

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2018

MEDIA CONTACT: Josée Duranleau | 416-652-7672 | josee@duranleau.com

Théâtre français de Toronto launches its 51st season!



The 2018-2019 season draws on the words of artists from Toronto and around the world, a season of "giving voice" (*Paroles manifestes*) echoing the theme of "outbursts" (*Éclats manifestes*) from Tft's 50th season. Audiences are invited to discover not only why key artists take position today, but also how. As such, each production is an exploration of "theatre as language", and how messages, arguments and joy are uniquely expressed through theatre. According to Tft's Artistic Director: "Each play is an opportunity to discover the Other through their story and how they choose to tell it".

The new season is as eclectic as Tft's audience – and the Artistic Director's aesthetic interests. Thus, works by well-known creators from Canada and abroad will be presented for several weeks alongside shorter runs for certain shows and events.

GENERAL AUDIENCE

The season begins with *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour* (*The Second Surprise of Love*), a Tft production on stage October 17-28. This comedy by Marivaux will be directed by Joël Beddows, who continues his exploration of the classical repertoire (*Dom Juan* and *The Liar*) as a way to study the complexities of lying in contemporary social relations.

From May 1 to 4, 2019, the Tft presents *Écoutez nos défaites* (*Listen to Our Defeats*), a Franco-Canadian co-production adapted from a novel by Laurent Gaudé, winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 2004, and staged by renowned French director Roland Auzet. This gripping spy story will thrill audiences as they witness a riveting confrontation between two secret agents.

Tft is also excited to collaborate with Canadian Stage to present two exceptional shows that have enjoyed resounding success in Europe. From April 11 to 21, 2019, we follow the misadventures of three neighbours in *Bigre*, Pierre Guillois's wordless show, winner of the Molière Prize for Best Comedy in 2017. Tiago Rodrigues, the National Theatre of Lisbon Artistic Director, will close the season on May 29, 2019. His show *Par Coeur* (*By*

Heart) invites 10 audience members to learn by heart a short text that could be shared with Tiago's grandmother, who is rapidly losing her sight and the ability to read.

YOUNG AUDIENCES

To attract a new generation of theatregoers, Tft will present four plays for young audiences for the first time in the same season. First up is the seventh edition of *Les Zinspirés: l'âge de raison* (*Les Zinspirés: The Age of Reason*), (November 30-December 5), a chance to hear gripping stories penned by teenage writers as directed by Chanda Gibson. On March 1st, 2019, other teenagers will share their reality on stage alongside professional actors in *Impatience*, a performance piece created by director Anne-Marie Ouellet. Tft then presents Estelle Savasta's *Traversée* (*Passage*) on April 26th, 2019, the story of Nour, who travels to a distant land in search of her mother. This stunning show directed by Milena Busiak brings sign language to the stage: the hearing-impaired actor Hodan Youssouf expresses herself using LSQ (*langage des signes québécois*) throughout the performance. Finally, Tft and Alliance Française de Toronto (AFT) are teaming up to present *Le Bibliothécaire* (*The Librarian*), created by Marie-Hélène d'Amours and Hippolyte, a show for children and their allies presented on April 28, 2019 at the Spadina Theatre.

TOURING

Tft is also touring shows outside Ontario. *Avant l'archipel* (*Countries Shaped Like Stars*) by Emily Pearlman (L'Irréductible Petit Peuple / Théâtre la Catapulte / Tft) will hit the road for a series of performances in New Brunswick and Montreal. *Le Dire de Di* (*The Telling of Tel*) by Michel Ouellette (Théâtre la Catapulte / Tft) will be performed at La Nouvelle Scène Gilles-Desjardins (Ottawa) and Théâtre Prospero (Montreal). *Exercice de l'oubli* (*Exercises in Forgetting*) by Emma Haché (Théâtre populaire d'Acadie / Tft) will premiere in January 2019 and tour throughout New Brunswick before stopping in Toronto in the fall of 2019.

PARTNERSHIPS

Tft continues to collaborate with AFT. The two institutions will once again present *Regards croisés* (*Converging Views*), a film series that twins films with Tft's 2018-2019 season shows. The Tft is also partnering with AFT's summer camps, offering children an opportunity to learn French through the dramatic arts. Collaborations with AFT and Canadian Stage are part of an outreach strategy to enhance Tft's visibility in the Greater Toronto Area.

PROJECT DEVELOPPEMENT

Tft continues to fulfill its role as a project incubator, welcoming once again Alain Doom as playwright-in-residence. His text, *Le Club des éphémères* (*The Ephemerals Club*), will be the subject of a series of workshops. The company is also providing studio time to Lina Blais and Nathalie Nadon for the development of their project *L'Affaires des Bacchantes* (*The Bacchante Affair*) as well as to Chanda Gibson and Sophie Goulet, for a spatial exploration of Jean Genet's *The Maids*. Finally, Tft and Beddows will be working with internationally known Toronto playwright Marie-Claire Marcotte on her project *Flush*.

At a time when Francophones from the four corners of the world are an ever increasing presence in the city, Tft remains a meeting place for audiences and artists from here and elsewhere. Because of our commitment to the democratization of art, we continue to offer English surtitles, *Pay-what-you-can* evenings on Thursdays, and school matinees.

Details about our productions and subscription packages are available online on our website: www.theatrefrancais.com

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Next Generations:** For the first time, Tft presents four shows for young audiences in the same season (*Les Zinspirés, Impatience, Passage, The Librarian*).
2. **Beyond Borders:** Tft is collaborating with three international theatre companies (*Bigre, Listen to Our Defeats, By Heart*).
3. **Theatre as language:** Tft explores wordless theatre (*Bigre*), live creation/performance art (*Impatience*) and sign language on stage (*Passage*).
4. **Collaborations with Alliance Française de Toronto (AFT):** Tft and AFT co-host *The Librarian*, co-present the *Converging Views* film series, and join forces for theatre camps in French.
5. **Outstanding Season of National Outreach:** Tft is touring three productions across Canada (*Countries Shaped Like Stars* by Emily Pearlman, *The Telling of Tel* by Michel Ouellette, *Exercises in Forgetting* by Emma Haché).

LIST OF SHOWS

La Seconde Surprise de l'amour (The Second Surprise of Love)

October 17 – 28, 2018

LISETTE HAS DECIDED TO THROW HER MISTRESS THE MARQUISE INTO THE ARMS OF A CERTAIN KNIGHT, so that she herself can marry the man she loves. But the Marquise is inconsolable following the death of her late husband one month after their wedding. For his part, the Knight is infinitely inconsolable over the infidelity of his lover Angélique.

The task that falls to the mischievous Lisette is not an easy one. Ruses, blunders, jealousies and denials are all obstacles delaying the ultimate declaration of love. Will Lisette overcome the hesitations of lovers meant for each other?

In *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour*, Marivaux uses comedy to unravel the mysteries of love. The language, rich and beautiful, channels games and unexpected seductions. After *Dom Juan* and *Le Menteur*, Joël Beddows continues to explore the joys of deceit and of gallantry in French classical theatre.

Les Zinspirés: l'âge de raison (Les Zinspirés: The Age of Reason)

November 30 – December 5, 2018

THIS YEAR, *LES ZINSPIRÉS* REACHES THE AGE OF REASON. The age when you learn to decipher your emotions. The age when you begin to understand the why of things. The age of daring to venture outside the family cocoon and discover the world.

For the seventh edition of the *Les Zinspirés* writing competition, five young authors take voice and challenge us, surprise us and amaze us. Pen and paper in hand, they convey the concerns and questions, dreams and hopes of their generation. Having polished their writing with the help of professional authors, over the course of the evening, they share their take on reality with us.

Consistently nominated for the Dora Mavor Moore Award in the categories of 'Best Youth Show', 'Best Performance by Ensemble' and 'Best Direction', *Les Zinspirés* comes together again for a seventh edition, with Chanda Gibson directing and Pierre Simpson coordinating the writing competition.

Impatience

March 1, 2019

A WHITE SPACE. A FLOOD OF LIGHT. Three students create a show based on who they are, what they know, what they like, what they're scared of.

Conceived by Anne-Marie Ouellet and Thomas Sinou, *Impatience* combines theatrical performance with soundscape. On stage: three Toronto teens, two professional actors. They spontaneously create something new with each performance that finds meaning in its immediacy. They question the commonalities that unite them. The show changes with the cities visited and the young people who partake in their game turned performance.

Featured as part of the Québec programming at Maison Folie in Mons, Belgium, the 2015 European Capital of Culture, this concept invites adults to revisit their adolescence and invites young people to look to the future. Performers reveal themselves through funny and surprising stories. It's not all true, but the line between fiction and reality are deliberately blurred. This is a work that is touching and spontaneous, and that sheds light on our visions of the future, what we dream and what we live.

Bigre

April 11 to 21, 2019

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WERE THREE NEIGHBOURS LIVING ACROSS THE HALL FROM EACH OTHER. They were destined to screw up, but to screw up gloriously. One lives in an immaculate room

equipped with high-tech gadgets. The second has hoarded so much junk that he has to sleep in a hammock above his mess. The third, a bit flirtatious, dabbles in hair styling and alternative medicine. In-between spats, we sing Jacques Brel, we dance to Daft Punk, and we laugh with these anti-heroes who prefer the absurd to their everyday lives in garret apartments in Paris.

In an acting style inspired by silent films by the likes of Charlie Chaplin, Jacques Tati and Mr. Bean, three clowns – Jonathan Pinto Rocha, Pierre Guillois and Agathe L'Huillier – combine disaster with clumsiness without saying a word. Absurdly human and disarmingly spontaneous, they recount modern loneliness in a tender, funny and surprising "melo-burlesque".

Winner of the 2017 Molière award for Best Comedy, *Bigre* ventures across the Atlantic for the first time to our greatest delight.

Traversée (Passage)

April 26, 2019

NOUR'S PEACEFUL WORLD IS ON THE BRINK. Since childhood, she has lived with her nanny, the beautiful and sweet Youmna. Youmna has taught Nour sign language, an unshakeable link that unites them in a world of silence. Both fear the day that Nour will join her "real" mother, who lives in a distant land, a country where girls can go to school with messy hair and eat as much as they want.

One night, there's a knock on the door. Thus begins the journey.

Each in their own language, Hodan Youssouf, a hearing-impaired actor, and Florence Blain Mbaye, a hearing actor, tells the story of resilience and transmission. An immersion into the visual world of Syrian artist Khadija Baker, *Traversée* takes a touching look at exile. An awakening for the heart and the soul.

Le Bibliothécaire (The Librarian)

April 28, 2019

FOR THE LAST 25 YEARS, PAUL-ÉMILE DUMOULIN HAS WORKED IN A MUNICIPAL LIBRARY. He is serious, proud, though terribly clumsy. The shelves must be impeccable, publications carefully organised. But beware, when his passion for books gets a hold of him, he can't help but plunge, head first, into their stories. Overwhelmed with excitement, he starts doing acrobatics, performing feats of balance, juggling, break dancing and beat boxing. A show that highlights the power of literature as well as imagination.

Écoutez nos défaites (Listen to Our Defeats)

May 1 to 4, 2019

TWO MEN CONFRONT EACH OTHER IN A CHARGED ENCOUNTER. The first, Assem, has the soul of a hunter. He is responsible for finding a former member of an elite American commando unit, which eliminated bin Laden in the Abbotabad raid. He tracks his target relentlessly using elaborate communication and surveillance equipment. But his adversary has no intention of being trapped: he also wants to force Assem to admit his own sordid truth.

Écoutez nos défaites is a gripping story about spies determined to expose each other. But what happens if you see yourself in the eyes of your adversary? And what if winning means learning how to lose?

Agnès Bioulès here adapts Laurent Gaudé's novel, winner of the prestigious 2004 Goncourt Prize for French literature. The play weaves together historical reality and fiction with a cruel and dizzying lucidity – because it's all about us in the end.

Par cœur (By Heart)

May 29, 2019

TIAGO IS LOOKING FOR A BOOK, a book that his grandmother can memorize before she goes blind.

To achieve this, he invites 10 audience members to join him on stage and share a unique experience: to learn a short text and then recite it, as if to ward off time. *Par cœur* begins as a game that gradually morphs into collective enterprise; that of keeping alive the memory all those who have resisted and still resist oppression through literature.

Tiago Rodrigues is an actor, author and producer who runs the National Theatre of Lisbon. His work has been lauded throughout Europe from Lisbon to Paris, from Avignon to Brussels. He enjoys blurring the lines between reality and fiction to remind us that the theatre lives and survives in our heads and in our hearts.