

# TORONTO STAR

SUNNY PERIODS, HIGH 23C ★ THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2006 ★ thestar.com

## Animal tales a Fringe triumph

### ★ FRINGE FEST

#### Desperate Housepets

► Highly recommended

At Robert Gill Theatre, 214 College St. Next performance: Sunday at 6:30 p.m.



Cast members (clockwise from left) Adrian Proszowski, Leah Wahl, Robert Watson, and Alan Lee play multiple roles in *Desperate Housepets*.

If you want an example of the kind of thing that the Fringe does really well, then take yourself down to the Robert Gill Theatre to meet the exceptionally funny critters lurking in Robert Watson's inspired piece of insanity called *Desperate Housepets*.

This smart and sassy comedy is actually three playlets in one, each treating a different facet of human behaviour as seen through the eyes of our furry and finny friends. There are inter-species relationships, the search for meaning in life, and a life-and-death struggle.

The themes may sound serious but Watson and his director, Andrew Lamb, know how to work their concept for maximum hilarity.

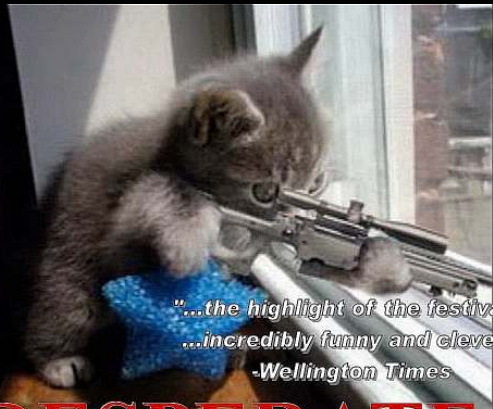
In the first section, a flighty rabbit, played in superb camp style by Watson, tries to rekindle his relationship with a body-building hamster. Alan Lee is a masterpiece of butch confusion as the wheel-obsessed rodent and the whole sequence has a deft comic touch.

In the second, three goldfish of unequal intelligence share an aquarium. Adrian Proszowski and Leah Wahl are content to gulp air and gobble fish food, but Watson plays a questing philosopher who scribbles Descartes on a blackboard and tries to instruct his hapless chums in the finer nuances of Kierkegaard. It's witty, intellectual stuff — sort of underwater Stoppard.

Finally, we're in the pound on "death row," where two dogs

and a cat will meet their maker unless someone adopts them. Lee is a wonderfully mangy Rover, Proszowski a befuddled Fido and Wahl a scene-stealing malevolent feline. It's hilarious, yet touching as well.

Linking all three episodes is delectably plummy narration by Rachel Marks, which sounds just like the kind you hear on *Desperate Housewives*. But in this season of TV repeats, you're far better off with *Desperate Housepets*. **Richard Ouzounian**



"...the highlight of the festival...  
...incredibly funny and clever"

-Wellington Times

## DESPERATE HOUSEPETS

By Robert Watson

Directed by Andrew Lamb

The Robert Gill Theatre  
214 College St. (@ St George ), 3rd Floor

Wednesday July 5th @ 8:45pm

Sunday July 9th @ 6:30pm

Monday July 10th @ 1:00pm

Tuesday July 11th @ 3:30pm

Wednesday July 12th @ 11:00pm

Saturday July 15th @ 8:45pm

Sunday July 16th @ 3:30pm

Tickets \$10  
No Latecomers



10% of box office proceeds donated to the World Society for the Protection of Animals