

# AMERICAN THEATRE

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U.S.



from *Say Anything*. Of course, *FUE*'s charms depend on your tolerance for crude songs and too-eccentric-to-be-real details, which Davis and Forman indulge in like so many bong hits. And despite Noah Weisberg's intensely felt performance as the nebbishy protagonist, it was frequently difficult to see past the glib contrivances of his character: His name is Christian Mohammed Schwartzelberg ("My family's kind of all over the place spiritually"), and he does children's puppet shows with figures of Noam Chomsky, Annie Leibovitz and Robert Smith of the Cure. There is such a thing as straining too hard to be hip. Set these superfluties aside, and *F#@cking Up Everything* will catch you off guard with its humor, sweetness and warmth. —*Gener*

### 'Max Understood'

There's no opening "number," exactly, in Nancy Carlin and Michael Rasbury's odd, intermittently transfixing not-quite-musical *Max Understood*, but there's an opening, all right, and it's a memorable one: A young boy stands downstage and stares blankly ahead, and as we hear a swelling chorus of seemingly unconnected ambient morning sounds—a

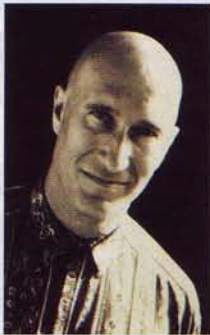
bird twittering, a bedside alarm, the trickle of a shower, a distant firetruck—he begins to quake, as if in a fit, nearly to the point that we want to rush the stage to calm him. Seven-year-old Max (Marlon Sherman) is autistic, and what Carlin and Rasbury have tried to do with this fragmentary collage of a show is to recreate Max's day through his own easily distracted senses. Not a lot happens outwardly—Max wanders outside, worries his well-meaning but stressed-out parents (Michael Winther and Mary Mossberg), exchanges banter with some neighborhood kids and a voluble gardener (Everett Quinton)—but the journey through the boy's brainy inner space is convincingly weird, obsessive and winning. Less rewarding are recurring visits to his parents' knotty interior lives; though Rasbury is himself the parent of a child with autism, he hasn't found a convincing way to dramatize the grinding helplessness and serendipitous joys of the perennial caregiver, and his whirling soundscapes convey a lot more than his pedestrian lyrics. Director David Schweizer's production accordingly conjured a powerful ambience if not a coherent world. It's a show we can't

imagine living on the page, and which doesn't really live on stage quite yet, but which shows the potential to expand the possibilities of music in the theatre. —*Weinert-Kendt*

### 'Mo Faya'

DJ Lwanda stands at the center of Eric Wainaina's political tale, loosely based on real-life events in Kenya. Set in the fictitious ghetto community of Kwa Maji, *Mo Faya* depicts residents chafing at subpar living conditions and harsh economic realities—one particularly funny scene shows the absurd lengths citizens must go to attain something as simple as clean water. Lwanda (played by author Wainaina), handsome and level-headed, leads and inspires his listeners, giving hope to the hopeless, in songs that evoke reggae and hip-hop with equal facility. Meanwhile, Anna Mali (Mumbi Kaigwa), a conniving and greedy real estate diva (think Donald Trump as a villainess), has other plans: Conspiring to take over the slums, she sets into action a series of events which lure Lwanda away to Nairobi, where he searches for fame and fortune. While Mali organizes a violent campaign of terror and murder, and bribes

## The University of Texas at Austin Welcomes New Faculty Charles Otte, Producer and Director

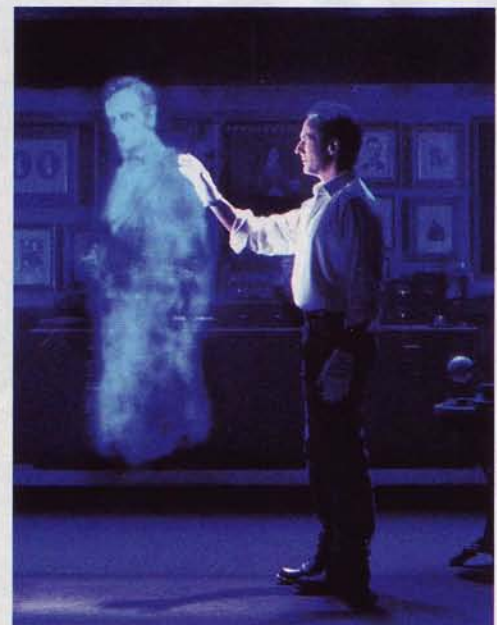


Charles Otte has more than twenty years experience in theatre, music and multi-media working with artists such as Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, David Byrne, and Andrei Serban. His work has been seen at The Guthrie Theatre, Lincoln Center, Alliance Theatre, Los Angeles Opera, Open Fist Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Lincoln Presidential Library. At UT, Mr. Otte will offer courses in Integrated Media for Live Performance.

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## Theatre & Dance



*Ghost's of the Library* Visitor experience created, developed, and produced by BRC Imagination Arts, brcweb.com. Creative Director: Charles Otte. Copyright BRC Imagination Arts

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