

Celebraci-n de las Culturas de IberoamŽrica

La Casa Azul

Thursday through Sunday, May 8-11, 2003
Zellerbach Playhouse

Text by Sophie Faucher
Inspired by the writings of Frida Kahlo
English translation by Neil Bartlett

Directed by Robert Lepage

Performed by
Sophie Faucher
Lise Roy
Patric Saucier

Normand Poirier, *assistant to the director*

Carl Fillion, *set designer*
Sonoyo Nishikawa, *lighting designer*
VŽronique Borbo'n, *costume designer*
Sylvie Courbron, *properties*

Angelo Barsetti, *make-up and hair*

Rachel Tremblay, *wigs*
(assisted by Claude Trudel)

Images produced by Jacques Collin
(assisted by Lionel Arnould)

Les Conceptions Visuelles Jean-Marc Cyr, *sets*

Music

ARVO PŠRT

Tabula Rasa, Fratres, Cantus in Memoriam of Benjamin Britten

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Tabula Rasa

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Fratres

Performed by I Fiamminghi; conducted by Rudolf Werthen; from Telarc CD-80387

TOMAS PONCE REYES

LUCHA MORENA

TITA RUFFO

Excerpt from *Belle of the Nineties* © Universal Studio Licensing, Inc.

Excerpt from *The HeatŌs On* © Columbia Pictures

Lynda Beaulieu, *Robert LepageŌs agent*

Louise Roussel, *production manager*

Marie-Pierre GagnŽ, *production assistant*

Annie Pilon, *tour manager*

Patrick Durnin and Robert Lemoine, *technical directors*

Tobie Horswill, *technical consultant*

FrŽdŽric Labelle, *technical director (touring)*

Nathalie Godbout, *stage manager*

Laurent Routhier, *lighting manager*

FrŽdŽric Auger, *sound manager*

Francis Leclerc, *video manager*

Sylvie Courbron, *costume and property manager*

Jean-Pierre Gallant, *chief stagehand*

Produced by Ex Machina

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Cabildo Insular de Tenerife, Tenerife
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Wiener Festwochen, Wien

Menno Plukker, *associate producer & North and South America, Australia, and
New Zealand*

Michel Bernatchez, *producer for Ex Machina*

English language production commissioned
by the Lyric Hammersmith & Cultural Industry

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La Casa Azul draws an impressionistic portrait of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, looking at both her flamboyant and passionate personality and her uncommon artistic talent.

In Frida Kahlo's eye is a disturbing darkness. In her mouth, an angry scream that has resounded throughout Mexico since the first massacres committed by the Conquistadors. In her veins, red blood, the source for all the colors that fill her works, where her innermost secrets come alive.

Frida Kahlo is a woman living in pain since youth, since a terrible tramway accident broke her spine. Her suffering, however, acts as the source of a singular outlook on art and on the mythology of her country, as seen through the history of the Aztec people. Pain is also part of her tormented love life as the wife of the great muralist Diego Rivera and as mistress of Leon Trotsky.

La Casa Azul shows Frida Kahlo in the last moments of her life, as she engages in a dialogue with Death, hours before the inauguration of her first and only exhibit in Mexico City. As the conversation ensues, we are witness to Frida's complex desire for recognition, her immeasurable need for love, and the constant struggle between her desire for death and her lust for life.

Stage actress Sophie Faucher has been fascinated for many years by the art and life of Frida Kahlo. *La Casa Azul* is her first stage play. Director Robert Lepage has been associated with the project from the beginning, and he brings additional layers of meaning to Faucher's text with the inventive

staging and visual elegance for which he is renowned. Video plays an important part in the production, sometimes as a narrative tool, sometimes as an element of stage design, while the frequent transformations of accessories, music, lighting, and atmosphere also play an integral part in the telling of this unique story.

Sophie Faucher (author and actress) has a substantial list of accomplishments is notable for both the quality and diversity of productions it includes. Immediately after graduating from Montreal's Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique, she began working in the theater, cinema, television, and radio. She has performed in over 30 productions, both comedies and dramas. Memorable roles include Mara in Paul Claudel's *L'annonce faite à Marie*, Camille in Alfred de Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, the daughter-in-law in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and title roles in Françoise Lalonde's *Alma Mahler* and Schiller's *Mary Stuart*. This versatile actress can also be heard as a film narrator and as the voice of various animated characters. She recently received a Gemini Award for her role in the children's television series *Tohu-Bohu*. *La Casa Azul* is her first stage play.

Robert Lepage (director) practices with an equal ability the functions of stage director, set designer, playwright, actor, and film director. He brings to the stage original plays, overturning theater's more traditional styles with the use of new technologies. Lepage finds inspiration in contemporary life; his work is actual, unusual, and transcends all barriers.

Born in Quebec in 1957, Lepage discovered early on a profound interest in geography (he even dreamed of becoming a professor). Also attracted to the various performing arts, he eventually came across what would become his greatest passion, theater. In 1975, at the age of 17, he began his training at Quebec's Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique. After returning from an internship in Paris (1978), he participated in numerous productions before joining Théâtre Repère two years later.

In 1984, Lepage created *Circulations*, which would go on to be presented across Canada and win an award as Best Canadian Production during La Quinzaine Internationale de Théâtre de Québec. It was, however, the following year, with *The Dragons' Trilogy*, that his work received international recognition. Subsequent productions included *Vinci* (1986), *The Polygraph* (1987-1990), and *Tectonic Plates* (1988-1990).

From 1989 to 1993, Lepage held the position of artistic director at the National Arts Center's French Theatre (Ottawa). While at the NAC, his directing projects included *Needles and Opium*, *Coriolian*, *Macbeth et La Tempête*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for which he became the first North American ever to direct a Shakespeare play at London's Royal National Theatre.

In 1994, Lepage took an important step by founding his own multidisciplinary company, Ex Machina. As artistic director, he led this new group through the creation process that resulted in the acclaimed *Seven Streams of the River Ota*, *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*, and Lepage's one-man show *Elsinore*. In 1994, he began extending his talent to cinema. The fervor with which he wrote and directed his first feature film was immediately recognized, and *Le Confessionnel* opened the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 1995. Lepage later went on to direct *Le Polygraphe* (1996), *N^M* (1998), and his first feature film in English, *Possible Worlds* (2000).

La Caserne Dalhousie, a multidisciplinary production center, opened in June of 1997 under Lepage's watchful eye. In this new workspace, Lepage and his team created *Geometry of Miracles*, *Zulu Time*, and his latest solo piece, *the far side of the moon* (which has won many prizes, including a *Time Out* Award and the prestigious *Evening Standard* Award).

Lepage's reputation as a theatrical pioneer has led to several exciting collaborations. Presenting the double bill *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* at the Canadian Opera Company, Lepage proved to be as gifted in opera as he is in theater. He repeated his feat in 1999 by presenting *The Damnation of Faust* in Japan (the production went on to play in Paris in 2001). In addition, he conceived and stage directed Peter Gabriel's highly acclaimed *Secret World Tour* in 1992. Lepage later took on the role of artistic director of *Mystic Voyage* (1999), an exhibition at Le Musée de la Civilisation du Québec. In 2002, he teamed up yet again with Gabriel to stage his *Growing Up Live* tour.

Robert Lepage's work has been recognized and honored many times. Among his most recent honors is the medal of l'Ordre National du Québec (1999). In September of 2000, he was recipient of the SORIQ Award, honoring his successful international career. In March of 2002, the French embassy invited him to join the Legion of Honor. In April 2002, he was named Grand Québécois by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Finally, this past November, he was recipient of the Herbert Whittaker Drama Bench Award for his outstanding contribution to Canadian theater.

Lepage is currently overseeing the world tour of *La Caza Azul*, and in the near future, he and a new cast will be reviving the cult classic *Dragons' Trilogy* for the Festival de Théâtre des Amériques. He is also collaborating with Cirque du Soleil. The circus called on his talent to create their next permanent Las Vegas show, which is expected to open in April 2004. With Maestro Lorin Maazel, Lepage will begin work on an opera based on George Orwell's 1984. Finally, Lepage is in the midst of producing his fifth feature film, adapted from his award-winning *the far side of the moon*.

Lise Roy (actress), a graduate of Montreal's Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique, has appeared in over 30 stage plays, playing roles including Camille C. in *Camille Claudel*, Madeleine II in *Le vrai monde?*, and Madame K. in *Portrait of Dora*. She also works in television, where she was seen on French-language series like *Le volcan tranquille*, *Fortier*, and *Fred-Dy*, as well as, in English, the remarkable *The Boys of St. Vincent*, which earned her a Gemini Award for best actress in a supporting role, and the television movie *Children of My Heart*, which earned her a Gemini nomination.

Roy also teaches acting, has initiated numerous artistic projects, and has received several grants from the Quebec and Canada Arts Council, while pursuing a career along roads less traveled, where the creative spirit is always dominant.

Patric Saucier (actor) graduated from Quebec City's Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique in 1990, and has worked in just about every theater in the city, participating in a wide range of works. He has directed several plays, including *Hosanna* by Michel Tremblay, *Les grands d'parts* by Jacques Languirand, *Le Chien* by Jean-Marc Dalpé, Molière's *George Dandin*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and his own adaptation of Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*. As an actor, Saucier has played Mario Escalope in René Ducharme's *Ines Pêche et Inat Tendu*, Bug in Lee MacDougall's *Dora* Award-winning *High Life*, and Wilbrod in Lise Vaillancourt's children's play, *Le petit dragon*. He is also the author of the stage plays *Et Cetera*, *Il pleut des vies*, and an adaptation of *L'écume des jours* by Boris Vian, as well as three radio plays (*Le Frappeur de t tes*, *Lili l'ot*, and *La mémoire de Neige*), which were performed on Radio Canada.