



FILE PHOTO

Brian Spangler-Campbell as the idiot

## Dark comedy looks at effects of labeling

Call someone smart, and he's likely to live up to his reputation. Call him stupid, and he might live down to expectations.

MadLab Theatre explores the power of labeling in *Pale Idiot*, opening tonight in MadLab's performance space.

Ric Shoemaker, co-directing with Peter Graybeal, describes the 80-minute one-act as a dark comedy.

The title character only thinks he's an idiot.

"If we keep labeling people long enough, they become that," Shoemaker said.

Written by Kirk Lynn, the play was initially produced by Rude Mechanics, an experimental theater company in Austin, Texas.

"They work very similarly to MadLab, doing shows out of the mainstream that other companies wouldn't do," Shoemaker said. "And *Pale Idiot* is a very MadLab-ish show, fun and creative."

Shoemaker, Managing Director Andy Batt and other MadLab members saw the play in 2003 at the New York Fringe Festival, where MadLab was presenting *The Geldings*.

"I was impressed by the intelligent, witty script and the natu-

ral opportunities for interesting blocking," Batt said.

The ways in which the play challenges stereotypes and conventional assumptions about accepted social roles fit MadLab's mission and aesthetic, he said.

Although the Texas company performed *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* in 2001 at the Wexner Center for the Arts, MadLab marks the first central Ohio troupe to stage a Rude Mechanics play.

Brian Spangler-Campbell plays the title role of a nameless resident routinely ignored or abused by townspeople.

Playing the townspeople are Sarah Brunet as the mother's maid, Vanessa Forster as the mayor's assistant, David Thonnings as an altar boy and Jim Azelvandire as the blacksmith's apprentice.

"Because he's become known as the idiot and people call him an idiot, they believe it," Batt said. "And because he doesn't know any better, he accepts the role and believes it, too."

Shows will be presented at 8 tonight through Saturday night — and Thursdays through Saturdays through March 25 — at 105 N. Grant Ave. Tickets cost \$8 to \$15, or \$7 for students, senior citizens and MadLab members. Call 614-470-2333 or visit [www.madlab.net](http://www.madlab.net).

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