

Chez Nous (Two): A Staged-Reading Series
Showcasing English-Language Drama in Quebec (1980-2010)

Produced by Professor Erin Hurley, Department of English, McGill University in collaboration with Playwrights' Workshop Montréal, Alexis Diamond (series Literary Manager) and Dr. Alison Bowie (dramaturg and research assistant)

EVENING TWO: "Faith, Frenzy, and Fallacy"

Director: Sophie Gee

Stage Manager: Carmina Berbari Daou

Cast:

Maryline Chery*

Marcel Jeannin*

Johanna Nutter*

Mireille Tawfik*

Reading selections from the following plays:

Toxic Bus Incident by Greg MacArthur

The Mary Project by Ann Lambert and Laura Mitchell

Magpie by Kit Brennan

Tulip by Don Druick

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

***Toxic Bus Incident* by Greg MacArthur (2009)**

Synopsis:

The Toxic Bus Incident, inspired by a bizarre 2004 occurrence on a Vancouver bus, is infused with post-9-11 paranoia about the terrorist threat. A suburbanite woman gets on a bus and notices a dark-skinned man talking with the driver. When she and the other passenger begin to suffer from a mysterious sickness, her paranoia also has consequences for her family, even though it is finally diagnosed as “mass psychogenic illness.” Unable to trust that she is safe and has not been physically harmed, Helen’s illness deepens, keeping her isolated in her home.

About Greg MacArthur:

Playwright, dramaturg, teacher and performer, MacArthur was short-listed for the 2011 Siminovitch Prize in Theatre. A graduate of Ryerson Theatre School in Toronto and based in Montreal MacArthur’s work examines imagined and real dystopias. For instance, *girls! girls! girls!* (Montreal Fringe Festival 2000, dir. Peter Hinton) is based on the tragic death of B.C. teenager Reena Virk; *Snowman* (Imago Theatre 2003) portrays the consequences of the discovery of the ancient corpse of a young boy in a glacier. In 2011, two of his plays ran in Montreal in French translations: *Toxique*, Maryse Warda’s translation of *The Toxic Bus Incident* (Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui, dir. Geoffrey Gaquere), and *Réhabilitation*, a translation of *Recovery* (Segal Studio, dir. Stacey Christodoulou). His plays are published by Coach House Books. More recently, he has been playing with the conflation of live performance, text, sculpture, and installation, using alternative spaces and venues for his work to see how they affect the viewing experience. He has held residencies at Buddies in Bad Times (1997-98), Centre for the Book (South Africa 2003), Playwrights Theatre Centre Vancouver, and the Stratford Festival. He was Artist-In-Residence at Playwrights’ Workshop Montreal from 2005 to 2011, and the 2011/12 Lee Playwright-In-Residence at the University of Alberta. MacArthur believes the purpose of theatre is “to excite, to challenge, to provoke, to affect change, to be sexy, to be dangerous,” and he has described his own work as “contradictory, unclassifiable, [and] vulnerable.”

***The Mary Project* by Ann Lambert and Laura Mitchell (2002)**

Synopsis:

A feminist play that brings together famous "Marys"—from the Virgin Mary and Mary Tudor to Mary Poppins—from across the ages in one room in Marieville, in modern Quebec. Their conversation provides interiority to these famous, caricatured, static personalities—insight into their lives/desires/thoughts/wants and needs while providing commentary on women's relation to contemporary issues such as religion, motherhood, child abuse, domestic violence, professional aspirations etc. It's a play about reclamation of the female body and identity, a reaffirmation of female agency and voice, and how it is almost impossible in today's reality. How patriarchy silences women and creates a certain 'image' of female historical figures which is suitable for the maintenance of its oppressive structure.

About Ann Lambert and Laura Mitchell :

Ann Lambert has been writing and directing for the stage and radio for thirty-five years.; she is also a novelist. Several of her plays, including *The Wall*, *Self Offense*, *Parallel Lines*, *Very Heaven*, *The Mary Project*, *Force of Circumstance*, and *Two Short Women* have been performed in theatres in Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia. Ann is the former head of The Playwriting Program at the National Theatre School of Canada. A teacher of English literature at Dawson College for almost thirty years, she has written, directed and produced shows with The Dawson Theatre Collective. With her daughter, Alice Abracen, Laura Mitchell, and Danielle Szydlowski, Ann co-founded Theatre Ovest End in Montreal, which was launched in the spring of 2019. It is dedicated to producing new and established work that brings together an intergenerational community of experienced, emerging professionals and passionate amateurs.

from: <https://www.annlambertbooks.com/about>

Laura Mitchell is an award-winning actress (UDA, Equity, ACTRA), who moved to Montreal from the southern U.S. after completing an MFA in acting at the prestigious Case Western University. Here in Montreal, she worked many years with TACcom, (a company that tailor makes corporate theatre) as writer, actor, and “animateur.” She is co-founder of Unwashed Grape, Right NOW! and TOE (Theatre Oust/west End). As a writer, she has co-written (with Janis Kirshner) four cabarets. She has also co-written one feature film -- the quirky, dark comedy, *World Without Men* (Sheldon Neuberger co-writer, 7th Art Production), -- and one documentary film, called *Unbuckling My Bible Belt* (Patricia Tassinari, Pandora Film). With Ann Lambert, and commissioned by GCTC, Laura co-wrote the full-length play, *The Mary Project* that has seen productions in Montreal, Athens, Greece, and Melbourne, Australia. She teaches English at Dawson College where she also directs The Showtime Troupe. She also taught Dramatic Structure at the National Theatre School for two semesters. Laura has a keen love of story and of storytelling and has performed as a storyteller at Blue Metropolis.

from: <http://www.theatreouestend.ca/about.html>

***Magpie* by Kit Brennan (1994)**

Synopsis:

In *Magpie*, we meet Bernice, large, middle-aged, and prone to fantasies. Her small-town life is disrupted by the arrival of a gifted dance instructor. He is everything she aspires to be and that her background rejects as frivolous. The men in her life, husband, doctor and evangelist preacher, cannot keep her in the confines of her reality, and her fantasy world escalates into a place that is much larger and more exciting than life.

About Kit Brennan:

Kit Brennan recently retired from her faculty position in Concordia University's Theatre department. Her award-winning plays have been published and produced across Canada. Titles include *Tiger's Heart* (Centaur Theatre, *The Ship's Company* (Great Canadian Theatre Company and Women in View Festival), *Spring Planting* (Hudson Village Theatre, The Ship's Company, Western Canada Theatre Company, Theatre Orangeville and Elora Community Theatre), *The Invisibility of Eileen* (Great Canadian Theatre Company), *Hunger Striking* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *Magpie* (25th Street Theatre) and *Having* (Centaur Theatre). Brennan also edited the anthology *Going It Alone: Plays by Women for Solo Performers* (Nuage Editions) as well as anthologies *Two Hands Clapping* (Plays for Two Actors), *Three on the Boards* (Plays for Three Actors), *Things That Go Bump* in two volumes, *Out on a Limb: Short Plays by New Writers*, and *One for the Road: New Plays for One Actor*, all for Signature Editions.

from: <https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/theatre/faculty.html?fpid=kit-brennan>

***Tulip* by Don Druick (2006)**

Synopsis:

Set in the madness of 17th Century Holland during the spectacular and frighteningly strange Dutch obsession with tulip bulbs, *Tulip* is a wild play about greed, beauty, deceit, and botany. The bubble bursts; within days, many are ruined. Starvation and poverty ensue. Adrift in a sea of menacing shadows, the characters of *Tulip* must now desperately try to reconstruct their shattered lives with only the broken mirror of their hopes and dreams to guide them.

About Don Druick:

Don Druick is an award-winning playwright, a baroque flautist, and an avid herb gardener. His plays have been produced on stage, radio and television throughout Canada, and in Europe, Japan, and the USA; and developed at Atlantic Playwrights' Resource Centre, Canadian Stage Company, Nightswimming Theatre, Playwrights Theatre Centre, Playwrights Workshop Montréal, Necessary Angel Theatre, the New Play Centre, and the Stratford Festival. Don Druick was born in Montréal in 1945. From 1967 to 1985, his theatre work focused on structural research and experimental performance techniques, often incorporating music and media, narrative innovation, and non-traditional venues. In addition to his theatre work, he performed widely as a flautist in Canada and Japan. He also composed music for dancers and for feature films. His musical research included baroque music practice on period instruments, and the *nohkan*, a flute used in the Japanese Noh theatre. At various times, he traveled to Tokyo to conduct research in contemporary Japanese theatre and in Kabuki. From 1985 to 1996, he lived again in Montréal. His work of this period was primarily as a playwright, embracing the traditional conventions of the theatre. Historiography became the subject of many of his plays. He was the resident playwright with a number of Canadian institutions.

Synopses and biographies prepared by Dr. Alison Bowie.

Pre-show music from “Songs of the Resistance” (1980) by Barry Lazar, produced by David Gélinas; *Anglo! The Musical* (1984) by Rod Hayward; and *Ride* (2010) by Alexis Diamond (librettist) and Nick Carpenter (composer). Thanks to all for permissions to play these tracks. Moyse Hall is SOCAN licensed.

Thanks to: The research project team: Alexis Diamond (literary management), Alison Bowie (dramaturgy), and Emma Tibaldo (production and professional guidance). To Pascale Théorêt-Groulx for designing the posters and programmes; and Corinne Deeley for her production guidance and her supervision of the student stage-managers; Keith Roche for technical direction; and Stewart McCombie for live streaming.

Bon spectacle!