

MARIEL O'NEILL-KARCH

MICHAEL MACINA (1951-2006), IN MEMORIAM

Michael Macina was raised in Toronto and graduated in 1973 from Saint Michael's College with a specialist degree in French and English literature to which he added in 1974, an M.A. in Drama. After more than thirty years in theatre and film, he returned to the University of Toronto's Graduate Centre for Study of Drama in 2001 and, while battling serious illness and working against the clock, he was in the process of completing a thesis entitled "Institutional Incursions into National Identity: New Play Development in Canada 1970-2000" when he died in 2006. Though I was technically directing this thesis, Michael worked in an unconventional way, treating his work as an organic whole. He was therefore very reluctant to share many pieces, since he was never sure where they would ultimately fit. Part of what I read concerned the transformative power of the theatre experience from the point of view of producer-creators and consumer-audiences. Michael was not looking necessarily for great big mystical moments, considering small moments and small perceptions as equally valid.

After studying with the likes of Roger Blin in Strasbourg, Robert Gill in Toronto, and Jerzy Grotowski, wherever he could find him, Michael was involved in various capacities with the founding of such experimental Toronto theatre companies as Actors' Lab, Buddies in Bad Times, Theatre of the Autumn Leaf, and Necessary Angel Theatre. In 1983, his own play, *Johnny Bananas*, a humorous look at the life of Italian immigrants in Toronto, was directed by Martin Hunter at the Adelaide Court Theatre, then adapted into both a movie script and radio play.¹ Film, television, and video also occupied a great deal of his time, including script writing, story editing, producing, and directing. Michael was equally at home in English and in French, and, in the eighties, he was producer and writer for several National Film Board productions, including *Métallo Blues*, *Ma vie, c'est à moi*, *Le bonheur, c'est d'être heureux*, and a co-production with his own well-named company, Macinema Incorporated, *Appartenance*, a documentary on Franco-Ontarian theatre to which he refers in the following Forum piece. In the nineties and until his death, Michael worked as writer and/or producer on many bigger budget productions, such as *Lonely Child. The Imaginary World of Claude Vivier*

(1991), an extraordinary music drama. In addition to co-producing, he also had an acting role in *The Proteus Chronicles* (1999), a gothic science fiction film, directed by his friend Steven Rumbelow who, on his website, published a fitting tribute to Michael Macina, “an intellectual and sharp-witted artist. Also a rebel who had a personality that most people could not resist loving.”²

NOTES

- 1 Scripts, outlines and miscellaneous production material concerning this play can be found in box 3 (19 folders, 5 bound manuscripts) of Martin Hunter’s papers, MS Coll. 00511, Fisher Library, University of Toronto.
- 2 See <http://www.renegademotionpictures.com/2006.html>