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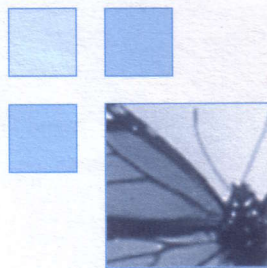
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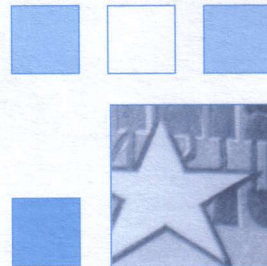
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Aesthetics & Representation

The writers in this issue of *alt.theatre* are all concerned with ways in which relationships between aesthetics and representation are directly implicated in agendas of either colonization or decolonization. As this issue goes to print, the Festival de théâtre des Amériques is just opening in Montreal and Robert Lepage's remount of *La Trilogie des Dragons* is billed as "the big one" (Jason Whiting, *The Hour Vol 11:20*). But while Lepage is often held up as a positive example of Quebec's cross-culturalism, Rahul Varma denounces the Quebec icon's portrayal of the Other in *Zulu Time*, arguing that Lepage's curatorial approach to representation and his aesthetic fascination with the new vocabulary of technology effectively masks dehumanizing colonialist assumptions and implicitly supports a world view defined by US militarism.

At the opposite end of the technological spectrum, Tamar Tembeck looks at a grass-roots up approach to relationships between aesthetics and social justice in her interview with Gabe Levine of Le Petit Théâtre de L'Absolu. This young Montreal company's activist puppet theatre addresses contemporary social concerns by revisiting revolutionary social history. Tembeck looks at how the company's toy theatre aesthetic—a world of miniature cut-out characters, found objects, and recycled garbage—facilitates, in an essentially Brechtian way, entry into an evocative world where tiny figures speak large truths about contemporary states of consumerism, war, and intellectual colonization. Le Petit Théâtre de L'Absolu was founded in 1999 by Scott Gilmore, Gabriel Levine, and Hermine Ortega, and the company's most recent project involves a Middle Eastern tour of a children's theatre project for Arab and Israeli audiences.

Rebecca Todd writes about a Toronto-based company that, while deeply concerned with "land-based awareness," eschews an activist approach to theatre. Red Sky Performance meshes dance, music, storytelling, and theatre to integrate Native artistic tradition and contemporary dance to bring the "more-than-human world" alive. Red Sky's artistic director, Sandra Laronde, makes the point that while "being a contemporary aboriginal person telling a contemporary aboriginal story is already inherently political," she is not interested in art which explicitly addresses political or even social themes. "I really want to see beauty" she states, "it occurred to me how revolutionary it would be to show beauty in spite of a history of genocide, suffering, and oppression. I'm tired of seeing constant existential angst onstage. We all are." Laronde is also notably the founder of Native Women in the Arts, an organization that encourages "artistic and cultural expression through creativity, activism, and social responsibility" (www.nativewomeninthearts.com).

Also in stark contrast to Lepage's fascination with the "magic" of technology, Penny Joy and Geraldo Ferreira de Lima write about culturally diverse artists who are drawn to mythical, mystical, or supernatural elements as a means of exposing perceptions of objective reality that remain deeply rooted in colonial mentalities masquerading as rationalism.

Penny Joy reports from Victoria BC on Puente Theatre's adaptation of a Chilean play about mentally disabled children which, while maintaining a deeply mystical Latin American flavour, "bridges" cultural difference through the use of mythic and allegorical figures designed to provoke an intuitive response to universal issues of social equity. Joy's description of the production's desire to communicate through what is "not seen and not explained" is evocative of Todd's description of connection to the "more-than-human world." Puente's approach to the project included outreach to parents of children with intellectual disabilities.

Geraldo Ferreira de Lima's article considers how Brazilian playwright Araylton A. Públio is "escaping from the claws" of a dramaturgical colonialism steeped in Grecophilia. Públio's approach involves a kind of aesthetic rehabilitation in which elements of classical Greek form are integrated with popular and magical, fantastical and supernatural thematic elements of the Brazilian *Cordel* — an oral or literary form in which two singers "fight" each other as if dueling — in order to reposition both centre and margins in ways that offer striking new perspectives on Brazilian identity politics and cultural colonization.

And finally, echoing Le Petit Théâtre de L'Absolu impulse towards social history, Ehab Lotayev uses poetry to draw attention to rhetorical posturing vis-a-vis the current situation in Iraq and to expose the colonialist impulse in aggression.

Edward Little

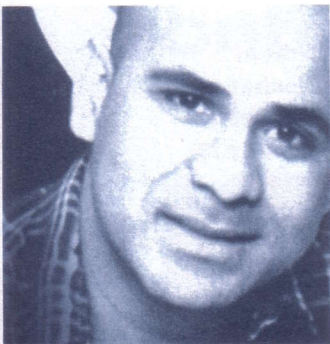


Robert Lepage's

ZULU TIME

A Dehumanizing Show

by Rahul Varma



Zulu Time, a lavish multimedia event created by Robert Lepage and rock star Peter Gabriel, was billed as the centrepiece of Québec New York 2001, a month-long festival celebrating Québécois culture that was scheduled to open in New York on 21 September 2001 but was postponed in the wake of 9/11. While ex-Premier Bernard Landry and his Minister Louise Beaudoin personally expressed their condolences to the victims, Lepage benefited from the postponement when it was revealed that Zulu Time was set in airports and had terrorism as a central theme.

Now, as President Bush's "liberation" of Iraq has finished off the unfinished business of Bush senior's "Operation Desert Storm," Lepage's *Zulu Time* continues its world tour, supporting a particular world vision defined by US militarism.

Zulu Time consists of 26 scenes, each named after a letter of the international radio transmission code used by aviators: A for Alpha, B for Bravo, . . . I for India, . . . and finally Z for Zulu. Lepage's "Zulu Time" refers to the military's universal clock. Apparently, Lepage was "blown away" by the profundity of the idea of the whole world agreeing on a common concept of time. He told Don Shewey of the *New York Times* (September 16, 2001), "When they bombed Belgrade, bombers leaving from San Diego were synchronized with bombers from Italy, and they were on Zulu time."

The action in *Zulu Time* unfolds on a giant metal catwalk that moves up and down and from side to side. A huge projection screen moves in and out of the scene while a soundscape - a mix of hip hop, (distorted) Indian classical, and other musical styles - pulsates in the background. The play chillingly depicts a terrorist-instigated plane crash, punctuated by breathtaking footage of warplanes and accompanied

underwater remains, an upside-down tango, an energetic robot dance, and a golfer repeatedly swinging his golf club. It depicts a flight attendant's sexual fantasy in which a black robotic figure jumps on her from the ceiling and repeatedly lifts her in the air and slams her back on the bed before disappearing into the ceiling, only to reappear and repeat the same actions but with more intensity. Each repetition leaves her more exhausted and with fewer clothes on her body.

Lepage's fascination with technology represents a form of cultural colonization in which the technological means of his art form mask the hidden message. *Zulu Time* is an exemplary demonstration of how multimedia art that is developed and controlled by the West can misinform, misinterpret, and malign the reality of the East in order to exercise political, social, and economical control over it.

Beneath the mesmerizing glitter and technological excellence of *Zulu Time* lies a perverse and dehumanizing show. In scene after scene, peoples and cultures other than Lepage's own are consumed to feed Western colonial fantasies. We are presented with such images as a South Asian woman carrying a candle and shabbily dressed in a sari, a Muslim woman in a burka who lets out a piercing scream, and a male terrorist who loosely resembles a Sikh, (even though by Lepage's own admission the show was triggered by Middle Eastern terrorists). In another scene, entitled India, the face of an East Indian woman with a large bindi and luscious lips is projected on a giant film screen as a male percussionist effectively "plays" her: each time he strikes an electronic drum her mouth emits a classical Indian taal/alap. Between each beat, her face is electronically frozen in a contorted grimace, drawing chuckles from the audience.

Even more disturbing is the depiction of Africans as dumb savages: a Zulu warrior tries hopelessly to learn to use a microphone (finally shoving it into his mouth) and a woman dressed in black monkey suit "apes" for

"it is a smokescreen masking the old colonial attitudes under the guise of new technology"

by deafening thunder, smoke, sparks, and fire to convey a sense of urgency, panic, and destruction. *Zulu Time* employs a cavalcade of character-types: pilots, stewardesses, drug traffickers, a golfer, travellers, acrobats, contortionists, singers, DJs, robots, and more. *Zulu Time* is an air travel fantasy - bodies floating through an airplane cabin, divers searching for

Photo: Reggie Tucker



a white man while a video shows Peter Gabriel teaching apes to play the keyboard. All of these images demonstrate a colonial mindset, one that hasn't yet freed the white man from a paternalistic desire to civilize others - the animal, the woman, and the natives.

White actors played all but one of the non-white "characters" and ethnic stereotypes. In this regard Lepage's instinct perchance turned out to be a good thing, as no actor of colour (except the "ape woman") was made to conspire against the dignity of their culture and history. If casting the actor as monkey woman wasn't degrading enough, however, Lepage decorated the lobby with a larger than life-sized photograph of the naked actor standing upside down in a balancing act.

Lepage, who sees the art of the twenty-first century as a convergence of disciplines, told Shewey in the same New York Times article, "it's not a homogenous group of people doing the same craft [. . .] you have interesting artists finding a coherent balance in an elegant way of telling one story [. . .] stories about loneliness and traveling, or about misunderstanding different cultures, or about men and women."

Lepage's team adheres to the theory of rock musician-philosopher Brian Eno, who maintains that the postmodern artist is primarily a curator. In *Zulu Time's* program, Eno is quoted as saying, "There is no longer such a thing as art history, but there are multiple art stories."

If *Zulu Time* is to be seen as an example of Eno's theory, it raises the question, Can Lepage's idea of postmodernist creation be considered a legitimate multiple art story when it utilizes a menu of myths, metaphors, and languages of the Other while sacrificing their dignity, culture, and history?

Lepage argues that *Zulu Time* presents an example of "technology's new vocabulary connecting dramaturgical ideas and heartfelt emotions." But in reality it is a smokescreen masking the old colonial attitudes under the guise of new technology. *Zulu Time* is nothing more than a sense-pleasing artistic product devoid of any serious dramaturgical ideas, revealing more about Lepage's expanded beliefs and fantasies than the actual cultures and people he depicts in the show. Lepage's *Zulu*

Time sells itself as cross-culturalism, but in reality it's nothing more than a collection of constructed images of the Other. The real other is politically, historically, and artistically absent. The potential for contrasting ideas and ideologies or for sophistication of analysis is sacrificed for a few simulated images, which range from superficial to exotic. Cultural diversity is diminished to a simulated likeness, which reveals the colonial mindset of historical superiority. For example, *Zulu Time's* white characters - doing drugs, living out their sexual fantasies, playing golf, and frequenting night clubs - are perceived as engaged in "civilized" pursuits, but only because his non-white characters display primitive idiocy (e.g., eating a microphone, acting like an ape, emitting a piercing scream, disrobing, or performing an erotic dance).

Zulu Time is a regressive show in so far as it claims to present a cross-cultural perspective but it fails to recognize the degree

"It is regressive because it keeps the public and its audiences distracted from questioning whether US warmongering is any different from the terror America claims to be fighting."

to which its own colonialist assumptions and arrogance are reified in its attempt to sympathetically depict the Other. It is regressive because while it is now pitched as a righteous artistic response to the events of September 11, in reality it reaps the benefits of the present climate by capitalizing on the grief, anger, outrage, and fear of terror that followed the terrorist attack of 9/11.

It is regressive because it keeps the public and its audiences distracted from questioning whether US warmongering is any different from the terror America claims to be fighting.

It is regressive because it conspires thoughtlessly with a US media caught up in a shameless game of one-upmanship to provide news entertainment: a game designed to demonize those very countries that had previously carried out US-backed terrorism but are now seen as counter to the hegemonic purpose of the US.

It is regressive because of its superficial

research. While Lepage acknowledges that Middle East terrorism played a prominent role in his conceptualization of the show, his "research" focused on terrorist training camps in Kashmir (Matthew Hays, *The Advocate*, December 25, 2001.) Perhaps nobody told Lepage that Kashmir's "terrorist training camps" are the Kashmiri people's attempt to defend themselves in a disputed land occupied by the armed forces of both India and Pakistan, which vastly outnumber the defenseless men, women, and children.

It is regressive because of its racist world view. Lepage told Matthew Hays of the *Advocate* (December 25, 2001), "we kept wondering if we had the right turban, if the guy would wear a beard. Then we sent all of this stuff off to New York just five days before the attack." Not only does Lepage lack a clear understanding of the nature of the enemy - the "terrorist" - he sacrifices his objectivity for superficialities: rather

than looking for cause and content he restricts himself to costumes, turbans, and beards. Much like a racist to whom all ethnics look alike, Lepage perceives that all "terrorists" look alike.

It is regressive because of its superficial look at airport security, which distracts attention from the racial profiling that routinely targets Arabs, Moslems, and South Asians as terrorism suspects at our border posts. In one scene, a white man fails a metal detector test until one by one all metallic objects are removed from his person, including "ornaments" from his nipples and genitals. He is gradually stripped naked, to the audible delight of the audience. By stripping a white passenger to the amusement of his audiences, Lepage desensitizes them to the dehumanizing surveillance and control that non-white passengers are regularly subjected to at our border points.

>> Continued on page 15

bridging art with activism:

In Conversation
with Gabriel Levine
of Le Petit Théâtre
de l'Absolu

by Tamar Tembeck



It would seem that the last stop for art activism these days is puppetry.

Puppets are re-emerging as effective vehicles for dramatic visual statements. Whether they're giant symbolic puppets being brandished at antiglobalization demonstrations, or little hand puppets held as a rock star's sidekick, puppets are everywhere - and they are dangerous.

At the time of this interview, Le Petit Théâtre de l'Absolu had just returned from a tour in France and Spain, where they presented their paper-theatre puppet show, *Paris in the 19th Century, Part IV: La Commune*. Their work inscribes itself in the recent lineage of activist puppetry, drawing on history and memory in order to address contemporary social issues.

Two of the company's founding members, Hermine Ortega and Gabriel Levine, are also direct inheritors of an activist puppetry lineage. They met at a residence with Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theatre, a company well known for the political content of its performances.

I had the opportunity to lend a hand in the final building phases of *La Commune*, and to see how the company works. This is what I took to be the bare bones of the company's creative process: take a piece of revolutionary social history, reframe some of the pivotal events while adding a contemporary commentary, and have it all fit on the stage of a portable homemade toy theatre. *La Commune*, a poignant and visually effective show built with minimal resources, is performed in French or English, or both, depending on the location.

Current events seem to have played an important role in their choosing the histori-

cal subject matter of the Paris Commune. The company also credits Peter Watkins' six-hour film on the subject for inspiration.

I asked Gabriel Levine to describe the process of building the show, and to reflect on the stakes of representing this hopeful moment in social history today:

"There's a wealth of documentary materials about the Paris Commune," Levine explains. "It's probably the first revolution in history to have been intensively photographed [...] So we got books of photographs and drawings, and read historical and theoretical material, and started to talk about what we wanted to do."¹

"That was at the same time that the Summit of the Americas was going on in Quebec City [April 2001]. We all ended up in Quebec City, playing street music, old revolutionary songs, in a somewhat self-conscious way."

"It's kind of fun to be playing *Avanti Popolo*, an Italian communist song, with a bunch of kids who have never heard of it before, and have no idea what it is. It's nice to have all these generations together in a theatrical way. It's like a homage to the revolutionary brass bands. You can't say that you're really in a revolutionary orchestra, but on the other hand you're inspiring people and you're adding this great dimension of sound to a street demonstration, which lifts it into another sphere."

As a moment in social history, the people's summit of Quebec had its parallels to

the Paris Commune. "So [the Commune] was a good story to reflect on what we were trying to achieve as activists in a nascent social movement, fighting for something. What, exactly? The so-called antiglobalization movement takes a lot of flack for being somewhat fuzzy, but the Commune was also contradictory, and people were fighting for different things at the same time."

I ask Levine about the usefulness of citing the past in order to address current concerns, and suggest that history might provide critical distance in portraying the present.

"For me, [citing the past] is really the essential thing to do," he replies. "In our show, we use a quote from Walter Benjamin's *Thesis on the Philosophy of History*, which was written in 1940. He's about to flee France and has seen fascism rising all across Western Europe, and has seen the failure of the movement of social democracy in Germany. He says that the problem with social democracy is that it has staked its hopes on the workers who would fight for the liberation of their grandchildren, who would be building some socialist utopia in the future. The strength of nineteenth-century revolutionary movements, up until social democracy, was that the participants were, as Benjamin

says, avenging their murdered grandparents. On the one hand they're building a new society, but on the other they're very conscious of the wrongs that have been inflicted on them."

"I think that a lot of theatre engages on that same terrain. A famous play like *Marat/Sade* is a very clear example of someone using a historical moment to investigate the present, using history as a tool."

"The difference is that we're doing puppet theatre. It's completely accessible in terms of presentation. It uses a minimum of money, space, and professionalism. It's

"The so-called antiglobalization movement takes a lot of flack for being somewhat fuzzy, but the Commune was also contradictory, and people were fighting for different things at the same time."

a kind of antiprofessional form. All of our materials come from the garbage. We are doing this entirely without any kind of sponsorship or affiliations."

Elaborating on the particularities of the puppet theatre form, Levine adds, "There's something about working with objects that frees you from the trap of the actor and the naturalism which is so hard to avoid in theatre. In terms of our performance style, we're definitely drawing on Brecht. It really takes it a step further when it's not just about alienating yourself from the character, but the character is in fact a foot-tall little cardboard cut-out. There isn't really any confusion."

The company's creative process involves a simple and straightforward, though hardly naive, appropriation of existing elements. "The process is really oriented towards the historical record: a lot of investigation rather than generation," Levine explains. "Our allegories are all very transparent. [...] You can say, 'here's this great Rimbaud poem, *Les mains de Jeanne-Marie*, about the Paris Commune. Why don't we put it in the show - oh, why don't we put Rimbaud in the show.' Instead of having an actor pretending to be Arthur Rimbaud, we have an actual drawing of the young Rimbaud. We photocopy it; it

becomes a puppet. [...] It's so easy to bring history in to the puppet theatre, when in a full theatre it presents incredible tactical problems."

There is also something to be said about the collective approach to their puppet theatre, which aptly echoes the subject matter of their performances. The puppeteers are entirely visible as they manipulate the cardboard puppets. Their backstage and sidestage choreographies become as important as the action on stage. "The whole idea of performing well in a group is that it's a kind of mini-society. In a way, you see people working well together and

that's inspiring just in itself."

"When you're dealing with a story that's about 'What can we do faced with these really difficult forces that we're up against,' if at least you see people working together well and constructively, and making something beautiful, well, that's kind of an answer in itself. I think that's why there's a very large puppet theatre community that's intimately connected with doing political theatre. It's a very natural fit."

Levine's idealism is tempered, however, by the anger that memory can breed. "There's this very strong desire for revenge that you see in the Commune. Why have we abandoned revenge in our theatre? People are now supposed to be very nice and address social issues in a constructive way. When I think about theatre, in its roots, and as it has developed for the past 2,500 years, one of the great themes of theatre has been revenge. Certainly with the Greeks and Shakespeare."

The theme of revenge in contemporary theatre echoes the debate about the use of violence in activist circles. The force with which we address the urgency of the need for social change is a pressing and contentious question.

"Now, people don't believe in revolution anymore. They don't believe that we

have any power. And they're right, we don't have any power. On the other hand, I think it's very important to let people know that at various points in history, people have decided to take matters into their own hands, and tried to recreate their society along more humane lines. I think that gives people some hope."

"Especially these days, when there's an increasing consciousness about power, on a mass scale, and how power operates, how propaganda works, how capitalist propaganda works, how the entertainment industry works [...] You can say, 'well, that's the way it is,' but there are other options. I think we can look to the Paris Commune as a really interesting example of people's struggle."

"It's a much darker time than it was [in April 2001]. The forces of reaction are much stronger. So for me, the element of history, memory, vengeance is much more important than it was [then]. Maybe the historical memory of Americans is a couple of years at best, but we'd like to make it longer and pay homage to these people who were murdered [in the Commune], this great flowering that was brutally uprooted."

La Commune is regularly performed in various Montreal venues and abroad, and le Petit Théâtre de l'Absolu has added two new creations to its repertoire: *The Haymarket Tragedy*, set in Chicago, 1880, and *Paris in the 19th Century, Part III: Demolition Polka*. Recently, *La Commune* and *Demolition Polka* were featured in "Andidotes for Terror: An Evening of Cheap Art, Music, and Puppet Theatre" held in Montreal in February 2003.

Tamar Tembeck is a Montreal-based performing artist. She recently completed her Masters in Art History, for which she studied representations of the body in works by Kiki Smith, Mona Hatoum, and Marie Chouinard. Tamar is currently working on *Latitudes Croisées*, an original creation co-produced by Omnibus (Montreal), Théâtre du Mouvement (Paris), and Linea de Sombra (Mexico).

¹ Gabriel Levine, personal interview, 20 April 2002.



Red Sky Performance

by Rebecca Todd

This article was first published by *Dance Current* (Vol. 5, Issue 9, March 2003). *Dance Current* is a Canadian dance periodical covering the art and culture of dance. www.thedancecurrent.com

"I believe we carry the spirit of the land within us. People are so different because they come from different parts of the land - whether it be the arctic, desert, or forest," says Sandra Laronde, artistic director of Red Sky Performance. A young contemporary company influenced by Native cultural traditions, Red Sky has distinguished itself by meshing dance, music, storytelling, and theatre to bring the more-than-human world alive.

Indeed, since it was founded in 1999, Red Sky has emerged as a leader in artistic domains that have engaged Toronto's dance and theatre communities. In response to the global ecological crisis, for example, many Ontario artists have been looking to rediscover a land-based awareness, and Ontario's dance avant-garde has shown new interest in mirroring and revealing the non-human world. But because most contemporary dance artists have little cultural basis for such an ecological interaction, they have to create it from scratch.

Red Sky has also been distinguished from the outset by its success in seamlessly integrating movement and text in performance - another area of exploration in Toronto's dance and theatre communities over the last decade. Because of specialized training within dance and theatre, this has been a long struggle. Dance artists have often lacked the writing and acting skills for working with text, while in theatre (with a few notable exceptions) movement has been more of an afterthought than a deeply integrated aspect of most productions. Again, artists have had to invent their own integrated training from scratch.

It may be that Red Sky has been able to succeed where others have struggled because it hasn't had to invent its own cultural context. Drawing on the combined talents of artists trained in a wide range of contemporary and traditional art forms, Red Sky brings alive the non-human world with impressive artistry. At the same time, the company's roots in lived Native artistic traditions provide a strong foundation for integration of movement, text, storytelling, and music. Such integrated performance has strong communicative power. As Laronde points out, "The more

our senses are filled and alive, the more the audience is engaged."

Laronde founded Red Sky with the stated mission of "exploring the imaginative possibilities within aboriginal performance." The company's first production, *Caribou Song*, was initially performed in February 2000 with the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra at Birchmount Collegiate in Scarborough, Ontario, then, notably, at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in February 2002. Written by Tomson Highway, with music by Barbara Croall, *Caribou Song* is the story of a Cree family's connection to the caribou. It was directed by Mark Wilson (known for his work with the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus), choreographed by Peter Chin, and performed by Laronde and dancer Carlos Rivera. Since its Toronto premiere, *Caribou Song* has toured in a chamber version to both Winnipeg and Murten, Switzerland. Red Sky is currently working on a CD-ROM version of the piece with the University of Toronto.

The company's second major project, a dance drama entitled *The Dancing Americas*, is a Canadian/Mexican production that uses the metaphor of the migratory monarch butterfly to explore the relationship between American aboriginal peoples. Choreography is again by Chin in collaboration with Laronde, and the music is by Mexican composer Zepeda. *The Dancing Americas* will be performed in both Canada and Mexico, with its premiere at Toronto's du Maurier Theatre Centre in March 2003. Another family production currently in development is *Raven*, which is based on a traditional story from the Northwest about how the moon, sun, and stars end up in the sky.

According to choreographer Chin, "Red Sky has been very multidisciplinary from the start. In my experience, a lot of dance and theatre companies work that way, but somehow with Red Sky it seemed more organic. I think this is because while they are working from a contemporary theatre model they are doing so in a way that's informed by Native culture. There's a legacy for Red Sky to draw on."

Laronde echoes Chin's sentiments: "Aboriginal

people come from a place that integrates storytelling, song, dance, ritual, and dramatic expression. Our integrated approach emulates what has been in our culture since time immemorial. Of course, the use of the stage is a Western theatrical convention."

As a director, Laronde is attracted to an intergenerational inclusiveness that is characteristic of traditional Native culture. Both *Caribou Song* and the upcoming *Raven* are aimed at family audiences. In addition, Laronde looks to Native cultural traditions as well as Western theatre conventions to define, for example, the use of space: "When you're listening to a storyteller

Zealand and Canada, and, within Canada, between our diverse nations, such as Inuit (Nunavut) and Anishnabe (Ontario)," she says. "I'm interested in working with collaborators from other aboriginal and land-based cultures." Beyond that, while Red Sky's core of artists is aboriginal, Laronde is interested in working with interesting collaborators no matter what culture they're from.

Chin, for example, is a Torontonian of Jamaican-Chinese heritage with training in contemporary dance as well as Indonesian performance forms. "Because of my own interest in Asian theatre, which also

Theatre, Native Earth, Nightwood Theatre, and Debajehmujig Theatre, for such directors as Paul Thompson, Sarah Stanley, Gary Farmer, and Loretta Todd. She has performed as a traditional singer with the Anishnawbe Quek Singers and the Sweetgrass City Singers, and has won awards for her writing, performance, and artistic direction. She is also a former co-artistic director of Native Earth.

Laronde considers that her approach to theatre springs first and foremost from physical impulse. Growing up in Temagami, Laronde distinguished herself as a star athlete. Her first training in theatre

**"The more our senses
are filled and alive,
the more the audience
is engaged."**

Opposite page and above: Dancer Sandra Laronde in 1st phase of *Dancing Americas*, photographer David Hou.

you're sharing the same one space," Laronde explains. "Once you put a performer onstage you cut the space in two, and the perception is that you're looking up at the performer as a spectator rather than exchanging eye to eye communication on the same level. That perspective changes the relationship of the performer to the audience and the immediate visceral response. It's interesting to look at how we used space before the advent of the stage."

Within Laronde's contemporary approach, Native artistic traditions provide inspiration, tools, stories, leadership models, and ultimately a home base from which to initiate dialogue with other cultural traditions among diverse aboriginal nations and other cultural communities. "I'm interested in a broad intellectual discourse on theatre and dance, and in indigenous performance methodologies and themes between different countries — such as New

includes dance, theatre, and music," Chin continues, "it seemed natural for me to collaborate on *Caribou Song*. What made me not question my participation was the integrated approach to the themes expressed in Highway's story."

Laronde herself is an actor, dancer, producer, and writer. She is also the artistic producer of Native Women in the Arts, the only organization in North America dedicated to serving the needs of Native women artists. In the last decade she has worked in a wide range of dance, theatre, radio, and film productions. She performed as a dancer at the Banff Centre for the Arts with contemporary Mexican choreographer Georgina Martinez and Cree choreographer Michael Greyeyes, and in Toronto with choreographer Denise Fujiwara (among others). As an actor she has worked on a number of productions with a roster of Toronto companies that includes Young Peoples

was with Floyd Flavel, who taught Jerzy Grotowski's highly physical approach to theatre. Later she studied with Linda Putnam, another teacher of Grotowski's work. "I find that Toronto theatre is so text-focused," she says. "A part of me longs for more body. For myself, I'm interested in where culture, history, and memory sit in the body."

As Red Sky's artistic director, Laronde draws on her familiarity with Native leadership skills to shape each collaborative project. At the same time she is creating an unconventional role for herself within the company, which Chin describes as "catalyst, impresario, and performer." Generally, she conceives of a project and frames and facilitates the collaborative process. However, she often hires both a choreographer and director for each project and co-creates with them as a collaborating performer.

Within the framework set up by Laronde, the collaborators on each project negotiate the territory between different disciplines and cultural forms. One central tenet of Red Sky's philosophy is that no one art form predominates: "I want music, dance, and text to work in such a way that at some points the music comes forward and has its say, and then it retreats and the text comes forward," says Laronde. "It's a more delicate balance than, for example, simply keeping the music in the background. And it's a question of rhythm. Tomson (Highway) taught me that rhythm is everything, in text, music, and dance, even in daily meetings."

The collaborators also have to negotiate traditional and contemporary approaches within each discipline. For example, *Caribou Song* blends contemporary, European classical, and traditional Native musical forms. At one point, Laronde explains, "I had the idea to incorporate a round dance song into the piece to lift the music to a new place. I sing a traditional round dance song, and we built this into the score. So you have contemporary music that goes into a round dance rhythm, and me singing over it. This is a thrilling moment in the piece, and the audience loves it."

While Red Sky's work is deeply informed by traditional aboriginal dance forms, Laronde considers their choreography to be firmly situated within the spectrum of contemporary dance. Her goal is to articulate a contemporary indigenous dance process while creating new movement vocabularies. She also aims to expand the public's often narrow perception of what aboriginal dance is. To that end, in both of Red Sky's projects to date Laronde has collaborated with Chin to shape the movement that runs through the work: "The choreography for *Caribou Song* was a collaboration between Peter [Chin], Carlos [Rivera] and me. Carlos is a traditional Yaqui deer dancer, and in creating *Caribou Song* we drew on the style of the deer dance, but not the actual steps. For example, I might ask Carlos to show Peter some steps, and then we might transform them to fit the story, asking ourselves: 'What would a caribou do?' It's more the essence of caribou - the traditional ability to become the animal portrayed - that we're looking for, and that we bring to the contemporary form. What you see is the cari-

bou, not the dancer being the caribou. And it makes people gasp."

"Peter's job is to shape the movement," Laronde continues. "He often asks the dancers to go further into what they're doing or investigate certain areas of it. For example, he might say, 'You have antlers that are like antennae. What information do you get from them? How do you move energy?'"

In general, Chin's choreographic approach focuses on moving energy within and around the body. Working with Red Sky provided him with a new context for creating movement, challenging him to integrate the demands of theatrical narrative into his choreographic process: "As choreographer for *Caribou Song*, I had to get used to working with a director, because, of course, when I do my own work [Chin is artistic director of his own dance company, Tribal Crackling Wind] I am the director," he explains. "But there was theatrical text involved and I learned a lot from having my ideas interface with those of a dramaturg/director as well as another composer. It was certainly the most directly theatrical approach to text and character I've ever worked with."

Red Sky's choreography often reveals aspects of the non-human world in such a way that we see them, with new eyes, as living and sentient. And while this animation of the natural world has been an aspect of both Chin's and Laronde's previous work, it is brought to the foreground in their collaborative relationship. Also, as Laronde points out, the stories of both *Caribou Song* and *The Dancing Americas* take place on the land. So one could say that ecological themes are an emergent product of their approach to narrative and choreography.

However, Laronde emphasizes that Red Sky does not set out to explicitly address social or political themes. "Often the tensions in the story naturally have to do with political or social situations. Being a contemporary aboriginal person telling a contemporary aboriginal story is already inherently political," says Laronde. "But I'm not interested in making issue-oriented theatre."

In *The Dancing Americas*, the monarch butterfly's migration from Canada to Mexico refers metaphorically to the pre-contact migration of aboriginal peoples and the importance of a certain intergener-

ational faith (the butterfly that reaches the sanctuary is a descendant of the one that leaves Canada). Drawing on stories, myths, dances, and songs exchanged along pre-contact trade routes, it also, naturally enough, refers to processes of metamorphosis. "I really want to see beauty," Laronde says. "It occurred to me how revolutionary it would be to show beauty in spite of a history of genocide, suffering, and oppression. I'm tired of seeing constant existential angst onstage. We all are."

By creating pieces with broad intercultural and intergenerational communicative power, Laronde hopes to tour their works as widely as possible. Already they have been the first Native company to perform in such large mainstream venues as Roy Thomson Hall and the du Maurier Theatre. "We don't just belong at the Native Canadian Centre and school gymnasiums. I want to take up space in larger venues. We should be taking up space everywhere," Laronde says.

Because of their level of artistic excellence and broad communicative power, Red Sky has the potential to reach large and varied audiences, adding to the breadth of existing aboriginal theatre and dance works, and, by extension, to Canadian, North American, and global theatre and dance. "I want Red Sky to be able to move. I'm interested in being able to perform in remote areas, large urban areas, and outside of Canadian borders. In this global culture, where there's a keen interest in aboriginal art and culture, it's an exciting time to be an aboriginal artist," Laronde concludes. Moreover, while having a political impact is not one of Red Sky's explicit goals in an era where a threatened global ecology is our most pressing challenge, Red Sky's works inspire us to look differently at the more-than-human world.

Rebecca Todd is a choreographer/performer and freelance writer who holds a BA in political science from McGill University and an MA in dance from UCLA. She was a dance and theatre critic for Toronto's *Eye Weekly* from 1997-2002, and her articles have been published in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *Dance Current*, *Dance Spirit*, *Dance Connection*, *New Art Examiner*, *Boston Book Review*, *Women and Performance*, *P-form*, *Parachute*, and *Images*.

1258

by Ehab Lotayef
Montreal, March 26, 2003

Oh Tigris, old friend
-lest you may forget-
the prophets of doom turn water to blood.

They'll burn all the books,
and slaughter the men,
enslave every girl,
extinguish the sun.

Hulagu, reborn,
commanding his tribes:
Starvation and bombs to subdue mankind.

Baghdad, my princess,
I send you a kiss:
We broke all your swords,
we burned down your walls.
For you we now cry,
forgive us, raped one!

Disguised in their lies
the Mongols return,
it's twelve fifty-eight upon us again.

In 1258 CE the Mongols, led by Hulagu, destroyed Baghdad. The city burned for seven days, and some historians estimate as many as 800,000 people, including the caliph and his family, were killed.

Ehab Lotayef is a local poet and activist. He is also involved in community-based theatre. Born in Egypt, Ehab is by profession an electrical engineer working for the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at McGill University.

A Delivery from Chile -

Letters for Tomas

by Penny Joy



In Santiago, on the occasion of the first production of her play *Letters for Tomas* in 1997, Malucha Pinto - a Chilean writer based in Santiago - wrote, I have a feeling that conventional theatre has a lot to do with a "masculine" way of thinking. It has to do with reason, logic, it requires a cause and effect. I would like to investigate a different kind of structure, a feminine dramatic structure. I feel it should be different. It should be outside time, deal with moments, with matters of the heart, with the unreasonable. With what is not seen, not explained.

In April 2002, Pinto's vision was finally realized in Victoria, B.C. by Puente Theatre. The process began as a collaboration between two women - one in Chile and one

"Pinto's play is a very personal, passionate, and authentic expression of a woman grappling with one of life's hardest realities."

with Chilean roots in Canada. In 1997, Lina de Guevara, artistic director of Puente Theatre in Victoria, read Pinto's book *Letters for Tomas* and, learning that Pinto was turning the book into a play, de Guevara contacted her.

In Chile, meanwhile, Andres Perez directed the 1997 long version of *Letters for Tomas* to critical acclaim in Santiago. However, Pinto then decided that she wanted to simplify and condense the work so that the play could tour. She sent the shorter version to de Guevara in Victoria and it was excellently translated from the Spanish

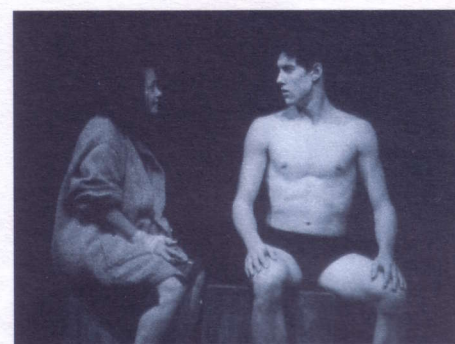
by Valentina Cambiazo. The first appearance of the play in Canada was a staged play reading at the Belfry Theatre as part of WorldPlay (described in an article in *alt.theatre*, Vol 2, June 2001). The play generated a lot of interest and excitement and de Guevara began a search to find the resources to mount a full production of this hauntingly beautiful work. In April 2002, Puente Theatre achieved this at Victoria's Belfry Theatre.

Letters for Tomas was the most significant production Puente Theatre presented in 2002 and perhaps their first to present a story from Latin America in a form and with a cast in Canada where cultural interpretation was not needed. Puente means "bridge" in Spanish and with *Letters for Tomas* the audience was subtly drawn into a Latin American atmosphere of magic and intensity as the universal content of the play spanned cultural difference to communicate directly to the heart.

Letters for Tomas is about Woman's experience - the wonder and passion of

childbirth, and the grief, anger, and final reconciliation when faced with the reality of a child born with severe brain damage. The play has a deeply mystical Latin American flavour and the Puente production was accompanied by evocative music composed and performed by an onstage Musician (Enrique Rivas). It is both a mythic and a very real story.

"Tomas" is a child of many cultures: he links the characters of Man and Woman, Elia and Death, as well as Chile and Canada. These "letters" in poetry, music, and dance - linked with earth and sky



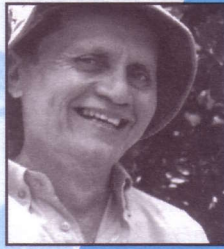
Barbara Poggemiller (top left, bottom left), Anthony Yuzwa (top center, bottom right), and Lynda Raino (top right, center photo) in scenes from *Letters for Tomas*

images - are illuminated by the wandering Soul of the Child. The play opens as he "delivers" his mother onto an unadorned stage. The Woman arrives tumbling down a pathway of scarlet silk rolled out from his arms - we find ourselves in sacred space, a birthing space. We see an ominous, masked Death brush the Soul of the Child in the womb and wait, apprehensively, for the unfolding of the story.

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Photos by Barbara Pedrick

Araylton A. Público:



The Rehabilitation of a Playwright by Means of Cordel

by Geraldo Ferreira de Lima

The wilderness of the Brazilian Northeastern Sertão has long captured the attention of visitors, as they attempt to understand how human beings are able to survive in an environment where the soil is dry, vegetation is poor, and as a result life is reduced to the bare essentials. In this land, the process of colonization has exacerbated Nature's actions in the form of policies carried out by the dominant classes: policies with clear purposes or hidden intentions to preserve the atavistic relationships through which, as João Cabral puts it in his dramatic poem *Severina Death and Life*, "one dies of old age before thirty, of ambush before twenty and of hunger a little bit everyday."

It was this land that one hundred years ago caught the attention of the engineer Euclides da Cunha. Transformed into a newspaperman, da Cunha was sent to report on the War of Canudos. This was the bloodiest of all events promoted by the centre - represented by the newly born Brazilian Republic elite - against the periphery - a group of dispossessed people led by Antonio Conselheiro, a mix of mystic and rebel who dreamed of a new promised land in the wilderness of the Brazilian hinterland.

In an attempt to provide a plausible definition of Brazilianess, da Cunha saw as symbiotic the relationship between the vegetation of the Northeastern Sertão - the *caatinga* - and the man who inhabits it - the *sertanejo*. In his striking report of the war (now the greatest of all Brazilian epics, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, from which Vargas Llosa took inspiration for his *La Guerra del fin del Mundo*), da Cunha described this vegetation as something that "chokes the visitor, abbreviates his looking, strikes and dazzles him" and the man as a "Hercules-Quasimodo [that] reflects in its appearance the typical ugliness of weak peoples."

In spite of his perception of this Hercules-Quasimodo trait, the Canudos war correspondent regarded the *sertanejo* as the racial model he was looking for to justify his idea of the Brazilian nation. In this man, firmly rooted in the soil of the Northeastern Sertão, da Cunha saw an authenticity he considered to be the ultimate "live rock" of nationality, preserved by geographical isolation. Although da Cunha failed in his reasoning to support a theory of nationality based upon the belief in non-white racial inferiority, the idea of geographical isolation as a determining factor for the rich and multi-faceted cultural manifestations of the people living in this part of Brazil has continued to be accepted.

One of the richest of these manifestations is the *cordel*, a literature genre known in ancient times by Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians, and brought to Brazil by coloniz-

ers. Spread through the Iberian Peninsula, this literature was popular among Portuguese and Spaniards until the end of the nineteenth century. It was the Portuguese who gave it the name "folhetos de cordel," an allusion to the way the booklets (folhetos) were hung along a string (cordel) in market places and on the corners of streets to attract people's attention. Even today this is a

**"one dies of old
age before thirty,
of ambush before
twenty and of hunger
a little bit everyday."**

common scene in many Northeastern Brazilian villages, towns, and cities. In colonial Brazil, the lack of literacy prevented the written form from flourishing. Instead, improvisation - an oral form in which two singers "fight" each other with verses as if they were duelling - became a common social form of leisure for the *sertanejo*. It also gave origin to what nowadays is referred to as *repentistas* - two singers improvise verses alternately in a dialogical relationship, usually according to a mote delivered by someone in the audience. The duel is won by the singer who makes no mistake.

This was the prevailing form until the late nineteenth century, when the first written *cordel* by Leandro Gomes de Barros appeared. That this new genre was still deeply immersed in the oral tradition of improvisation is revealed through the lines of his *Manoel Riachão's Fight with the Devil*: "The argument I've done/was not by me afforded,/an old man of the time/has it still recorded/my own are the rhymes/just them, no other."

More than one hundred years since its first written form appeared in Brazil, the *cordel* no longer has to keep a close relationship with its primitive form - the improvisation - in order to justify itself. *Cordelistas* (those who write their lines) and *repentistas* (those who sing them by improvising) have become the most active representatives of the way of life and thought in the

wilderness of the Brazilian Northeastern Sertão.

It was in this striking form of popular literature that the playwright Araylton A. Púbio, taking the road already trodden by other dramatists, found the inspiration to change the axis of a dramaturgy steeped in "Grecophilia." Defined by Frantz Fanon in his essay *On National Culture* as an "effect consciously sought by colonialism," what Púbio expressed in his early devotion to the Greek model was a way to reject his own culture. In other words, he was being operated on as an agent of colonialism. As he admits today, he had "difficulty supporting a Brazilian identity" - and, by extension, using cordel literature - because "it seemed to be too obvious."

As a dramatist he sees his work as if it were "a rat before a big Swiss cheese, gnawing it patiently until it may reach the centre someday."

However, it was this obviousness that drove Púbio, after writing ten plays on Greek motifs, forward along a path apparently unimaginable: to the abandonment of a discourse that he now sees as belonging to the centre and, therefore, antithetical to his own condition as an artist placed in the periphery. This, again, makes one think of Fanon in his reference to "the efforts of the native [intellectual] to rehabilitate himself" so that he may be able "to escape from the claws of colonialism."

In connection to Púbio, such "efforts" started in the early 1990s when the play *Estinfália*, inspired by one of the twelve works of Hercules, was being rehearsed. The playwright's turning point was reflected in the complete modification of the setting, characters, and plot of the play. Despite the preservation of their Greek names, the Greek characters were no longer Greek but instead were three Morubixabas - chiefs among Brazilian native people - waiting for an envoy from the Heavens to replace the dead king of *Estinfália*. The Heavens' envoy was now an American pilot fallen from a wrecked plane. And the Python, losing some of her Greekness, had become a witch or a kind of *ialorixá*: a woman who, in the

Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, makes the link between man's world and that of the *Orixás* - the deified forces of Nature.

Later changed to *Estinfália - A Nação* (*Estinfália - The Nation*), the play, in spite of its retaining some paradigmatic references to Greek mythology, was the first attempt by Púbio to see his reality with eyes of Brazilianess. He did so with irony and sarcasm, as can be inferred from the first word of the title: *Estinfália*. This contains a pun as the result of the junction of two morphemes - *esta* (this) and *falha* (mistake) - to make the word *Estafalha* in Portuguese. In phonological terms, this has a devastating effect. When *Estafalha* is taken apart, the term becomes comical.

However, when it is added to the second part of the title - *A Nação* - an irony is produced, which is enhanced by the words in the initial stage directions: the location is described as "a far nation where the Greek and Tupi-Guarany cultures are mixed up." If the metonymy of the pre-Colombian culture is not enough to identify the nation the metaphorical *Estinfália* is referring to, the sarcasm underlying Captain David's auto-crowning as the new king followed by the issue of his first decree allowing "just the selling of coca-colas (sic)" will help one to deduce where *Estafalha* is and what nation it refers to.

Púbio's effort to "rehabilitate himself from the claws of colonialism" led him to write *Os Urubus* (*The Vultures*) in 1993, a play that could be considered to be the very first manifestation of his Brazilianess. However, it was with *Uma História muito Estranha!* (*A Very Strange Story!*) that he left his mark on the Brazilian stage: in the National Contest of Unpublished Theatrical Texts in 2001 it was chosen by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture as the second best play of the year. And the way Púbio chose to tell his "very strange story" was through a farce, a form whose absolute origins J. A.

Cuddon considers "obscure." This obscurity, however, has not prevented audiences from laughing since ancient times at content largely composed of lies, treachery,



peripetias, pursuits, deceits, secrets delivered in exaggeration of action, characters in situations either absurd or fantastic, and surprises provided by unexpected appearances and revelations.

All these elements in Púbio's farce enrich a plot developed on a dichotomized ideology. On the one side, a father - an Intendant - is determined to preserve the establishment by means of a set of values (which includes his daughter's virginity) that he believes essential for social control. On the other side is a daughter determined to dismantle her father's devices in order to liberate her sexuality, which ultimately could be understood as a metaphor for the conservative society she lives in. In between them we find three characters: an adulteress wife pretending to be a virtuous woman; a civil servant who is also a buffoon, a traitor, and a coward hiding his bad intentions behind a lying persuasiveness; and a magician responsible for supernatural subjects in the intendance.

Things go along well in this intendance until the day the Intendant, Zé, is told that his daughter, Senhorinha, has lost her virginity. He at once demands that the Magician begin invoking his supernatural

powers to expose the criminal. In the meantime, the deflowered young woman acquires the ability to levitate. Her father, thinking he is before a saint, starts praying. However, the Intendant's wife, Cordélia (who is Senhorinha's stepmother), and the civil servant, Gavião (who is Cordélia's lover), plan to control the intendance by killing the Intendant and expelling Senhorinha and the Magician. To this end, they accuse the Magician of having deflowered Senhorinha. Her confession of having seduced the Magician doesn't prevent him from being emasculated. The couple is expelled from the town and the Magician is dying from infection when his lover's paranormality not only saves him but also brings about the recuperation of his manly condition.

In choosing the fantastic and supernatural as the main components of his farce, Públio is very close to the traditional themes approached by cordel literature: romances, fantastic stories, and fables. Surprisingly, this attraction for the cordel came to him first by means of the "fantastic realism" that, he says, "has strong links with popular culture." From this he was led to the cordel, which is where he found himself as a Brazilian and Northeastern playwright. Públio considers that this form gave him the opportunity to work with elements like the magical and supernatural, to which he was always attracted. "These elements," he says, "broke the natural chain of objective reality which we live in, reinforcing the cultural colonization that makes us see just the objective realization. The cordel gave me the opportunity to see reality in a much more clear, explosive, and exuberant way."

This way of extracting the raw material of his plays from the periphery itself and not from the centre as he had in the past has given Públio's dramaturgy a new dimension. By means of the cordel he learned how to start inverting the centre/periphery equation. Although he has already found the way, there is a long road ahead. As a dramatist he sees his work as if it were "a rat before a big Swiss cheese, gnawing it patiently until it may reach the centre someday."

Such an action is symbolically represented in *A Very Strange Story!* through the antinomies in Cordélia and Adynaton. Although Cordélia's name contains the word cordel, her perspective is from a dominant standpoint, characterizing her as a

representative of the centre. In turn, Adynaton, a carrier of impossibility as his Greek name suggests, becomes the architect of a social order that turns him into a representative of the periphery. Like Adynaton, Públio has also chosen the way to rehabilitate himself as a playwright: by substituting the central discourse of his Greek characters with the peripheral. And the means through which he chose to express it was the cordel.

Geraldo Ferreira de Lima teaches English and Anglo-American Literature at the Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana in Brazil. He is currently working on a dissertation on "David Fennario's Drama: From the Tacit Agreement to the Declared Rebelliousness."

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In Puente Theatre's production, *The Woman* (Barbara Pogemuller) gave a performance of heartbreaking poignancy, encompassing the breadth of complex emotions facing a mother who gradually comes to comprehend the severe mental disability of her child.

Elia, earth goddess and shaman figure with whom the Woman consults (and who accompanies her birth) was played by Lynda Raino with powerful sensuality and an evocation of the wisdom of the ancients. She draws us into the richness of the Latin American culture as she half sings and half breathes incantations in a mixture of Spanish and English. Slowly and on many levels, like the unravelling of a complicated weaving, the nature of the great wounding becomes apparent.

The Man (Roderick Glanville) struggles with his disbelief and rages at his inability to control the convulsing child. He circles the Woman's experience impotently, until finally managing to come to terms with his son by inventing a name that honours his unique nature, "hero of the toughest battle." He baptizes him Parsarillas.

Finally, the Soul of the Child (played by Dean Ozen) walks through his mother's anguished universe, a silent observer until the startling moment when he speaks to her as she prays and grieves by his hospital

bed. His voice is that of an old Indian warrior: "Leave me alone woman. I didn't come to this planet of mountains and water to fulfill your dreams, I come to live my own life. Don't interfere."

Pinto's play is a very personal, passionate, and authentic expression of a woman grappling with one of life's hardest realities. During the rehearsal period, de Guevara involved mothers and families of children with disabilities to guide and give feedback to their staging. The foyer of the Belfry Theatre was hung with photos, paintings, and images from Victoria families and the play ended with projected photos of "meninos excepcionais" (Portuguese for "exceptional children") from that community. Pinto was able to travel to Victoria for the Canadian premiere; the final projected photo used in the play was of her son, Tomas.

Letters for Tomas is a courageous play written by a courageous woman and Puente Theatre's production brilliantly captured Pinto's vision. Under de Guevara's unerring direction the cast delicately wove ancient mystery across time and culture, beautifully realizing what is "not seen and not explained."

Penny Joy is a writer and film maker, living in Victoria BC.

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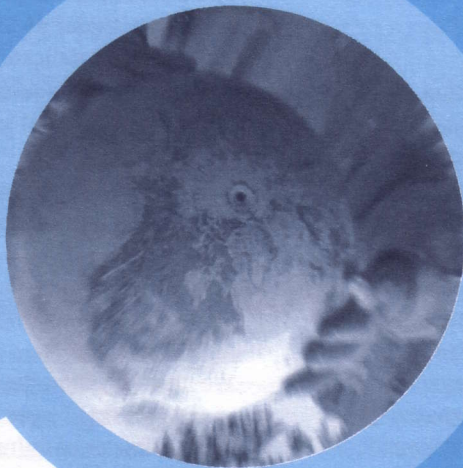
We must question the show's patronage given the fact that Louise Beaudoin, then Quebec's Minister of Culture and International Relations, had been enthusiastically citing *Zulu Time* to elevate Lepage to an iconic status as representative of cross-cultural attitudes in Québec. In promoting this vision of Québec, Landry and Beaudoin failed to recognize that Québec, like the rest of Canada, is a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society in which misrepresentation and nonrecognition seriously diminish the other. Lepage's *Zulu Time* exhibits a colonial mentality in which the dignity of the other is sacrificed on the altar of an assimilationist cultural agenda.

Rahul Varma is a Montreal-based playwright and founding artistic director of Teesri Duniya Theatre

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