



PRESS KIT



CYCLO-
RAMA

« [...] it's about the two stories that have been ignoring each other for a long time: those of the French and English-speaking theatres of Quebec. »

IN BRIEF

Laurence Dauphinais is a French-speaking Quebec artist. Working regularly with anglophone artists, the francophone creator asks herself: why do these two communities seem to know so little about each other? Thanks to rigorous research and with the help of collaborators on both sides of the linguistic divide, she plunges into the history of Montreal theatre to shine the spotlight on the stories we weave that make us who we are.

The author and director is inspired by the cyclorama form to deliver a documentary comedy in three locations on Montreal's cultural duality. *Cyclorama*, which begins at Centaur Theatre and ends at the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, takes the audience on an original journey through the city, time and space, literally transporting them along Saint-Laurent Boulevard.

A PLAY IN THREE PLACES

Cyclorama is a theatrical experience in three places. The audience starts at Centaur Theatre (453 Saint-François-Xavier) for Act 1. Act 2, is a guided bus tour through the streets of the city, and Act 3 takes place at the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui (3900 Saint-Denis).

Acts 1 and 3 are approximately one hour long, and the bus tour is about 30 minutes. The total time of the show is estimated at 2 hours 30 minutes but could be longer depending on traffic.

Because of the changes in locations, seats are not assigned.

Walking distance from Centaur Theatre to the buses is approximately 350 metres (1150 feet). We advise you to check the weather forecast and dress accordingly.

We strongly suggest you use public transit. However, transportation service to Centaur Theatre is available for those who wish to use it.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Created by Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui
and Centaur Theatre

Director
Laurence Dauphinais

Assistant Director
Charlie Cohen

Featuring
Laurence Dauphinais
Antoine Yared
Alexandre Cadieux
Erin Hurley

Set Design
Robin Brazill

Costume Design
Cynthia St-Gelais

Lighting Design
Chantal Labonté

Original Music
Navet Confit

Video Conception
Allison Moore

Props and Assistant Designer
Marie-Ève Fortier

Make-up and Hair
Sylvie Rolland-Provost

Dramaturgs
Cristina Cugliandro
Mathieu Gosselin
Camille Trudel

History Consultants
Alexandre Cadieux
Erin Hurley

History Research
Alexis Paquette-Lacasse

Video Integration
Pierre Laniel

Sound Operator
Gabrielle Couillard

Surtitles
Elaine Normandeau

Stage Manager
Charlie Cohen

Stage Surtitles
Charlie Cohen

Centaur Theatre
and Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui
11th october to 5th november 2022

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

PANORAMAS

Cyclorama: Circular panorama presenting a historical scene, allowing all angles to be observed simultaneously.

Shared stories are central to the lives of communities and are important for their social cohesion. But in pluralistic societies like Quebec, they are strained; this fragmentation often causes all sorts of problems of identity. The latest provincial linguistic policies restricting the growth of anglophone CEGEPs and forcing immigrants to learn the majority language in record time are witnesses to this discomfort.

Personally, I believe that it is the responsibility of dominant cultures to ask themselves about the stories that shaped them and to have the courage to look at their blind spots when required.

I am a francophone Quebecer who has been immersed since childhood in a very specific construct of stories around language, identity, oppression, territory and survival. I grew up in a period of Quebec history where, if you were francophone, speaking English was easily seen as an act of self-alienation.

Only French was heard in my house. Books, radio, TV. Daily life, entirely in French. Except for maybe that one mixtape saved for the annual trip from Montreal to Old Orchard. I clearly remember those precious arrivals at US Customs, where I made sure to wake myself up for the sole purpose of laughing at my parents' English, a language that no one in my family had mastered. To the sounds of doo-wop classics and «Surfin' USA», which I entertained myself by singing phonetically, the mountains of Vermont seemed even greener. But phonetically wasn't good enough. I wanted

to learn the language of the enemy.

First of all, for affairs of the heart. Then to send myself to other places. I learned it over the course of French kissing. I absorbed it by playing the words of others in theatre. Speaking with other phonics than the ones I used by default parachuted me into the heart of unfamiliar territory, and it was exciting.

Since then, like many of my generation, I currently work in both English and French, and my universe has been profoundly enriched.

The adoption of bill 96 proves that there is a massive rift between the punitive politics imposed by the government, seemingly fed by the fear of losing, and the desire for inclusion of my generation and those that follow it.

With *Cyclorama*, I wanted to dig into this discomfort in the hopes of dissolving it. I wanted to use Montreal's theatre world, so profoundly divided linguistically and culturally, to study the concrete effects of History on the practice of a shared art form. To bring together audiences who know nothing about each other. To air our extended family's dirty laundry. Most of all, I wanted to make all these points of view heard simultaneously, to understand which stories they took root in and why they persisted. I wanted to give ourselves the chance to rewrite History and its stories in the present moment, over the time of a theatrical presentation.

— Laurence Dauphinais

CONVERSATION BETWEEN ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Sylvain Bélanger graduated from the Francophone program of the National Theatre School in 1997. He is currently a director and artistic director of the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. Eda Holmes graduated from the National Theatre School's Anglophone program in 1997. She is currently a director and artistic director of Centaur Theatre. Parallel career paths, on either side of the language divide that had not crossed until the dawn of the 50th anniversary of their respective institutions. Acknowledging the gap between the two artistic communities, they decided to create a bridge in the form of a co-production, performed in both theatres. Assigned to author, actress and director Laurence Dauphinais, *Cyclorama* tackles Montreal's cultural duality head on. Sylvain Bélanger and Eda Holmes offer us their correspondence on this ambitious creation!

English translation follows

– **SYLVAIN** :

Dear Eda,

Je me souviens il y a quatre ans, des débuts de ce beau projet, et je tente de me rappeler nos intentions de départ, de cet élan naturel que nous avons eu l'un vers l'autre. Mon souvenir, c'était que tout était facile et évident pour nous. Que malgré le geste symbolique, il allait de soi de se parler et de créer ensemble.

Nous avons fait l'École nationale de théâtre en même temps, dans deux sections différentes, sans le savoir (!), et plusieurs années plus tard, nous dirigeons en même temps des théâtres qui œuvrent depuis plus de 50 ans dans deux langues différentes, dans la même ville, à 20 minutes de distance l'un de l'autre.... Des vies bien parallèles...

De mon côté, ce que je trouvais stimulant et évident lors de nos premières rencontres, c'était le désir réciproque de créer des rapprochements, des ponts entre nos communautés et nos pratiques, et pourquoi pas entre nos publics! Surtout entre nos publics! Je sentais une volonté évidente et commune de le faire de façon intègre et totale. Je sentais qu'on se permettait, sans résistance, qu'il y avait déjà dans ce projet un gros why not? excitant. C'est toute l'aventure du métissage culturel qui me semblait riche. Pour deux théâtres de langues différentes mais qui fêtaient leurs 50^e anniversaires quasiment en même temps dans une même ville, je sentais que l'évidence de « faire ensemble » était particulièrement inspirante! Nos deux théâtres ont écrit des histoires du Québec bien en parallèle pendant ces 50 années, à s'épier de loin.

Je ne sais pas ce que tu en penses, mais je pense (sans trop d'originalité, sorry) que se parler, c'est le début d'une solution. À bien des échelles. Relationnelle comme culturelle. Même politique, si on pousse la suggestion. J'ai l'impression qu'une culture est riche quand elle se frotte, quand elle laisse entrer de l'air par ses fenêtres, quand elle donne et accepte de prendre sans la peur d'y perdre dans l'échange...

Y a-t-il dans ce projet, porté fièrement par Laurence, davantage d'excitation face à de l'inconnu que de méfiance face à la différence? Y a-t-il plus de plaisir à envisager ce qu'on pourrait découvrir que de peur face à ce qu'on pourrait y laisser de compromis? Sommes-nous finalement en train d'en apprendre davantage sur l'autre et sur soi-même dans un tel projet? Aucune de ces questions?

Comment bien nommer ce que propose notre projet?

Dear Eda,

I remember four years ago, at the beginning of this beautiful project, and I'm trying to recall our intentions at the start, that natural impulse we had. I remember that everything was simple and obvious to us. Over and above the symbolic gesture, of course we had to talk and create together.

We were at the National Theatre School at the same time, in two different sections, without knowing it (!), and years later, we were running two theatres that were more than 50 years old, in two different languages, in the same city, twenty minutes apart. Parallel lives...

Personally, what I found exciting and obvious from our first meetings was the mutual desire to build bridges between our communities and our practices, and—why not?—between our audiences. Especially our audiences! I felt a clear and common willingness to do it in a totally honest way. I felt that we were giving ourselves permission, with no resistance, that this project already had a big, exciting, why not? The adventure of mixing cultures felt very rich to me. For two theatres in two different languages, both celebrating their 50th anniversaries at almost the same time, in the same city, the obvious idea of doing something together was inspiring! Our two theatres have been creating Quebec stories in parallel for these 50 years, looking at each other from afar.

I don't know about you, but I think (unoriginally, sorry) that talking to each other is the beginning of a solution. On many levels. In personal relationships as well as cultural ones. Even political ones, if you want to push it that far. I have the impression that a culture is rich when it rubs up against another, when it lets some air in through the windows, when it can give and take without the fear of losing something in the exchange...

Is there something in this project, carried so proudly by Laurence, that is more of an excitement for the unknown than a fear of difference? Is there more pleasure to be had in what we could discover than in what we might lose in a compromise? In the end, are we about to learn more about each other and maybe about ourselves in a project like this? None of the above?

How can we clearly articulate what this project is about?

– EDA :

Dear Sylvain,

Given how much we have in common now, it still stuns me to think that you and I were at National Theater School (NTS) at exactly the same time and never consciously crossed paths. I remember being so excited when I came to Centaur in 2017 when you called and wanted to talk about our two theatres collaborating. As a student at the NTS in the

90's I had dreamt of having the chance to find a way to bridge the gap between the French and English theatre communities. I have always been so inspired by my French colleagues and could never understand why there had to be so much distance between us.

The 50 years of theatre history that our two institutions have lived so close together on the map but so far apart in the culture are such a conundrum to unravel. Each step of the process of *Cyclorama* has made me ask myself - why has it taken so long to start the conversation? Is it only language that has divided our two theatrical cultures? That seems too easy. There is difficult history for sure but there is also a certain amount of fear - the fear people have on both sides of the divide of not understanding and of being misunderstood. That is the challenge that Laurence has taken on and risen to in such a deft and creative way with *Cyclorama*. I believe this piece has the ability to short-circuit the fear the audiences might have of not understanding and invites them to lean into their natural curiosity about "the other" and their shared passion for theatre.

You ask how do we describe what this project proposes and I think of it as the beginning of a rich conversation - one that begins in the theatre and then spreads, as you suggest, into the culture and perhaps even into the rocky road of politics. I have always believed that theatre serves a vital role in creating a healthy, democratic and progressive community by fostering an expansive spirit in artists and audiences alike. This project is a prime example of that ideal.

We have gained so much at Centaur from having the chance to collaborate with all of you at Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. We have discovered many new ways of working but also found so much in common in terms of what we all aspire to as theatre makers. Do you think that this project is the beginning of something new in Montreal? What do we need to do to keep the fire lit for this kind of ongoing collaboration in Montreal theatre as a whole?

Laurence and her team have conjured a

wonderful theatrical ride through the story of Montreal and I am looking forward to riding the bus with you to see where it takes us!

– SYLVAIN :

Je poursuis et attrape ce que tu écris si bien sur le *beginning of something*. C'est très juste. C'est intéressant que tu le nommes comme ça parce que ce premier projet commun, sous l'impulsion de Laurence, est un récapitulatif historique, des histoires parallèles devenant histoire commune. Comme si, pour se mettre à la même place, on devait refaire les chemins historiques des deux communautés théâtrales pour arriver finalement à aujourd'hui. *Au why not?* de Laurence, si beau et si fort à la fois.

Ce que tu écris m'emmène surtout à imaginer la suite. C'est intéressant car *Cyclorama* est un passage logique obligé, à la fois historique, artistique et humain. Laurence brise le mur généreusement. Son spectacle crée totalement la rencontre, en traversant tous les paliers d'échanges du projet : Eda/Sylvain, équipes Centaur/CTD'A, Laurence/Antoine, les historiens Alexandre/Erin, et finalement les publics Centaur/CTD'A. *Total shake hand!* Tout le monde travaille avec l'autre, tout le monde rencontre l'autre. Tout le monde joue au même jeu du réel.

Mais après, on fait quoi? Peut-être qu'on doit raconter les histoires que nous partageons, celles d'aujourd'hui, des rues et des gens qui nous traversent et nous bousculent. J'image qu'il faudra actualiser notre relation rapidement, dans nos prochains échanges. J'espère qu'on aura plus besoin d'un autobus pour faire circuler nos publics d'un lieu à l'autre, que nos artistes collaboreront tout naturellement les uns avec les autres, que nos coproductions pourront être jouées par une même équipe. Cette fluidité me fait rêver. J'espère surtout que nous pourrons dépasser la relation à deux pour parler d'une seule voix dans un spectacle qui sortira de nos deux quartiers, que ces prochains projets nous sortiront de nos propres murs. Tourner un spectacle ensemble, en français et/ou en anglais, hors Montréal, hors Québec, ce

serait ça mon prochain *Why not?* Pour que le nouveau NOUS ne soit jamais limitatif, qu'il s'inscrive dans une communauté connectée et élargie, toujours en découvrant de nouveaux complices, à Toronto, à Paris, à New-York, à Berlin, etc. Car ce monde-là, c'est déjà celui dans lequel nous vivons, non?

I get what you are saying so well about being the beginning of something. It's exactly right. It's interesting that you say it that way because this first joint project, driven by Laurence, is a historical recap, parallel histories becoming a common history. As if, to get to the same place, we had to revisit the historical paths of the two theatrical communities to finally get to the present. To Laurence's why not?, so beautiful and strong at once.

What you wrote mainly brings me to imagine the future. It's interesting, since Cyclorama is a necessary first step: historical, artistic, and human at the same time. Laurence is generously breaking down the wall for us. Her show is creating the total encounter, through all the levels of the project: Eda/Sylvain, the Centaur/CTD'A teams, Laurence/Antoine, historians Alexandre/Erin, and finally the Centaur/CTD'A audiences. Total handshake! Everyone works with each other, everyone meets each other. Everyone plays the same game of reality.

But after this, what next? Maybe we have to tell each other the stories we share, our present stories, stories of the streets and people that we cross and run into. I imagine we will have to actualize our relationship quickly, in our next exchanges. I hope we won't have to need a bus to move our audiences from one space to the other, that our artists will naturally collaborate with each other, that our co-productions can be acted by the same cast. I dream about that kind of fluidity. Most of all, I hope that our relationship can be bigger than just the two of us, to speak with one voice in a piece that will go beyond our two communities, that these next projects can get us over our own walls. Touring a show together, in French and/or English, outside Montreal, outside Quebec, that would be my next Why not? So that this new NOUS would have no limits, that it would take place in a larger and more connected community, always looking for new partners, in Toronto, Paris, New York, Berlin, etc. After all, isn't that already the world we're living in?

– EDA :

And now the world! Why not indeed! I believe that this "Total hand shake", as you have so wonderfully named this process, reflects the unique potential of Montreal as a city. Living here, we have the privilege of a truly pluralistic society that is enriched by people from all over

the world who are drawn here by all kinds of things - the universities, the bilingual reality of the city or simply by the exceptional joie de vivre that this city emanates and which fuels the rich cultural life that pulses in every neighborhood. I agree that the next step is to imagine how we can make productions that are made by artists as linguistically free and culturally and generationally diverse as the people we see on a city bus. In that way, we can make theatre that truly reflects the magic reality of our city and that is something the world will want to know about. *Cyclorama* is putting our collective audiences on the bus together which is such a great start. You are right - from here we can go even further outside of our own walls and our own experiences to collectively bring new projects to life that can speak in French and/or English and can expand our collective humanity.

At the end of the day, no matter where in the world we live, we are all confronted as human beings by life speeding along with very few places to stop and ponder what it all means. Artists are the people who build places for us to stop and ponder. Here in Montreal we are rich with artists who can do that in both languages. I am already imagining some of the exciting artists we can bring together from our two communities who could expand the world for the rest of us.

– SYLVAIN :

C'est intéressant cette forme de responsabilité que tu nommes sur l'image créée et véhiculée sur une ville ou un endroit dans le monde. J'ai toujours cru que c'était l'affaire de tous et toutes, que les gens « faisaient » l'endroit, que nous avons tous et toutes une responsabilité sur la perception que les visiteurs (et nous-mêmes) avons de la vie qui bat dans cette ville ou sur la réputation qu'on en fait.

Car qu'est-ce que le cœur d'une ville, sinon que l'esprit qui s'en dégage entre les gens, la nature et le rythme de leurs contacts, de leurs conversations, des échanges de regards, de l'hospitalité, de la curiosité des uns pour les

autres.

Notre relation à une ville, c'est aussi la nature des déambulations qu'on y fait. Et la façon dont on les fait. Que ce soit par habitude ou par plaisir. *Cyclorama* est peut-être l'une de ces déambulations, à l'intérieur de notre propre ville. Mais nous avons tous fait des centaines de déambulations dans cette ville, dans ses quartiers, ses commerces, ses espaces publics. La plupart du temps en appréciant le décloisonnement, la nouveauté, l'étrangeté, la découverte. Mais la grande majorité des déambulations que l'on fait dans nos théâtres a été déterminée par ce rapport à la langue. À une langue... On pourrait dire que c'est culturel, que ça s'explique, que c'est tout naturel, avec les époques, avec les élans d'affirmation ou avec les besoins spécifiques et ponctuels des communautés. Mais aujourd'hui, ça me semble curieux. Ça me semble curieux que mes déambulations théâtrales, dans cette ville, aient été influencées à ce point par la langue. Alors que toutes mes autres « déambulations », disons culturelles, cinématographiques, musicales, esthétiques, n'ont jamais été influencées par aucune frontière.

Cyclorama, (peut-être), fait tomber une barrière construite par le monde du théâtre de cette ville-ci, spécifiquement, et qu'on peut franchir plus aisément qu'on le croit avec un simple souffle. Du moins, aujourd'hui. C'est ce qui fait sa beauté pour moi.

I think that the sort of responsibility you talk about when it comes to creating and conveying an image of a city or a place in the world is interesting. I've always believed that it was everybody's business, that people created a place, that we all have a responsibility for the way visitors (and we ourselves) perceive the life of our city or the reputation it has.

What is the heart of a city, if not the spirit that emerges between people, the nature and rhythm of their contacts, their conversations, exchanges of looks, hospitality, curiosity about one another?

*Our relationship to a city also has to do with how we walk around in it. Whether it's out of habit or for pleasure. *Cyclorama* is maybe one of those meandering strolls through our own city. But we've wandered around hundreds of times in the city, through its neighbourhoods, its stores,*

its public spaces. Most of the time appreciating the lack of boundaries, novelty, variety, discovery. But the vast majority of the journeys we make to our theatres has been determined by language. By one language... You could say it's cultural, it's easily explained, it's natural, it's the times, people's need to assert themselves, or the specific and periodic needs of communities. But today I find it curious. It seems strange to me that my theatrical travels in the city have been so strongly influenced by language. Although all of my other, shall we say, «artistic strolls», or cinematographic, musical, aesthetic, have never been influenced by any barrier.

Cyclorama (perhaps) breaks down a barrier constructed by the theatre worlds of our city specifically, and maybe we can overcome it more simply than we think, with a single breath. Today, anyway. For me, that's the beauty of it.

– EDA :

You are right that the heart and soul of a city are made up of the people who live there. Whether born there or drawn there each individual contributes to the life of that city. Part of Montreal's uniqueness is in fact the possibility to live a fully bilingual life here. It is striking that while most of the culture people consume on both sides of what has been historically defined as the «two solitudes» comes from all over the world in terms of music, film and TV, theatre remains divided almost by habit by a notion of "mother tongue". I am so proud to be part of the creation of *Cyclorama* since it challenges that habit in the audience on both sides of the divide.

I have always been inspired by the fact that your theatre has the word "Today" embedded in its name. It signals your commitment to the contemporary relevance of everything you produce and present. By contrast I am equally proud of the name of our theatre - "Centaur" - which defines us as a mythical beast and commits us to imagining worlds that we may have never seen before but inspire us to dream the dream of "what if?". For me *Cyclorama* is a beautiful melding of "Today" and "What if?" in Montreal. Thank you for embarking on this journey through the past into the present with a challenge to the future that proposes "why not?".

LAURENCE DAUPHINAIS



photo : Anne-Marie Baribeau

Laurence Dauphinais was trained in the French acting program of the National Theatre School of Canada and works in multidisciplinary creation as actress, author, screenwriter, and director. She co-directed *iShow*, a piece that toured Canada and France for two years. With Maxime Carbonneau, she toured their co-creation *Siri* in Rio de Janeiro, Edinburgh and Dublin after its Montreal premiere at the Festival TransAmériques. She directed *Aalaapi* at the Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, a production that won the Prix des auteurs dramatiques in 2019, and whose text was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards in 2021. The piece was remounted at FTA, at the PuSh Festival (Vancouver), Theateraffen Stückemarket (Berlin) and will tour Canada from east to west this year and next. Laurence and Maxime Carbonneau presented the first version of their new co-creation *Dans le nuage* at FTA 2021, which was accompanied by an online interactive experience she co-created. They will present the final version of the project, now called *Si jamais vous nous écoutez*, at Théâtre Denise-Pelletier in fall 2022. As writer and producer, Laurence recently launched *Bâtarde/Bastard*, a podcast co-produced with Transistor Media; she is co-writer of the pilot of the digital series *Zone sud* produced by Toast Studio.

ANTOINE YARED



photo : Tim Leyes

Born in Lebanon, Antoine grew up in Montreal, where he was pleased to get his start in the world of Shakespeare by performing for Repercussion Theatre. His love of Shakespeare brought him to move to Stratford, Ontario in 2012, where he appeared in an ever-growing series of roles. During his five years in the mecca of Canadian theatre, Antoine played in such classics as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *The Alchemist*, *The Madwoman of Chailot* and *Mother Courage*. His love of adventure sent him to seize the opportunity to act in the Groundling Theatre production of *King Lear* in Toronto. He returned to Montreal after seven years to act in *The Last Wife* at Centaur. Most recently, he appeared south of the border, at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., in *A Thousand Splendid Sons*, a play he had performed several months earlier in San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle. His American tour ended at Seattle Rep where he appeared in *Indecent*, before finishing the year in the classic *A Christmas Carol* at Soulpepper in Toronto.

ERIN HURLEY



photo : Mark Elkin

Erin Hurley is a Professor and Chair of the Department of English of McGill University. A specialist in Quebec theatre, her monographs include *National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion and Theatre and Feeling*. In February 2020 and March 2022, she presented a series of public readings of English plays by Quebec playwrights.

ALEXANDRE CADIEUX



photo : Cédric Égain

Alexandre Cadieux has been an assistant professor at l'Université du Québec à Montréal and l'Université d'Ottawa, a theatre critic at Le Devoir and JEU magazine, librarian at the National theatre school of Canada and referee in the Ligue Nationale d'Improvisation. He is currently in charge of the documentation centre of the Centre des auteurs dramatiques (CEAD).

CENTRE DU THÉÂTRE D'AUJOURD'HUI

The Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui is exclusively dedicated to Quebec playwriting. It supports the creation, production, and distribution of plays from Quebec and francophone Canada. It believes in a writer-centered theatre, as well as a modern and uncompromising approach to contemporary issues.

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CENTAUR THEATRE

Centaur Theatre, located in the heart of Old Montreal, is devoted to telling stories on stage that expand our perceptions of the world. We believe theatre serves a vital role in creating a healthy, democratic and progressive community by fostering an expansive spirit in artists and audiences alike by training a fresh lens on their experiences of being human.

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