

Teeth

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warning labels required by the Food and Drug Administration on all fluoride toothpastes and dental care products shipped as of April 7.

None of the caveats that began appearing on toothpaste tubes in 1991 so candidly broached the risks of ingesting too much fluoride.

General warnings on toothpaste products that display the American Dental Association seal of approval heretofore cautioned: "Don't Swallow — Use only a pea-sized amount for children under 6" and "Children under 6 should be supervised while brushing with any toothpaste to prevent swallowing."

The word "poison" wasn't used.

"When I receive the fluoride here, it has a skull-and-bones on it," Regina Miskewitz says of containers of the chemical at the Princeton, N.J., laboratories of Church & Dwight Co. Inc., maker of Arm & Hammer products, where she is director of research and development for oral and personal care.

"If a child was to take a big spoonful of this fluoride, I don't think he could swallow it," she says, "but if he did get it down, it is a poison and the child could die."

"If a child ingested a whole tube of toothpaste, he should be taken right to the emergency room and he would either get his stomach pumped or get some kind of antidote."

Three ingredients found in most toothpastes pose health risks if too much is ingested, according to Miskewitz.

Sorbitol, a liquid that keeps toothpaste from drying out, is a laxative that could cause diarrhea in children. Sodium lauryl sulfate, an ingredient that makes toothpaste foam, can also be a diarrhetic. But the fluoride poses the most danger if too much toothpaste is swallowed — particularly by younger children.

"The fluoride in toothpaste is considered a drug," Miskewitz says. "Even though it is an over-the-counter drug, we are altering the body when we brush our teeth with a fluoride toothpaste or tooth gel. . . . I'm sure our 800 number is going to get more calls as products with the new warnings show up on store shelves."

This summer, as toothpaste shipments with the new labeling replace older inventories, consumers will see nearly twice the warnings displayed on the back of tubes and cartons — the ADA's general warnings along with the new FDA-required statement that starts with: "Keep out of the reach of children under 6 years of age."

Research has shown that because they aren't yet in control of their swallowing reflex, children 4 to 6 years old typically swallow toothpaste when brushing. "That's why it's recommended that kids

get only a pea-size amount of toothpaste," says Miskewitz, "because most of that goes down their throats."

A 1995 study at the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry found that about half the children this age don't spit out or rinse out — they swallow the toothpaste instead. Making matters worse, they tend to use too much toothpaste on their own, especially when they use flavored children's toothpastes.

While the cavity-preventing effectiveness of fluoride has been demonstrated, too much fluoride not only can be dangerous, it can cause a condition known as fluorosis that discolors or spots developing teeth.

Research conducted by the School of Dental Medicine at the University of Connecticut Health Center concluded that brushing with more than a pea-size amount of toothpaste more than once daily contributed to most of the fluorosis cases it observed in young children. In areas where the drinking water contains fluoride, children who swallow even the pea-size amount of toothpaste are getting too much fluoride and are at risk for fluorosis.

"It is always kind of a trade-off," says Nancy Rosenzweig, vice president of corporate communication and market development at Tom's of Maine, which in 1975 introduced the first "natural" toothpaste on the market. The company recently began marketing a new line of natural toothpaste for children, which eliminates synthetic sweeteners but contains fluoride.

"We made a decision to have only fluoride toothpaste for children because that has been proven to be the overall benefit of toothpaste for children," Rosenzweig says. "We feel the benefit outweighs the negative."

As for natural fruit flavorings being more attractive to a child's taste buds than mint-flavored adult toothpastes, Rosenzweig says Tom's chose wholesome flavors — such as Silly Strawberry and Outrageous Orange — that would lure children to brushing.

"You have to get the education across to your kids that you don't suck the toothpaste down, just as you have to work with your kids to brush their teeth," she says. "The alternative is they don't brush."

Many in the toothpaste industry feel the new FDA warnings may be overstating the risks.

"Our position was that they went a little too far," says Clifford Whall, director of product evaluations on the ADA's Council on Scientific Affairs. "There wasn't really a need for the cautionary statement about the danger of poisoning if you've ingested too much."

While Whall concedes that poison control centers do receive reports of fluoride "poisonings" every year, he says the ADA isn't aware of any of those cases resulting in adverse effects. "It just hasn't proved to be that kind of a problem. . . . We didn't think you needed a label like that because it could unnecessarily scare consumers into not using toothpaste."

is down," Tannen says. "If you don't recognize these conversational rituals, they tend to be taken literally. Men will banter with each other in ritual opposition — playing devil's advocate to test each other's ideas — and women will take it literally, feeling attacked. Women will apologize and men will take it literally — thinking it shows a lack of confidence and is a reflection of her internal psychological state."

Ritual apologies can also backfire when one party uses them more frequently than others in a group. Tannen relates the story of a corporate executive who was recognized among her peers and her immediate boss as one of the most competent in her field. Indeed, they voted her best among them. But when her boss' boss ranked employees, the executive plummeted to the bottom.

"She issued a ritual apology seven times in one meeting," Tannen said. "It was not that she was using it that was so bad, but she was the only one who was doing it. The observation of the boss' boss was based on a much more limited view of this woman than that of her peers. He told me she was weak. On the other hand, if everyone is issuing ritual apologies, it does not have a negative effect."

With such potential for misunderstanding and career costs, should ritual apology be banned from conversation? That depends on who you are talking to, what the context is and your role in the conversation, Tannen says. Within marriages, such apologies can prevent standoffs and ease tension. Among women, a gal pal who never apologizes will be more disliked than a man who never apologizes. And in the workplace, a good rule might be, never have a higher "I'm sorry" quotient than those around you.

Kathleen Kelleher is a writer based in Santa Monica, Calif.



Lee Elmer Ernst (far right) plays the title role in the American Players Theatre production of "Cyrano de Bergerac." The beautiful Roxane (Deborah Staples) comforts the love-smitten Christian (Shawn Douglass).

Review

Lee Ernst brilliant as 'Cyrano'

By Kevin Lynch

The Capital Times

The nose knows. Moreover, "the nose might be the index of a great soul."

And yet the brilliance and passion embodied by the pithy protuberance of "Cyrano de Bergerac" would add up to only pathos if the nose didn't also signify a rapier wit.

That is Cyrano's counterattacking defense. That was also American Players Theatre's front line of defense against schmaltz overload in the opening Saturday of Edmond Rostand's famous entertainment, right down to the last, lost battle.

In this anti-romantic era, some audience members complained politely about the length of the first two-hour act. This was despite the fact that it ends with two winning scenes. Cyrano famously pitches lines of woo for witless pretty boy Christian de Neuvillette so that the young man can ensnare the magnificent Roxane. Secondly, somewhat oversold, was Cyrano distracting the conniving and lascivious Comte de Guiche (Jonathan Smoots) from discovering the newfound lovers in their first rapier.

Actually APT was smart in combining the first two acts. Otherwise this play would have run to midnight. For nearly 3 1/2 hours, you got enough florid poetry to fuel 10 modern romantic

"Cyrano de Bergerac"

By Edmond Rostand
American Players Theatre
in Spring Green
Last show is Oct. 5
Tickets run \$18-\$33
Call (608) 588-2361

comedies. And you got the touching — and maddening — story of a man overcoming a social handicap, but only to a limit.

Lee Ernst made this well worth while for anyone who loves acting in the grand tradition, which means a flair, a sense of self, that's undeniably Romantic.

But his Cyrano also flashed a tough, truly bitter edge.

It's there in the throaty roll of his words, emitted with an elegant softness that encases a sharp snap of sarcasm.

Ernst has one of the most fascinating vocal deliveries in local theater — perfect for this role. J.R. Sullivan's savvy direction made the most of APT's stable of talented comic actors and the countless splendid costumes that nicely defined the various class levels of 17th-century French society. The sword fight and battle scenes (Cyrano battles bullies, and lead an ace regiment in a war against the Spanish) crackle and dazzle.

Though not appreciably cut, the text (an Anthony Burgess transla-

tion) seemed tinkered with, especially the poetic style in the aforementioned distraction scene. Cyrano poses as a nut case who has dropped out of the sky. His routine to explain to De Guiche how he got heavenward is turned into verbal and physical slapstick, reducing Cyrano to playing a fool, which he is loath to do.

The scene was funny enough. Nevertheless, poetic wit and pride define Cyrano publicly. He co-opts a dumb insult by suggesting 10 better ones ("Is that a sign for a perfumery?" etc.)

In a sense, he has such a large nose so that he can hold it higher than anyone. Yes, he's a rip-snorting snob, for the sake of artistic purity, and as a defense mechanism, but also to maintain personal independence.

The ultimate question may be: Does this man keep hidden his authorship of a lifetime worth of amorous verse because of his need to be a free spirit or because, for all his military and social courage, he can't face possible rejection by his beloved?

The answer is both, of course, but the dilemma hangs him up forever, by his nose.

Roxane admits she loves her cousin Cyrano like a brother, and she seems too smart to not sense, deep down, that he's the "great soul," the font of all poetry in her social circle.

Alas, Cyrano knows obsessively that his prodigious prow precedes

even his most beguiling utterances.

As Neuvillette, Shawn Douglass aptly resembles Hugh Grant in looks and manner, though a bit more comic bumble would help.

As Roxane, Deborah Staples is exquisitely radiant and displays enough reflexive intelligence to justify her romantic potency.

Smoots does well with his sniveling bad guy specialty.

Also excellent were Mark Corkins as Cyrano's "voice-of-moderation" best friend Le Bret, and wiggly Robert Spencer, who bakes pastry and overpuffed doggerel.

Cyrano never listens to Le Bret, of course. But his downfall is random fate, not one of his many cultivated enemies.

This plot turn reveals the modern side of Rostand's Romanticism, as does his final suggestion that pride can reduce even the most soulful of lovers to a stylish loser.

Lee Ernst gave such ideas all the drama and weight they might carry. His brilliance only grew through breathlessly long effusions of venom and lyricism. His death scene so convinced as to reach right into the ominous black clouds overhead.

You feared for the man spread-eagled eloquently across the stage, felt his life ebbing. Ernst's greatest role at APT to date has been Hamlet, but this may be his greatest performance.

Sorry

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even though you are 100 percent sure you were clear. If he says, "I'm sorry I wasn't there," then blame has been shared. But if he says, "Yeah, you weren't clear, you would be mad. There are many instances where men do this — and women do it as well."

But women, generally, are more comfortable saying, "I will take part of the blame and you take part of the blame," Tannen adds.

Studies conducted on Americans and New Zealanders found that women are generally more likely to apologize than men. Women apologize more to other women and much less to men, according to the New Zealand study, while men apologized more to women and rarely to other men. Women are also more likely to apologize to a subordinate, while men are more likely to apologize to a boss.

Such gender differences are outgrowths of the differing social organization of boys and girls, according to research. Boys and men tend to organize themselves based on negotiation and status; girls and women, based on connection and relationships. Men tend to see apologizing as weakness, an admission of failure and loss of status. But, of course, both sexes are concerned with status.

"Both sexes are always trying to negotiate relative status and we have to juggle how close and distant we are and who is up and who

Sound Off!

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Review

APT's 'The Rivals' faithfully funny

By Michael Chase

Special to The Capital Times

Madison is indeed fortunate to have a world-class outdoor classical theater practically in its own back yard. I'm referring, of course, to American Players Theatre in Spring Green. I've had the opportunity to see a wide range of classical repertory theater productions in England, Canada and the United States, and Wisconsin's APT is right up there with the best of them.

A full moon greeted an enthusiastic audience on Friday evening to the opening of APT's 18th season of theater under the stars. Despite the high temperatures and humidity, the first-nighters were treated to a faithfully entertaining production of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy of manners, "The Rivals." Sheridan, who also wrote "The School for Scandal," penned "The Rivals" at the tender age of 24. In an attempt to spoof the sentimentality and romanticism of the 18th century, Sheridan went to great lengths to exploit the feelings and foibles of the day, not so much through actions but through words. Sheridan may have been a victim of his own spoofing. When the play opened at London's Covent Garden in 1775, critics hailed Sheridan's wit but universally agreed that "The Rivals" was

"The Rivals"

By Richard Sheridan
Americans Players Theatre
in Spring Green
Last show is Oct. 4
Tickets run \$18-\$33
Call (608) 588-2361

too verbose and too long. Today, 222 years later, I would have to agree.

At three hours in length, APT's faithfully grandiloquent production is a bit on the long side. Through no fault of the actors or director, "The Rivals" suffers from wordy confessions, long declamations, reports of conniving schemes and precious little action.

The plot is centered around Capt. Jack Absolute, a potentially rich lad, who disguises himself as a lowly ensign in order to amuse and woo the heart of the breathlessly romantic Lydia Languish. Intermingled with the main story are numerous love triangles, interfering relatives, plans for revenge and attempts at restoration of honor.

APT's artistic director David Frank has staged "The Rivals" with fluid pacing and an obvious respect for and understanding of Sheridan's eloquent dialogue. As usual, the APT actors are all gifted with precise diction, flawless timing and powerful vocal projection.

Some of the show's scenes, particularly those of the young lovers, are played a bit too heavy handedly and could benefit from a lighter touch. The inclusion of whimsical incidental music might also add some frivolity to the proceedings.

Andrew DeRyke, as Jack, and Deborah Staples, as Lydia, have the right feel for their amusingly self-centered characters. However, I felt that the romantic intrigue between fretful lovers Faulkland and Julia, played by Russell Edge and Jennifer Jordan Campbell, was sometimes more dramatically intense than necessary.

For "The Rivals," Sheridan created one of the most memorable eccentrics ever written for the stage. Mrs. Malaprop, whose name brought the word "malapropism" into existence, tickles everyone's funny bone with her ridiculous misuse of like sounding words.

The heavenly Sarah Day plays the outrageous character to perfection, skillfully employing her trademark pursed lips, arched eyebrows and billowing voice. Day is delightful, whether screeching for her servant or delivering such famous lines as "She's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile" or "He is the very pineapple of politeness." What makes Mrs. Malaprop so endearing is the fact that her verbal blunders make absolutely perfect sense to her.

Jim DeVita's comic performance as country booby Bob Acres is a revelation. DeVita, complete with bowed legs and blackened teeth, was hilarious, as he described the going-on of a lady to her lover and later, making an inept attempt to defend his honor.

Jonathan Smoots brings a strong and forceful authority to Jack's cantankerous father, Sir Anthony, but at the same time enables the warm, paternal dimensions of his personality to shine through.

Other standouts include Merideth Mapel as the saucy, conniving maid, Lucy, and Paul Bentzen as the dastardly Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

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