



Bill Celentano and Daniel A. Stein rehearse *Clown Show for Bruno*, one of two new plays by Murray Mednick that will debut at Art Share L.A. this week. The Mednick festival continues through

Art Share Presents Three Works by Influential Playwright Murray Mednick

organization Art Share L.A. made a splash in the downtown Los Angeles theater scene last summer with *A Thousand Words*. The production of nine works was based on works by nine visual artists, ranging from paintings to sculpture to even an urn.

Next, the Arts District-based organization is set to undergo a change to an unlikely venue again, as it partners with Art Share to present a play by a playwright it has never claimed before. Audiences will be as surprised as the writer, who last week had never seen one of the pieces in its entirety.

The production, which continues through April 19, is called *New Works by Murray Mednick*. It includes two new stage plays, *Destruction of the Fourth World* and *Clown Show for Bruno*, and a new version of one of Mednick's previously produced works, *Girl on a Bed*.

As a playwright, Art Share's resident theater company plans for the Mednick fest to be the first of annual tributes to playwrights associated with the city of Padua.

Mednick founded Padua in 1978 and served as its artistic director for years. For a time, the organization was a major force in the local theater scene, producing works by playwrights including Sam Shepard, Caryl Chesson, and John Stepping.

Mednick's work has garnered two Rockefeller Foundation grants, a Guggenheim fellowship and several other accolades. Though he no longer runs the organization, his operations for the company, Padua still exist and are in good work.

Mednick and Padua are both major forces in the Los Angeles theater scene, and they're a major part of its history. "Mednick's Padua Hills Playwrights Festival was held every summer in the foothills above Hollywood, drew critics and audiences from across the country from 1978 to 1995. The festival was a model of new theater that featured a kind of poeticism, creativity and artistic rigor that offered a direct challenge to traditional theater and the plays they engendered."

and 30 residential lofts for low-income artists.

"We wanted an interim place to begin to establish the kind of work we want to do," said Padua Artistic Director Guy Zimmerman. "So we talked to Art Share and they were a natural partner for us, and we formed a partnership where we would be the resident theater company."

Destruction and Invention

Destruction of the Fourth World, the first of the new works to take the Art Share stage, debuts this Thursday. It is the most challenging of the pieces to mount.

The play is written in a style close to verse, with no stage directions or costume specifications. The surreal story revolves around a Native American mythological trickster known as Coyote and his accomplice, a 13-year-old boy from a dysfunctional Jewish family, as they prepare for the end of the world.

"That play began as an exercise, really," said Mednick.

The production, Schultz noted, is a homecoming of sorts to the Zoo District. The company was born 12 years ago in a loft and then moved to Art Share, where it produced several shows before shifting to Hollywood about nine years ago.

Early last week, Mednick had not yet seen Zoo District's version of *Destruction* in its entirety, but he caught a glimpse when he accidentally walked in on a rehearsal.

"It's not what I would do," he said of the company's production, "but it's interesting."

Stage and Screen

Clown Show for Bruno, directed by Zimmerman, debuts at Art Share this Friday. The play premiered last year at the Zoo District, and the same production will also appear at Art Share.

The play is Mednick's tribute to Polish writer and artist Bruno Schulz, who was murdered in 1941 in an act of revenge by a

Nazi officer who had protected, or "owned,"

Mednick. "He died a very unusual death," said Mednick. "When I wrote it, I was having a tremendous amount of empathy toward him. It's like I was writing with his voice, in a way. There are several levels to it, but it's basically a biographical homage to Bruno Schulz."

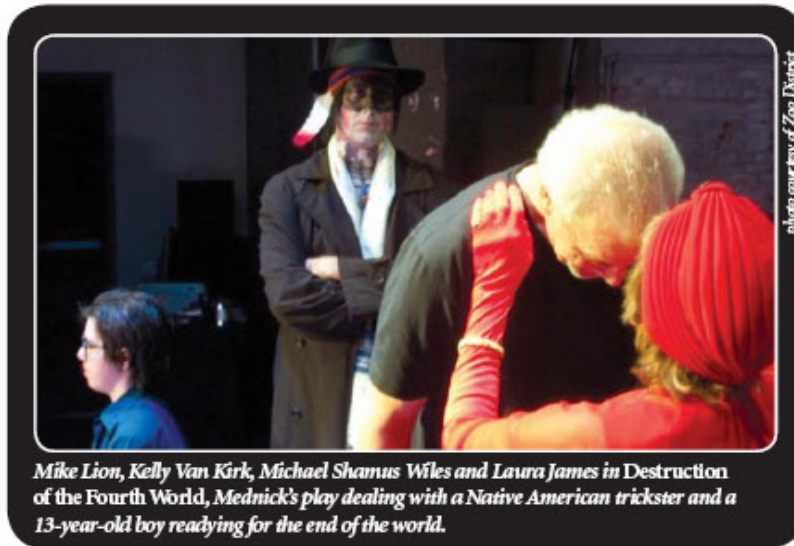
Clown Show and *Destruction*, Mednick said, deal with similar themes of Jewish life and memory.

The final piece of the festival is a film adaptation of Mednick's play *Girl on a Bed*, about a high school girl involved with pornography and drugs. The film, also directed by Zimmerman, will open at Art Share at 10 p.m. on Saturday.

"It was an experiment," said Mednick. "If you're going to see a movie, it's not quite a movie. If you're going to see a play it's not quite a play."

The playwright is looking forward to seeing his works come alive as much as anyone who will be in the audience. He said Art Share provides the ideal venue for the plays.

"I like the space," he said. "It's just the right size and the right perspective; the actors are not too far away or too close. The space is perfect for those plays."



Mike Lion, Kelly Van Kirk, Michael Shamus Wiles and Laura James in *Destruction of the Fourth World*, Mednick's play dealing with a Native American trickster and a 13-year-old boy readying for the end of the world.

"There were no characters. I was just writing voices and trying to keep it one line at a time, like metrical poetry, and it just blossomed and bloomed into this whole play."

The nonprofit theater ensemble Zoo District, known