kevin Corey, the young lover, is compelling and a delight to listen to and watch. Rachael Johnston, who plays the young lover, among other roles, is particularly enchanting as she prepares for the wedding. At the heart of the production is Michael Scholar, Jr., who plays the mysterious Peg Leg, who has the magic bullets. His whole being seems to radiate evil. Aply supporting these three actors are Clinton Carew, George Szilagyi and Michele Brown. The two men take on multiple roles with aplomb, while Brown creates an arresting Wife and Mother. At one point, the cast are joined by one of the musicians, Corinne Kessel, who takes on the brief role as messenger with flair. *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*, as staged and performed by the November Theatre, clearly deserved its opening night's enthusiastic standing ovation.

Denyse Lynde

*The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets* is a production that is both a musical and a play. It is a story of young love that is thwarted by lack of parental approval. However, magic bullets in the hands of the former non-hunter mean parental approval, and the wedding date is announced. Kevin Corey, the young lover, is compelling and a delight to listen to and watch. Rachael Johnston, who plays the young lover, among other roles, is particularly enchanting as she prepares for the wedding. At the heart of the production is Michael Scholar, Jr., who plays the mysterious Peg Leg, who has the magic bullets. His whole being seems to radiate evil. Aply supporting these three actors are Clinton Carew, George Szilagyi and Michele Brown. The two men take on multiple roles with aplomb, while Brown creates an arresting Wife and Mother. At one point, the cast are joined by one of the musicians, Corinne Kessel, who takes on the brief role as messenger with flair. *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets*, as staged and performed by the November Theatre, clearly deserved its opening night's enthusiastic standing ovation.

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