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By Anne Ingram

I don't know how you feel about it, but in my book, anyone who can stand alone on a bare stage. and keep an audience laughing for close to two hours has to be "some" talented.

That's just what Lorne Elliott did at The Playhouse last night. This fuzzy-haired comedian, who combines dry humor with musical parodies, skits in which he plays all the parts plus brilliant monologues, can hold his own against any of the big names in the business.

Lanky, rubber faced and definitely a master of the English language, Mr. Elliott is also a shrewd observer of human behavior--or should I say Canadian behavior. When he confessed that he comes from Montreal, the comedian quickly added "not my fault" before poking fun at all regions of the country.

During the course of the evening he became the guy from Saskatchewan who had never seen a winding road before, a very inexperienced sailor who didn't understand what "brisk breezes offshore" really meant, a tourist who attempted to swim in the frigid ocean off Cape Breton and the kid whose mother forced him to learn classical guitar when all he wanted to do was play rock and roll.

Mr. Elliott is a master of comic timing and quick delivery. And having been in the stand-up business for more than two decades he is able to switch immediately from one subject to another if he notices that the audience isn't being too receptive.

Not that this happened much last night. Although the crowd was disappointingly small, it was very enthusiastic. Who wouldn't be, Lorne Elliott is a funny guy and, praise be, he doesn't have to resort to smut or even close-to-the-bone jokes in order to make people laugh.

All he has to do is describe spring in Canada as "that time between the frostbite and the fly bite," sing an ode to "the league of lawn art lovers," or point out that when you start a renovation project you are letting yourself in for a load of trouble.

Most comedians have a stock of "husband and wife" jokes in their repertoire but Lorne Elliott brings the battle of the sexes right down into everyone's living room. He points out that when men look as if they are thinking deep thoughts they are actually thinking about nothing and he notes that while women like "to shop", the male of the species just wants to "buy stuff".

Written down on the printed page this may not sound very funny. I guess you had to have been there last night because it had me nearly falling out of my seat.

At the close of the evening Lorne Elliott asked the somewhat rhetorical question "so what have we learned here tonight?". I don't know about anyone else in the audience, but I learned that comedy is definitely alive and well in Canada and that once you see and hear Mr. Elliott you become an instant fan.

Last night this lanky fellow managed to make me forget at least for a little while, the GST, Sheila Copps and my income tax return. Now that takes talent.

I left The Playhouse with words of wisdom uttered by this deep thinking philosopher ringing in my ears. They are words that I will probably never forget - "live every day as if it were your last and sooner or later you are bound to be right."