

PERFORMING ARTS

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Cinderella will sparkle

Ross Petty is at that point in his career where he's not shy to concede he'd rather be the producer in charge of bedlam than the performer delivering properly enunciated sweetness and light.

Ergo, Petty is again unleashing his favourite form of chaos on Toronto audiences this holiday season with *Cinderella: The Sparkling Family Musical!*, sparkling being a code word for behaviour that would get the rest of us institutionalized.

The effort is another in a long line of Petty-produced Christmas uproars for the family, featuring a classic children's tale, a good deal of improvisational fun and loud audience responses to the stage shenanigans. This time, Petty is directing as well.

The tradition being summoned here is that of the English pantomime, entirely the talkative opposite thing of what a silent great like Marcel Marceau does.

"When we go into rehearsal, I'm going to push the actors," threatens Petty, "and just go for the most ludicrous thing you could want.

"Later," he adds, "we'll tone it down. If need be."



Cinderella: The Sparkling Family Musical! at the Elgin Theatre from Dec. 7 to Jan. 2.

With Laura Bertram, Laird Mackintosh, Michael Lamport, Juan Chioran, William Vickers, Mary Lou Fallis and Ernie Coombs, the stage presentation at the Elgin Theatre (previews from Dec. 7, runs from Dec. 9 to Jan. 2) lacks only Petty himself, who has played villains in his holiday fests in recent years and essayed the Prince in *Cinderella* when last he mounted the show.

"That was in 1986, and even then I was pushing the envelope in that

role," says Petty, once again clearly having fun away from the seasons in which he plies his trade as an actor, frequently in television movies.

No fear. Bertram, star of Global TV's *Ready or Not* will bring teenage zing to the title role, while Coombs is transformed from Mr. Dressup to Baron Hardup and the allegedly sombre Chioran gets a rare turn as one of the mean step-sisters.

Chioran is as capable of ludicrousness as the next man, even when the next man is Petty, the producer avows. And even the handsome and upright Mackintosh was able to persuade Petty he possessed "that little element of lunacy I always look for."

Fun isn't always the long suit of producing, of course, and Petty concedes some tense moments en route to confirming this year's show. Originally sponsored by Eaton's, *Cinderella* has had instead to find its corporate white knight in Sears, which saved the day in modern storybook fashion.

Call (416) 872-5555 for more details.