

CHEZ NOUS

A Staged-Reading Series Showcasing
English-Language Drama in Quebec
(1930-1979)



EVENING TWO “HE SAID X, SHE ASKED, WHY”

Director: Eda Holmes,
Artistic and Executive Director
of Centaur Theatre

Stage Manager: Aida Jamil



Produced by Professor Erin Hurley, Department of English,
McGill University in collaboration with Playwrights' Workshop
Montréal and research team members Alison Bowie (Concordia
University), Alexis Diamond, and Emma Tibaldo (PWM).

***A Man Was Killed* by Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen (1959)**

Henderson: Jean Marchand*

Jeff: Ryan Bommarito*

Mort: Alain Goulem*

Eve: Lucinda Davis*

Pig: Alex Petrachuk*

Blackie: Josh Johnston*

Cupid: Sophie-Thérèse Stone-Richards*

Napoleon: Ryan Bommarito*

Stage-directions: Rebecca Gibian

A Man Was Killed is read with the kind permission of the estates of Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen.



***Big X Little Y* by Elinore Siminovitch (1974)**

Lori: Rebecca Gibian*

John: Ryan Bommarito*

Woman 1: Lucinda Davis*

Woman 2: Sophie-Therese Stone-Richards*

Woman 3: Alex Petrachuk*

Man 1: Jean Marchand*

Man 2: Alain Goulem*

Man 3: Josh Johnston*

Big X, Little Y is read with the kind permission of the estate of Elinore Siminovitch.

*The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the Dance•Opera•Theatre Policy.

***A Man was Killed* by Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen (1959)**

Synopsis: *A Man was Killed* is a black comedy about violence and the breakdown of human social interaction. The play intertwines the lives of people living in the same Montreal neighbourhood, as they fail to connect with each other in a meaningful way.

A Man Was Killed, one of Cohen's few dramatic works, was co-written with his friend, fellow poet and fellow Montrealer, Irving Layton, in the winter of 1959, before Cohen travelled to Greece. Cohen and Layton's collaboration produced four short plays, none of which were professionally produced.

ABOUT Irving Layton (1912 - 2006)

Irving Layton was born in Romania to a devout Jewish family who immigrated to Montreal in 1913. Layton briefly served in the Canadian Army during the Second World War and upon his return to Canada, obtained an MA in Economics and Political Science from McGill University.

Of the poets coming out of Montreal in this period, Layton was said to be “the most outspoken and flamboyant”. Throughout the course of his career, Layton published close to 50 books, most were volumes of original poetry, others were plays, works of prose, and memoirs.



At the height of his career, Layton was Canada's most celebrated poet, garnering a Governor General's Award and a nomination for a Nobel Prize in Literature.

ABOUT Leonard Cohen (1934 - 2016)

Leonard Cohen, one of the most acclaimed Canadian artists of the 20th Century, was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Montreal's Westmount neighbourhood.

Following high school, where he participated in the school's theatre productions, Cohen studied English Literature at McGill University. Cohen proceeded to write, perform, and publish poetry in Montreal. Just after he co-wrote *A Man Was Killed*, he relocated to the Greek island of Hydra, where he would publish the foundational poetry collections *The Spice Box of Earth* (1961) and *Flowers for Hitler* (1964), in which appears another short play entitled *The New Step*. Cohen also published his first two novels while in Greece, *The Favourite Game* in 1964, and *Beautiful Losers* in 1966. With the release of his 1967 album, *Songs of Leonard Cohen* career in music was launched. Cohen's ability to probe the human condition and explore themes of love, loss, and death in his work makes his a voice that continues to resonate.



***Big X, Little Y* by Elinore Siminovitch (1974)**

Synopsis: The play uses nursery rhymes and children's games to demonstrate how even from a very young age, men and women are conditioned to see the world very differently. It focuses specifically on the female experience through life and ties in with the feminist movement going on in Québec during this era. The playwright was a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada.

ABOUT Elinore Siminovitch (1922-1995)

Elinore Siminovitch was born in Poland and immigrated to Montreal with her family at the age of five. Her career in writing started with CBC Radio in Montreal, where she sold several of her early stories to be adapted to radio dramas or televised productions. During her career Siminovitch wrote close to 30 plays, invested in themes of Jewish life and feminism, and exploring social issues of the times. *Big X, Little Y* won the Ottawa Little Theatre's Playwriting Competition, and was produced at Glendon College, at Montreal's Playwrights' Workshop Theatre and in numerous high schools across the country.

Her passion for and commitment to theatre is also reflected in the Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, started in 2001 in her name and that of her husband, the molecular biologist Lou Siminovitch to recognize and reward excellence in playwriting, direction, or design. It has buoyed the careers of dozens of Canadian theatre artists such as playwright Carole Fréchette, director Brigitte Haentjens, and designer Stéphanie Jasmin, all of whom are Montreal-based.

Biographies written by Hannah Cheslock.

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Bon spectacle!



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