

# le journal de québec

## Le petit Woodhead et le grand Waldo

(DT) — Des États-Unis, le petit Woodhead et le grand Waldo font la paire au Festival d'été de Québec jusqu'à demain. La maladresse de l'un et le talent de l'autre donnent un numéro comique où la



Photo Léopold ROUSSEAU

jonglerie avec la bouche ou les mains retient l'attention du public, toujours nombreux, chaque soir, à la scène Desjardins.

LE QUOTIDIEN DE LA CAPITALE

# LE SOLEIL

QUÉBEC, LE JEUDI 11 JUILLET 1996



*Waldo & Woodhead : finalement, on ne sait plus trop qui est le faire-valoir de l'autre.*

LE GRAND VARIÉTÉ DES JARDINS

## Des oh!, des ah! et des rires gras

MICHELE LAFERRIÈRE  
*Le Soleil*

Le duo Waldo et Woodhead est complètement débile. Vaudeville et numéros d'adresse s'entremêlent dans la plus parfaite confusion. Le petit qui ressemble à Jerry Lewis a certainement reçu un baccalauréat en gaffes. Finalement, on ne sait plus trop qui est le faire-valoir de l'autre.

# OBSERVER

**A6** Saturday, February 19, 1994  
EVENING OBSERVER, Dunkirk-Fredonia, N.Y.

**A6** *Review*

## *Waldo-Woodhead Show a night of unforgettable, outrageous comedy*

Frantic, frenzied, frenetic, funny, fantastic- these are just a few words that describe the madcap Waldo & Woodhead Show now playing at Marvel Theatre on the Fredonia State campus.

Unless you have previously had the good fortune to have seen this duo perform their special magic, I wager you have never feasted on any act quite like this one. The performers are: Woodhead, billed as the "Boy-Man" a garish nerdy fellow who, it is claimed, was raised by beavers (he has buck teeth) so enjoys building dams, and Waldo, the "Man About Town", who plays the suave sophisticate of the team and is, in fact, a highly-skilled, world renowned juggler (when he isn't dropping things all over the stage).

With nary a pause for air, the act proceeds from amazing opening juggling feats by Waldo, interspersed with Woodhead's musical accompaniment (keyboard, clarinet, accordion, and guitar) dressed in assorted garish costumes in which color coordination and good taste find no refuge. The show is billed as vaudeville, but vaudeville was never quite like this. To borrow from Hunter Thompson, it's more like "gonzo" vaudeville, or what life in an insane asylum would be like, if it were fun.

The shows directed primarily at kids, who delight at the crazy sight gags and slapstick. But moms and dads are afforded ample opportunities for smiles and laughter. I was somewhat reminded of Fred Garbo (The inflatable Man), but Fred is a self-confessed perfectionist and, in contrast, Waldo & Woodhead dedicate their show to the proposition that imperfection is acceptable-and very funny. It was hard to tell which of their goof-ups were part of the show, or spontaneous (and unplanned) catastrophes; in any event, they were adept at turning each gaff into humorous situations that kept the mixed-age audience laughing and applauding throughout the evening. The duo quickly established and maintained a warm rapport with the audience, and included some hilarious audience-participation gags as part of the act.

For a night of unforgettable outrageous comedy, take the whole family to see the Waldo & Woodhead Show, playing for two more nights at the Marvel Theatre in Rockefeller Arts Center, Fredonia State. Tickets must be purchased in advance (\$18.00 for adults \$12.00 for kids) and are available from the central Box Office in the Campus Center (673-3501) **Jack Berkley, Fredonia State**

# The Burlington Free Press

Monday, July 19, 1999 •••☆

172nd Year Serving Vermont

## Charlotte actor lives for laughs

### Woody Keppel entertains Vt. as Woodhead

By Abbey Duke  
Free Press Staff Writer

CHARLOTTE — As Woodhead, the bumbling character he plays, Woody Keppel feels like a 2-year-old.

Glitter is a favorite. So is a device that fits on his head and blows bubbles.

Then there are the prat-falls, the falls and foibles — all done with an expression of happy confusion.

"Everyone has a right to laugh, and I'll do whatever it takes," the 40-something Charlotte actor and musician said, smiling. "It is check-your-brain-at-the-door entertainment."

But there are a few rules: no politics, no put-downs and no cursing.

For 14 years, audiences have been checking their brains for the Waldo and Woodhead Show as Keppel and partner Paul "Waldo" Burke have traveled the world as modern-day vaudevillians.



ADAM PIKE RIESNER, Free Press

Woody Keppel of Charlotte performs for an audience recently during the "Barnstorming" tour at Shelburne Farms for the Waldo and Woodhead Show.

Now, they are performing in Vermont barns as part of a "Barnstorming" tour, whose sponsors include the Vermont Land Trust and Rural Vermont.

At a recent performance inside the cavernous Breeding Barn at Shelburne

Farms, Woodhead, the short, nerdy one, wore a tight suit with tails and a red bow tie. Waldo, the tall, slickly handsome one, looked like a leering circus ringmaster.

When Waldo juggled pingpong balls with his

### If you go

■ **BARN TOUR:** For a schedule and ticket information, visit [www.vt.org](http://www.vt.org) or call 223-5234.

■ **FOR SALE:** For information or to order a video or a compact disc, visit the Web site [www.mrwoodhead.com](http://www.mrwoodhead.com), or call (800) 366-5379.

mouth, 4-year-old Kiren Tilson of Burlington squealed. When Woodhead tried to scale a stepladder with a glass of milk balanced on his forehead, her mother, 41-year-old Ellen Tilson laughed out loud.

"I didn't know entertainment like this still existed," Ellen Tilson said afterward. "It's just silly ... not nasty or condescending."

### Rising star

One recent afternoon, Keppel sat in the back yard of the wooded hilltop home he shares with his wife, Andrea Grayson, in Charlotte.

"Why live anywhere

See LAUGHS, 5B

# The Free Press

## LAUGHS: Vaudevillian-style duo hit the barn circuit

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 when you have Vermont?" Keppel asked looking off his back porch through a break in the trees to the farms below.

He talked softly and without hurry. The only theatrical hint was that as he spoke his fingers splayed and his hands framed his face to emphasize points.

Like a handful of other performers in Vermont, Keppel manages an international career away from the limelight of New York and Los Angeles. That can mean missed opportunities, but it also opens doors, Keppel said.

He wrote and starred in "Woodhead Saves the Day," an award-winning children's video shot at Shelburne Farms. He has major roles in two feature films that will be released next year by Rutland filmmaker David Giancola's company, Edgewood Motion Picture and Video. By Christmas, he'll release a second compact disc of children's songs.

New York still calls. He keeps an apartment there, and he and Burke, who lives in Burlington, might be in an off-Broadway, vaudeville-type show next year.

Giancola thinks Keppel has the makings of a star.

"Realistically, it's only a matter of time that something is going to catch with him," he said. "I don't want to compare him to Pee Wee Herman, but..."

### Stealing the show

Keppel is part of the vaudeville tradition, when an actor could make a career out of one character.

"He's got a great sense of play about his work," Giancola said. "He can improvise and come up with gags and just steal the show."

Keppel did not always intend to perform. He studied voice and



Woody Keppel and Paul "Waldo" Burke perform the Waldo and Woodhead Show at Shelburne Farms recently. On a trip to New Orleans, Keppel saw Burke juggling on the street. "I had been looking for a partner. I needed a foil," Keppel said. "And Waldo is tall and flashy and handsome."

ADAM PIKE  
 RIESNER,  
*Free Press*

music in college and wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Meeting his sister's boyfriend, Bob Berky, a successful mime, changed his life.

"I couldn't believe he could make a living traveling around the world performing," Keppel said. "So I started going to a workshop in Maine for clowning and theater."

That led to the job at the Opera Company of Boston, where he played characters such as Major Domo in "Don Pasquale" and the Ring Master in "Faust."

Keppel is a small man, just 5 feet 5 inches tall and 125 pounds. Partly because of that, he thinks, he always has been cast as comedic relief, even from his early

days in Boston to recent tryouts for movies.

While studying in Maine, he created the Woodhead character, and on a trip to New Orleans he saw Burke juggling on the street.

"I had been looking for a partner. I needed a foil," Keppel said. "And Waldo is tall and flashy and handsome."

They started as street performers and graduated to stages. Over the years, they've performed on six continents, opened for Natalie Cole at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and performed at the Lincoln Center in New York City.

The duo's mixture of juggling and slapstick comedy is more popular in Europe and Japan than

in the United States. At times, they have spent more than half the year abroad.

Through the years, Keppel lived part time in Vermont. Recently, more and more, he has wanted to stay home.

"I got tired of having to fly to Europe to earn a paycheck," he said. "If I could, I'd like to sit on my porch with my guitar and write songs and make films."

After the show at Shelburne Farms, a handful of children came up front to talk to Woodhead, who stayed in character with his shoulders pulled back and his voice high-pitched.

"There is just something wonderful about getting people to laugh," he said.