

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 30, 2011 – November 27, 2011

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With over 100 performances across the country, *Une Maison face au nord* (*A House Facing North*) by Jean-Rock Gaudreault returns to Toronto.

ZOOM IN ON AN EXUBERANT CULTURAL DIVERSITY!

Toronto, August 30, 2011 – Théâtre français de Toronto (TfT) is proud to present *Une Maison face au nord* (*A North-Facing House*) by **Jean-Rock Gaudreault**. This remarkable production has travelled from coast to coast across Canada, having been played over a hundred times from Vancouver to Caraquet since its creation in Toronto in 2009. Considered “one of the ten best plays of the decade” by Eye Weekly when it was first presented in 2009, *A House Facing North* will be presented one last time in Toronto at the Berkeley Street Theatre from November 24 to 27.

OSCILLATING BETWEEN FAMILY DRAMA AND A COMEDY OF MANNERS, *A House Facing North* 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 Quebec film, television and stage icon **Louissette 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 has become a definite pillar of Canadian francophone theatre.

Directed by **Jacinthe Potvin**. Featuring **Éric Chalifour, Alexandre Dubois, Louissette Dussault, A.-J. Henderson, Guy Mignault,** and **Sara Simard**.

TfT wishes to thank the show’s sponsors: the law firm Heenan Blaikie and Scotiabank.

***UNE MAISON FACE AU NORD* (*A House Facing North*), by Jean-Rock Gaudreault
November 24 – November 27, 2011**

Théâtre français de Toronto | Berkeley Street Theatre – 26 Berkeley Street Upstairs

Evening performances: Thursday to Saturday at 8 p.m.

Saturday matinee: November 26 at 3:30 p.m.

Sunday matinee: November 27 at 2 :30 p.m.

All performances will be surtitled in English.

Tickets: \$33 to \$48 | Seniors (65 +): \$28 to \$41

Box Office: (416) 534-6604 or 1-800-819-4981 | www.theatrefrancais.com

Press Kit

A HOUSE FACING NORTH

by Jean-Rock Gaudreault

DIRECTED BY JACINTHE POTVIN

WITH LOUISETTE DUSSAULT ET GUY MIGNAULT, ÉRIC CHALIFOUR, ALEXANDRE DUBOIS, A.-J. HENDERSON AND SARA SIMARD

CONCEPTION TEAM

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: CATHERINE SASSEVILLE

STAGE MANAGEMENT: SERGE LAPIERRE

LIGHTING DESIGN: LYNE RIOUX

COSTUMES: YASMINA GIGUÈRE

ORIGINAL SOUND AND MUSIC:

CATHERINE GADOUAS

A COPRODUCTION OF THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS DE TORONTO, THÉÂTRE LA RUBRIQUE AND THÉÂTRE DU TANDEM.

SYNOPSIS

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 TftT first presented in 1999 with *La Raccourcie*, has since become a definite pillar of Canadian francophone theatre.



Guy Mignault and Louise Dussault as Henri and Anne-Marie in *A House Facing North*. Photo Jean Briand.

A WORD FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – GUY MIGNAULT

Dear Friend,

When I think about *Une Maison face au nord*, I feel like I've said it all: that I fell in love with this script, right away at the reading; that for me, this is probably one of the most important roles that I've played in my life; that for me, being back onstage with my friend Louise Dussault is a great joy; about meeting Jacinthe, our director, A. J. (the anglo), Alexandre (the Guatemalan), Éric (my son), and Sara (his wife): a director and actors of immense talent and even more, friends for life. Michel and Martin (it sounds like a comedy duo!) those involved behind the scenes, are also friends for life. This is what a tour can do!

But what I can't say enough about is that having crossed Canada from Moncton to Vancouver with this Jean-Rock Gaudreault play, having felt the reaction, it is pretty much the same whether the spectators are in Saskatoon, Caraquet, Sudbury, or Amqui. The soul and the feelings are the same among all humans. And we all have a little ball of rage that we carry inside us, so it is good to see a character onstage like Henri who lets his out.

As Michel Tremblay has often proved, what is « local » is the most universal. The real feelings of this Chicoutimi family, the Simards, and the other characters, move people everywhere. Human beings are all the same, everywhere. Immigrants are “strange” everywhere, until each side takes steps towards the other.

What guilt parents have to endure if their children turn out badly. How much can we impute children's misdeeds to their parents? When Henri says “It's my fault,” when Anne-Marie says “It's my fault,” how far should we blame them? Questions, answers, and life (yet again!) that sometimes drags us along in a funny way.

And then there's the country, the river, the fjord, and the people...

Joseph Latour (Marcel Dubé's simple soldier) says to his friend while planning a trip: “Canada's big, Émile, you can't know how big it is,” and we come full circle. We have presented our House Facing North at TFI, in February 2009 and we are finishing our wonderful pan-Canadian tour, with you in Toronto.

Enjoy the show!

GUY MIGNAULT



THE PLAYWRIGHT – JEAN-ROCK GAUDREULT

Born in Jonquière in 1972 and receiving a degree in playwriting from the National Theatre School of Canada in 1993, Jean-Rock Gaudreault has since written numerous works, as much for adults as for young audiences. From *La Raccourcie* (1995, for adults) to *La Migration des oiseaux invisibles* (2008, young audiences), to *Deux pas vers les étoiles* (2001, young audiences), *Pour ceux qui croient que la terre est ronde* (2004, young audiences), and *Une histoire dont le héros est un chameau et dont le sujet est la vie* (2005, young audiences), his twelve scripts for the theatre have been produced by different companies across Québec and France, and have even toured around the world. Armed with his numerous Masque nominations from the Académie québécoise du théâtre and several awards for his work as a playwright, he scooped the Governor General's Award for drama with *Deux pas vers les étoiles* in 2003. Several of his scripts have been published by Éditions Lansman or Dramaturges Éditeurs, some of which have been translated into English, Norwegian, and Japanese. His magnificent script *Une Maison face au nord* has just been performed at Théâtre La Rubrique and will tour to Théâtre du Tandem in Abitibi, Québec, after its run at Théâtre français de Toronto.

THE AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wasn't born near a great peaceful river.

I grew up in a town perched on a fjord, a scar of black water surrounded by ancient, rounded mountains, which forced my eyes to look upward to the sky.

I am from this Québec, one built in a spirit of resistance, of tight-knit families.

A Québec that exaggerates every word, that's not afraid of words, that speak loudly and without apology, when it must, after letting what it really thinks be known.

I was born in the middle of nowhere with the desire to explore everywhere.

In this place, strangers come from the capital, the big city, or further afield, and none of them were ever badly received. Our only discourtesy is naming everyone according to their background before inviting them to be one of our own.

This Québec, I carry it with me, everywhere I go. I bequeath it to my children who speak with a Montréal accent.

I bequeath what I've received as I am.

They brought me up in the old anger of those who pushed our boarders northward, in the overweening pride of lumberjacks and labourers, exploited in the past, who now own their land.

They brought me up by telling me that children were life's finest achievement, the only thing that really counted.

They brought me up by telling me that this granite land was a country and our French language was an absolute act of possession.

They brought me up repeating that you had to say out loud what you think very quietly, even if it hurts, so you can later make up in the warmth of the table and wine.

They brought me up to not forget where I come from by making me understand that leaving wasn't an excuse to disown one's own.

The pride that governs us is not a barrier to change.

This country changes because it possesses the life that everyone breathes into it.

I hope that it continues to change without ever ceasing to speak freely, by putting its heart ahead of its fears.

And because no one who lives here should be left out in the cold – and no matter what shore of the world you were born on – I invite you into my house facing north.

JEAN-ROCK GAUDREULT



THE DIRECTOR – JACINTHE POTVIN

A native of Saguenay, actress, director, and artistic director of the company Mathieu, François et les autres..., Jacinthe Potvin played the character of Madeleine in the serial drama *4 et demi*, which many will remember. But, since 1975 she has devoted herself to theatre, her great passion, beginning with Théâtre de Carton, one of the most important groups creating in the 1970s and 80s. Co-artistic director of the Festival Les Coups de Théâtre and assistant director of Maison Théâtre for some years, she began a career as director with *Le Pont de pierres et la peau d'images* (Daniel Danis) in 1996. In 1999, following in the success of her direction of the Jean-Rock Gaudreault piece, *Mathieu trop court, François trop long* (1998), she founded her own theatre company for children, Mathieu, François et les autres..., named after the play, which enjoyed more than 200 performances in Québec and France, and an English version created in New York. Her participation as director of *Une Maison face au nord* marks her fifth collaboration with author Jean-Rock Gaudreault.

THE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I believe you've come here this evening to meet characters like us.

It seemed to me, in listening to them talk, the first time – at a reading of this superb script, presented in Ottawa – that I was hearing my own. My family's people, my great family of this country: strong, funny people, tender and sensitive beneath the crust, full of hope and contradictions... that I was seeing emerge through a piece of my story, where my story joins ours, I think.

We have made the voyage to meet these characters, our whole team, actors and designers, in a state of pure joy: often deeply moved... The bursts of laughter and emotion that rise in the throat and well in the eyes were never far off... And gripped by a very strong, common desire: to go to you.

I thank with infinite affection each and everyone of this wonderful team: for their talent, their generosity, and the shared pleasure!

Thanks to Jean-Rock for taking the time to watch our world go, and for writing such fine stories.

And most of all, thank you for being there! To feel like, again and again, telling you these stories, which are like mirrors, sometimes distorting or magnifying, but still, we give back facet of who we are, little humans, left one day to conquer our fate.

Have a wonderful evening... in our House Facing North.

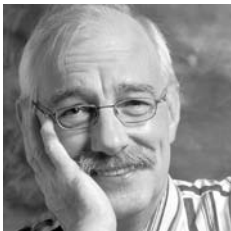
JACINTHE POTVIN

BIOGRAPHIES



LOUISETTE DUSSAULT – ANNE-MARIE

Since leaving the National Theatre School, Louise has toured across Canada and has played at most of the professional theatre companies in Québec. While numerous Québécois know her from *La Souris Verte*, she has also made her mark on television with *Marilyn* and *Les Super Mamies*. Although known for her film work, she has dedicated herself principally to the creation of a Québécois theatrical repertoire. Cofounder of Petits Enfants de Chénier (1969-1972), she was part of the first public reading of *Les Belles-Sœurs*, as well Michel Tremblay's *Lysistrata* (1969), *Demain matin, Montréal m'attend* (1970), and *Mistero Buffo* (by Dario Fo, translated by Michel Tremblay, 1974). A member of the feminist collective Nef des sorcières (1976), she was a cast member of the controversial production *Les fées ont soif* (1978). As well as being an actress and director, she wears hat of author, and shone with her solo show *Moman* (1979-1983), which earned her the *Chouchou* ("Darling") award at the Festival de Nancy (France, 1980) and tied for second place at the Festival de Sitges (Spain, 1982). She plays an active role with the Conseil québécois du théâtre, the provincial theatre council, and the International Commission of Francophone Theatre. She has received numerous accolades for her commitment to arts and culture, including the Gascon-Thomas Award (National Theatre School of Canada, 1995), the Victor Morin Award for the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society, and the badge of the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres de France from the French Republic's Ministry of Culture (Paris, 2003).



GUY MIGNAULT – HENRI

TfT's Artistic Director since 1997, Guy is a multi-talented artist. At the helm of TfT, he is a performer whose comic talent is much appreciated by theatre and television lovers, and is also a director and playwright. Recently, he has been seen on the TFO series *Francoeur* and *Météo +*. On stage at TfT, Guy has played the parts of Josaphat-le-violon under his own direction in Michel Tremblay's *Bonbons assortis*; Harpagon in the brilliant production de *L'Avare*, directed by Jean-Stéphane Roy; and the hilarious Monsieur Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. When not performing his numerous roles at TfT, Guy fulfills his dream of creating musical productions: *C'était un p'tit Bonheur*, which received Dora for Best Musical Production in 1998; *La, la la, mine de rien*; *Autour de Kurt Weill*; and *Et si on chantait...* (2007). Finally, he is also the author of *Bonjour, Monsieur de La Fontaine*, a production for young audiences which toured Ontario for three consecutive years and was seen by 27,000 schoolchildren.



ÉRIC CHALIFOUR – STÉPHANE

A graduate of the University of Québec at Chicoutimi, Éric has already been immersed in the theatre world for 15 years; he works as an actor, director, and designer. Additionally, since 2006 he has occupied the post of artistic director of ManiganSes, Festival international des arts de la marionnette (an international puppetry festival). He has been seen in, among others, *Le Déluge après, Pierre et Marie... et le Démon* and *Toilette de soirée* (Théâtre La Rubrique); *Le Malade imaginaire*, *Onan*, and *Le Misanthrope* (Les Têtes Heureuses); *Fin de partie* (Théâtre 100 Masques); *Mon Ismérie* (Théâtre de la Suggestion); and *Georges Dandin* (Troupe du Jour, Saskatchewan). As well, he has participated in the creation of the pieces *Du Bec et des ongles*, *Lifting*, and *Kapos-B12730* (Théâtre CRI); and *Une Surprise pour Velaa* and *Sophie dans la neige* (Les Amis de Chiffon). He has also acted in some productions of the Société d'Art lyrique du Royaume, including *La Chauve-Souris* and *La Périchole*. As a director, he has worked on *Le Festin* (Théâtre La Rubrique); *Un violon sur le toit*, *Miss Saïgon*, and *Les Pirates de Penzance* (Société d'Art lyrique du Royaume); *Suor Angelica* and *Les Mousquetaires au couvent* (with students from the Collège d'Alma); and *La Serva Amatorosa* (Théâtre 100 Masques). Finally, he has set up, for the Orchestre symphonique du Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean, the concept for *Musifête*, with the *Marcheur de rêves*, for the 2003 benefit evening of *Hansel et Gretel*.



ALEXANDRE DUBOIS – HENRIQUEZ

Since graduating from Collège Lionel-Groulx's acting program in 2007, Alexandre Dubois' career has move into several disciplines. His film credits include *Polytechnique* and *Le Banquet*, among others. He has also appeared on the television series *CA 3* and *Sophie Paquin 2*. In addition to appearing in various dance productions, he has walked the planks as Polonius in *Hamlet* (Théâtre de l'Utopie) and with the teams of *Pour ceux qui croient que la terre est ronde* (Mathieu, François et les autres...) and *Comme vous avez changé* (Théâtre inédit). His appearance in *Une Maison face au Nord* marks his first collaboration with Théâtre français de Toronto.



A.-J. HENDERSON – LARRY

Coming from the National Theatre School of Canada (English Acting Section), A.-J. has worked as an actor, stage director, and a teacher. He also works regularly in recording studios dubbing and has lent his voice to characters in *Little Flying Bears*, *Ovide Video*, *Maya the Bee* et *Robinson Sucroe*, to name only a few. A professor at the University of Ottawa, Concordia University, and the National Theatre School, he has also taught voice and speech for 24 years at the École de théâtre du Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe. In theatre, he has played, among others, at the National Arts centre in Ottawa, the Globe Theatre (Regina), the Saidye Bronfman Centre, and the company Land of the Young, while racking up performances in different film and television projects. He has also directed three video games for the company Microids (bought by Ubi-Soft), and has played several roles for Ubi-Soft.



SARA SIMARD – SONIA

An artist with multiple interests, Sara easily combines the roles of actress, author, director, stage designer, and graphic designer. She has been seen on stage in the pieces *Le Bordel* (Les Diaphanes), presented in Québec City; *L'Espace entre Nous*, *Le Désir*, and *Entre-Deux* (Théâtre La Rubrique). After having made several notable forays into directing and stage design, including one into dance with the project *L'Envers du décor* (Troupe Zusammen), in 2004 she won the *Prix d'écriture dramatique* from the Festival du Jamais Lu with her script *No et Bennie*.



CATHERINE SASSEVILLE – DIRECTOR ASSISTANT

With a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Québec in Chicoutimi (UQAC), Catherine has collaborated as a designer for such productions as *Par la fenêtre, la forêt* (L'eau du bain); *Les Soirées du Grand Écart* (Théâtre 100 Masques); *Job*; *Les Sorcières de Salem*, and *l'Impromptu de l'Alma* (Petit théâtre de l'UQAC). In film, as assistant art director, she has worked on *Jeu d'esprit* (Alexandre Smia), *Péché originel* (Manon Poudoulec), and *Le Film de sa vie* (Julien Lahmi). She was the stage manager for the theatrical productions *La Fabuleuse histoire d'un royaume* by Ghislain Bouchard, *Marciel Hallucine* (Hollo Company), as well as for special events such as the Montréal Jazz Festival and *Le Bal d'une nuit d'été* (Orchestre symphonique de Montréal).



SERGE LAPIÈRE – SCÉNOGRAPHIE

A designer of sets, costumes, props, and puppets, Serge has been collaborating with Théâtre La Rubrique since 1993 and has been its technical director since 2000. In 16 years, he has created more than 30 designs, (costumes and /or props and sets) for 22 productions. He has designed, among others, the costumes for *Les Feluettes* (1993) and *Les Sept jours de Simon Labrosse* (1996), the sets, costumes, and props for *Laguna Beach* (1998), the two productions of *Cabaret des nuits blanches* and *L'Espace entre nous* (2008), as well as the sets and props for *Celle-là* (2001), *Le Désir* (2003), *Le Festin* (2006), and *Je ne pensais pas que ce serait sucré* (2007). He has also worked with Schème Danse, Théâtre Les Amis de Chiffon, and ManiganSes, an international puppetry festival.



LYNE RIOUX – LIGHTING DESIGN

Receiving a degree in cinema studies from the University of Montréal in 1992, Lyne is a much-appreciated professional in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue performing arts world. She has been a part of the Théâtre du Tandem team for ten years, where she fulfills in turn the roles of lighting designer, stage manager, assistant director, production director, tour director, and technical director. A member of the Théâtre du Cuivre stage team since 1998, she is also a house technician for the theatre and for the multiuse hall at the Abitibi-Témiscamingue CEGEP in Rouyn-Noranda.

She is technical director of Agora des Arts, a performance hall in Rouyn-Noranda. On occasion, she also makes videos and directs street theatre in collaboration with community organizations.



YASMINA GIGUÈRE – COSTUMES

With a degree in stage design from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec, Yasmina has designed and produced a good number of productions since leaving school, particularly for Théâtre des Fonds de Tiroirs. She has worked in all aspects of visual creation: sets, costumes, props, lighting, makeup, and posters. Working under director Frédéric Dubois, she designed the costumes for several Théâtre de la Bordée productions, including *En pièces détachées* by Michel Tremblay, and the Théâtre du Trident production *Ha ha!...* by Réjean Ducharme. Fuelled by her nomination for the *Prix d'Excellence des Arts et de la Culture de Québec* (2005), for the design of 75 costumes for the epic piece *Vie et mort du roi boîteux* by Jean-Pierre Ronfard, she furthered her career by working side by side with Robert Lepage, designing the costumes for *The Busker's Opera, 1984*, and *Lipsynch*. More recently, she has designed the costumes for the production *La Cantatrice chauve* followed by *La Leçon* by Eugène Ionesco, produced by Théâtre des Fonds de Tiroirs de Québec and for which she was again nominated for the Prix d'Excellence des Arts et de la Culture de Québec, as well as the musical comedy *Les Misérables*, presented at the Capitole de Québec as part of the city's 400th anniversary festivities.



CATHERINE GADOUAS – CONCEPTION SONORE

Composer, choral director, coach, researcher, professor of choral singing, and musical director of the National Theatre School of Canada, Catherine has since 1981 written more than 100 creations of original music and sound design for various Montréal stages, with, among others, the directors Pierre Bernard, André Brassard, Yves Desgagnés, Françoise Faucher, Denise Guilbeault, Lorraine Pintal, Claude Poissant, and Jean-Pierre Ronfard. For television, she composed the music for the series *Montréal P.Q.* (Victor Lévy-Beaulieu) and *Sous le signe du lion* (Françoise Loranger), and has written the music for several films. In film, her music can be heard in *Roméo et Juliette* and in *Idole instantanée* by director Yves Desgagnés, and in the short film *Now That We Know* by Sébastien Girard.



MICHEL CÔTÉ – RÉGISSEUR

Technical director of the theatre Salle Pierrette-Gaudreault, he has for several years collaborated with Théâtre La Rubrique as sound designer, sound technician, and/or stage manager. His sound design credits include *La Nuit où il s'est mis à chanter*, *Le Désir*, *Jacinthe Rioux*, *609 Saint-Gabriel*, *Pierre et Marie... et le Démon*, *Toilette de soirée*, *Le Festin*, *Entre-Deux*, *Le Déluge après*, and *L'Espace entre nous*, all produced by La Rubrique.

REVUE DE PRESSE

One of the top ten plays of the decade, according to *Eye Weekly!*

“A privilege for the viewer. Everything is convincing, steady, at times funny, at times moving. A script superbly handled by a cast impeccable in their game. A magic moment: the strength of the play and the beauty of the words stay with us for a long time. Definitely go see it.”

Christiane LAFORGE, *Le Quotidien*

“Guy Mignault gives an exceptional performance, Louissette Dussault sparkles. I had a wonderful time.”

Caroline DUCHESNE, *Rock-Détente*

“A beautiful piece to discover. It’s worth seeing.”

Catherine GAUDREAULT, *Énergie*

“Wonderful performances, a really effective stage design – I really loved it.”

Philippe BELLEY, CBJ Première Chaîne de Radio-Canada

“The lines are delicious. It’s well put together, simple, sensitive, intelligent, funny, profound. It’s a marvellous pieces performed by very talented actors. Bravo!”

Annick BILODEAU, CKAJ



Guy Mignault in *A House Facing North*. Photo Jean Briand