

et Brian Dooley, directeur artistique de L'UniThéâtre. Il faut préciser que ce genre de collaboration a été initié par la compagnie francophone.

Dans l'Ouest canadien, les artistes francophones doivent composer non seulement avec l'exiguïté et la rareté des moyens mis à leur disposition, mais aussi avec l'isolement dans lequel ils se trouvent. This isolation of the Francophone artists in the West deprives them of the stimulation and creative input generated by a vibrant theatre community. Beyond the need to expand their audience, the interest of Francophones in collaborative bilingual projects lies in the need to nourish interactions with a larger artistic community, as much creatively as critically. La collaboration avec des artistes anglophones est aussi source de légitimité et de reconnaissance pour L'UniThéâtre qui a reçu en 2013 le prix Sterling pour « its outstanding contribution to Edmonton theatre » (L'UniThéâtre), grâce aux surtitres anglais qui accompagnent ses productions depuis 2008. Cette reconnaissance de la part de la communauté théâtrale anglophone a donné à L'UniThéâtre un souffle d'énergie vitale. It has nourished a desire to further collaborate in order to escape the limitations and starvation of artists creating in the far away margins of the Francophone institution. Ces nouvelles alliances créent des produits hybrides qui problématisent les modèles et les références associées à une tradition théâtrale strictement francophone et offrent un champ d'expérimentation porteur de nouveautés esthétiques.

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Un blanc... Drawing a blank

LOUIS PATRICK LEROUX

A few years ago, in Victoria, at the CATR conference, colleagues drawing on Joseph Roach's and Diana Taylor's respective theoretical explorations into the archive and the repertoire offered their own "Canadian Performance Genealogies" using key words as triggers to recalibrate Canadian theatre history from its traditional grand narrative and usual temporality. They sought to address intercultural performances and to interrogate historical biases. It was exciting, rich, lively, playful, and allowed for an essential reconfiguration of the historical narratives of Canadian drama by a generation of highly theorized scholars, comfortable with their theatre history and the current theoretical trends emerging from America.¹

Yet, in their effort towards inclusion, every and any trace of Francophone theatre was forgotten or made redundant as a quaint historical “otherness” reference. How does inclusion proceed by the systematic exclusion of the work and artists that garner the most attention and produce the most scholarship internationally?

Drawing a blank

How did this happen? How is it that English Canadian colleagues now exclude the dynamism of Quebec’s internationally-pertinent and trendsetting performing arts (from Robert Lepage to Wajdi Mouawad, Cirque du Soleil to Dave St-Pierre) when reconsidering our common Canadian theatrical history? Have we moved to a post-Quebec, post-Francophone understanding of Canada? If so, mustn’t we nevertheless *acknowledge* our common and numerous points of contact over the course of the past 256 years of cohabitation?

As colleagues developed their fascinating transversal readings of theatre histories, I was working out my own Performance Genealogy in the audience, and came up with my metonymic term, hesitating between “trou de mémoire” and “un blanc,” either *drawing a blank* or *a slip of the mind*.

Relativism and in-betweenedness

Un blanc—but, in fact, theatrical memory is so often based on shifting narratives defined by those who remain and who are invested in a historical project that is, by definition, narrative-driven (including the narrative of inclusion and the atomization of discourse). To suggest evacuating all narratives is to enter into a relativist scheme in which everything is of equal historical pertinence: a reassuring Grand Narrative of social and artistic distinction (if not distinctiveness). In today’s Canada, does a distinct language or culture only count when it is understood through the normative Anglo lens and explained and written about in English, as I’ve felt compelled to do in this article? And what of Francophone cultures “in-between” (Bhabha): the Franco-Ontarians, the Acadians? Do they not amount to much in this context, except as hiatus-status place holders? These cultures in the contact zones between dominant discourses and normative stances, offer the only lasting examples of “junction” if not conjunction of both our national theatrical traditions, through inspired collaborations across languages and biases.

Convergences?

What, then, are the possible points of convergence between our respective theatre scenes? Hiring directors from each other’s theatrical worlds or mixed casts? This is already an interesting, if rarified, example of convergence, if not *frottement*. Experiments abound, at the National Theatre School, exceptional productions as well: *En français comme en anglais, it’s easy to criticize*. For junctions to truly occur, we need to work together, in a common rehearsal process, confronting traditions and habits, going beyond Equity’s three-mandated weeks and, conversely, trying to convince Union des Artistes to allow artists to focus on a single production at a time. What theatre can come from such a meeting? Perhaps a collaborative discourse of language as being something more than difficulty or conflict. While Francophones typically see the action as embedded in speech, Anglophones typically see speech as a prompter or a result of the action. How to move beyond language as a source of

conflict? The incommunicability trope is now tired. And we've become tongue-tied, too shy to reach out and engage in a dialogue.

Liminality

I'm most interested in the liminal spaces asking to be explored and invested, spaces in-between that essentially defy homogeneity and glib positions of cultural conceit. Are there too few of those spaces left in our theatre? They still exist; they also defy the theatrical tag, pushing towards installation, performance, dance, contemporary circus. The body speaks, yet the body's language is also marked by culture. The body of works considered is just as marked by culture as is the body politic of academia, we the scholars, the teachers, the conveyors, the commentators. How can we open up to each other's national traditions without it feeling like a "corrective" gesture or an obligation? How can it not be political or divisive but rather a "normal" expression of healthy artistic and intellectual curiosity, and perhaps even a courteous exploration into each other's singularities? This curiosity, this desire to defy our biases, to flirt with paradox allows us to engage anew in dialogue. This dialogue can be prompted by conferences, by projects, by renewing positions in Quebec or Francophone theatre practices. Opportunity can prompt collaboration beyond debate, but debate is often necessary to warm things up, to get us all *chauffés à blanc*, in order to truly engage with each other, beyond curiosity, beyond obligation, but rather as a desire to follow through on such a rich set-up for tension, conflict, and some form of dramatic resolution.

Notes

- 1 An edited transcript of this CATR session was subsequently published in *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada*. See Barker et al.

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Plus Ça Change, the Rest Stays the Same: Perpetual Spring in New Brunswick Theatre

GLEN NICHOLS

After a very long and difficult winter down East, the metaphor of perpetual spring seemed particularly apt as I prepared this paper. What I don't mean, as I apply it to theatre in