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Emotions Unbound at the Theatre

The 41st season is found under the sign of emotion. All sorts of emotion. Inspiration. Passion. Hope. Surprise. Love. Gloom. "It's funny, but I was expecting that the emotions and energy unleashed by the 40th anniversary were going to calm down. Not at all! We are launching our 41st season with an increase in passion and lots of innovations. You will experience a slew of emotions: from Musset's poetic and romantic voice, to Veber's acerbic comedy, de La Chenelière's trenchant truth, Gaudreault's quest for freedom, and Thériault's need to bellow his outrage. Add to this our young authors in *Les Zurbains*, the mirror of Isabelle Bélisle, and the characters from *Oz...* and you will see me smiling happily," Guy Mignault, Artistic Director.

To start, a great classic piece: ***On ne badine pas avec l'amour (There Is No Trifling with Love)*** by Alfred de Musset.

This season's classical piece depicts both the bright and dark sides of passion. Three young people are trying to find their way in life; trying to fulfill their dreams. They do it surrounded by characters as colourful as they are eccentric, who excel at the art of confusing innocent feelings. Not surprising, since Alfred de Musset did not believe that there was a border between the reality of his existence and the fiction of his poetry. Himself a victim of a tumultuous love affair with George Sand, he created a work of vicious emotion, the result being a piece of his time that is for all time. We are seized by the incessant and contradictory rhythm of life and our feelings. A tragedy of innocence, *There Is No Trifling with Love* rouses in our emotional memory the involuntary torture of certain passions. Can we at once live and die from emotion?

October 22 – November 8, 2008; with Surtitles™: October 23, 24 and 29, and November 1 and 7.
A production of Théâtre français de Toronto.

Bashir Lazhar by Evelyne de la Chenelière

Do we still want to hear about reasonable accommodation? Yes, if it is to share the life of an ordinary person like us, who asks only to find happiness. A gentle and humorous ode to life, *Bashir Lazhar* retraces the journey of a political refugee who lands in Québec and who at a moment's notice fills in for a grade six teacher. With a passion for teaching young people, this educator goes against the current to instruct more about tenderness and justice than spelling and grammar. Beyond the discrepancy between an immigrant's expectations and his country of refuge arises a profound reflection on numerous subjects that touch us all: the place of schools in our society, immigration, problems of integration in Canada, and the fear of foreigners. We laugh, we cry, we are moved by this piece by Evelyne de la Chenelière, winner of the 2006 Governor General's Award and author of *Des fraises en janvier (Strawberries in January)*, presented at Tft last season.

November 26 – 30, 2008.

A production of Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui.

Le filet (The Net) by Marcel-Romain Thériault

Inspired by riots that broke out in the Maritimes in 2003, when the New Brunswick government wanted to give a percentage of the fish quota to Aborigines, this piece presents a generational conflict within one family. Between the blindness of the grandfather and the fanaticism of the uncle, the idealism and integrity of the grandson are gravely shaken. Without sensationalizing or moralizing, the author paints a portrait of a society where the values that protect the collective fall down in the face of the furious quest of individual interest. An intense theatrical story, *The Net* provides heart-stopping suspense in a tightly knit universe, one behind a closed familial door. Contrary to the societal and linguistic battles, the enemy is not the Other, but is instead rooted within the chaos of a family. The author brings us inside a forceful story that, thanks to the power of theatre, has a universal reach.

February 4 – 14, 2009.

A production of Théâtre populaire d'Acadie with the support of National Arts Centre French Theatre.

Une maison face au nord (A North-Facing House) by Jean-Rock Gaudreault

Oscillating between family drama and a comedy of manners, *A North-Facing House* takes on some serious subjects, such as the rural exodus, the integration of immigrants, and generational conflict, all of which are dramatized with the author's humour spicing up the text. Between a son pursued for money laundering, a young Guatemalan worker, and an elderly Pole, a man in his twilight years (played by Guy Mignault) feels at a dead end despite the kindness and good sense of his wife (played by Louise Dussault). He sees the heritage that he created and the country of his dreams inexorably losing its sense and future. Far from witnessing the collapse of a microscopic world, something quite different happens, which allows us to tackle questions of spirituality confronting today's reality. Jean-Rock Gaudreault, whose work Tft first presented in 1999 with *La Raccourcie*, has since become a definite pillar of Canadian francophone theatre.

February 25 - March 8, 2009; with Surtitles™: February 26 and 27 and March 4 and 7.

A co-production of Théâtre La Rubrique, Théâtre du Tandem and Théâtre français de Toronto.

Le Dîner de cons (The Dinner Game) by Francis Veber

This piece, a cult hit onstage and in film, has become synonymous with scathing comedy that denounces the excesses of today's society. Its premise begins with some characters tracking down a complete idiot and inviting him to dinner with the intention of mocking him the entire evening without him ever realizing it. But what happens when the game does not unfold as planned, when nothing seems to stop the invited idiot from making things worse? The result, much to our amusement, is one of the most hilarious and intelligent comedies of our age. Nothing is left to chance. Between continuous mistaken identity, ongoing word games, and table-turning situations, it is impossible for us to avoid both a serious case of the giggles and a critical look at society. We are sure to see humour displayed in all its forms as society's excess is gleefully denounced.

April 22 - May 9, 2009; with Surtitles™: April 23 - 24 and May 1, 6 and 9

A production of Théâtre français de Toronto.

New Generations Series (teenagers)

Les Zurbains 2008

With a whole new batch of stories, *Les Zurbains 2008* is comprised of five pieces from young people from Montréal and Québec City and one from Toronto. Since the program's debut in Toronto in 2004, *Les Zurbains* has inspired hundreds of young francophones to explore their creativity. From one year to another, it has been a joy to see new talent emerge and these teens develop their creative potential in French. *Les Zurbains* is, each year, the outcome of a writing contest in secondary school.

School Matinees: November 18 - 19. Evening presentation: November 19 at 7pm

A production of Théâtre Le Clou.

Regarde-moi (Look at Me!) by Isabelle Bélisle

A period of transition where experimentation and questioning goes hand-in-hand with self-assertion and the desire to conform, adolescence at times seems contradictory. Misplaced pride can make us forget who we really are and can push us to act in ways dictated by our entourage, advertising, and consumer society. This is what the author manages to convey through the vivid portrayal of three inseparable friends, Noémie, Thomas and Sandrine. Sandrine receives a magic mirror for her birthday. Whoever is reflected in it experiences an extreme desire to distinguish oneself by transforming... at the expense of friendship. Faced by an obsession that becomes destructive, Sandrine tries to foil the mirror so that she may stay true to herself. Inhabited by captivating characters, the world created by Isabelle Bélisle is one with which we can easily identify. The text remains light, accessible, and direct, and offers keys to finding self-acceptance.

School Matinees: February 17 - 18. Evening Presentation: February 18 at 7pm

A production of Théâtre la Catapulte.

Children Series (children)

Oz, adapted from the L. Frank Baum story by Marie-Thé Morin and Pier Rodier

Like Tom Thumb, *Oz* tells a symbolic story for those seeking to understand their place in the universe. A fierce cyclone transports Dorothy and her dog Toto to the Land of Oz. The place is lovely but Dorothy longs to go back home to Kansas. Only the Wizard of Oz can make that happen. On the road to visit the wizard, Dorothy acquires some amazing companions who also need magical assistance greatly. We are carried along on a voyage full of challenges, all of which are enhanced by songs that captivate us.

In addition to creating a magical world out of ordinary objects before our eyes, this story transforms the banal into the surreal with a strong mythic dimension. The show reunites two artists who for 28 years have worked to incorporate music into drama, just like Tft.

School Matinees: November 13 - 14. Family Presentation: Saturday, November 15 at 2pm

A production of Vox Theatre