

infini[∞]theatre

Presents

Arthur Holden's

Father Land

STARRING: TBA

DIRECTED BY Guy Sprung

COSTUME and SET DESIGN BY TBA

LIGHTING DESIGN BY Sarah Yaffe

Teacher's Aid Package

March 11 to March 28, 2009

Tuesday to Saturday 8pm, Sunday 3pm
Previews March 9 and 10, 8pm

Bain St Michel, 5300 St-Dominique

For information regarding group bookings or student groups contact:
education@infinitheatre.com

(Plays unpublished but available for study upon request)

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infinithéâtre

Mandate

Infinithéâtre: Dedicated to reflecting and exploring life in 21st century Montréal.

We believe that live theatre is an essential part of a society's democratic discourse, that great theatre speaks to and about its own community. Theatre is a collective experience that must be both an entertainment and a reflection of and on significant social and political issues.

Hence Infinithéâtre develops, promotes, produces and brokers new work. We seek out innovative Québec plays, playwrights and new theatrical styles. Great theatre begins with great writing. We challenge writers from other media — journalists, poets, and novelists — to write for the stage. We tackle and adapt classic plays when the themes and characters are relevant.

Anglophone artistic expression is Infinithéâtre's mother tongue. However, as life in the great creative crucible of Montréal is primarily in French, inevitably some of our work is bilingual, even multilingual. Occasionally we also produce plays in French. Language, and the paradox of creating in English in Québec, of being a linguistic minority within a linguistic minority, helps shape our identity and fuels our creative work.

With the wired universe dominating the mindset and quality of contemporary life, we strive to celebrate live human communication. We believe it is especially important to make sure a younger generation of theatregoers has a chance to experience live theatre.

Founded in 1988 as Théâtre 1774, we have a unique record of longevity and achievement for an alternative English-language theatre in Montréal. With our renaissance and name change in 1997 to Infinithéâtre, we have assumed a leadership role in the *relève* of English theatre in Québec.

Infinite vision Infinite possibilities

Infinithéâtre – the *théâtre québécois* in English

infinithéâtre

ACTION INFINI 2009-2010

Infinithéâtre's mandate is to seek out innovative Québec plays and new theatrical styles by developing, promoting, producing and brokering new works and new playwrights.

Infinithéâtre wishes to make an educational impact on students at the high school (Secondary 3 and above), CEGEP, and University levels by bringing students to the theatre and the theatre to their classrooms. Action Infini is a program developed by Infinithéâtre to help us achieve this goal.

Because Infinithéâtre is the only theatre company in Québec with a mandate to bridge linguistic divides and to promote and produce exclusively new works by Québécois playwrights, this is an excellent way to expose our youth to theatre that is cutting-edge and relevant to their world.

Infinithéâtre's main venue, the Bain St-Michel, is an excellent place to introduce young people to the theatre. Its unique architecture and atmosphere demonstrates that plays do not have to take place in regal venues with velvet curtains. Artistic expression can happen anywhere.

For each play Infinithéâtre offers:

- Copies of the play for study.
- A Teacher's Aid package with an indepth look at the play and discussion topics as well as supplementary materials and resources to facilitate discussion.
- Discounted rate of \$10 / ticket (regular student rate is \$15).
- A post-performance talk-back session with the actors and the stage manager.
- Follow-up classroom visit after the play, if requested.

Arthur Holden

Playwright

Born in Montreal, Arthur Holden has made his living as an actor and screenwriter in this city for two decades. Onscreen, he has appeared in various film and TV productions including *The Aviator*, *René Lévesque*, and *Québec 1759*. Screenwriting credits include the English remake of the hit Quebec series *Rumeurs* and a made-for-TV movie, *Out of Control*. *Father Land* is his first stage play and was the winner of Infinithéâtre's 2008 Write-On-Q! playwriting competition.

GUY SPRUNG

Artistic Director, Infinithéâtre

Mr. Sprung, now in his 62nd year, has behind him a full four decades of tremendous contribution to the theatre scene in Québec, in Canada and internationally. As a director, as a producer, as a writer, as a teacher, as an actor, and as a dramaturg, his list of achievements is long and varied. He has been the founder of many long-lasting institutions, and the nurturer of artists and theatre professionals too many to count. He has been an innovator, an initiator, a creator, a *provocateur*, a leader, a mentor, a passionate artist and a loyal friend to many in the theatre world. With every project he has undertaken, his tremendous intelligence, inextinguishable energy, and unique imagination have been fully evident. He has shown great courage and ceaseless determination in the face of all the many challenges Canadian artists face, and have faced, over the years of our collective history. Sprung is unarguably firmly established in the canon of Canadian Theatre. It is not without reason that Gaëtan Charlebois wrote in Montréal's **Hour Magazine** that "Sprung is... at the forefront of the promotion of new authors and plays in this country," and that Matt Radz wrote in **The Gazette** that "If there was a Great Book of Canadian Theatre, Sprung's picture would head the Cutting Edge chapter." Mr. Sprung has been a prolific builder, even from his early days at McGill University where he was President of the **McGill Players' Club**, directing and/or producing over 40 productions, and also founding **Theatre XV** which had as a member of the company the now world renown American playwright, David Mamet. Shortly after graduating Mr. Sprung founded and became the first Artistic Director of the **Half Moon Theatre** in London, England, which still thrives today as a hub of theatrical activity combining professional productions with youth training and community outreach. One of Sprung's greatest legacies to Canadian theatre was the conception and founding of the **Dream In High Park**, Toronto's annual free outdoor Shakespeare festival which averages 50,000 spectators a year. This tremendously popular event has brought extraordinary outreach to the community, has been the inspiration for many other similar festivals across the country, and continues to thrive to this day. Mr. Sprung was also the Co-Founder of the **Canadian Stage Company**, a dream he shared with the late Bill Glassco, and one which together they made a reality. **CanStage** is now the largest not-for-profit contemporary theatre company in Canada. Sprung's International reputation is far-reaching. Before founding

the Half Moon Theatre in London, England, he was an Assistant Director at the **Schiller Theater** in Berlin, where he gained tremendous experience working with some of Germany's best-known actors and directors in one of the largest repertory theatres in the world. As director of the wildly popular **Balconville** by David Fennario, Sprung traveled with the company on an international tour to England and Ireland. In 1990 Mr. Sprung was invited to direct **A Midsummer Night's Dream** at the **Pushkin Theatre** in Russian in Moscow. The production ran in repertory for eleven years to sold-out houses. Then, in 2001, his Montréal theatre company, **Infinithéâtre**, was invited to represent Québec and Canada at the Cairo International Festival of Experimental Theatre in Egypt, with its bilingual production of Beckett's **Endgame/Fin de partie**. Sprung created the bilingual version, directed the production, and also played the part of Nagg when Québec's beloved actor, the late Marc Gélinas, was in too poor health to play the role he originated. Sprung is perfectly fluent in both French and German, works easily in three languages, and even became proficient enough in Russian while in Moscow to direct in that language. As a director, it is rare to see an individual who excels equally in the classics as in new, untried work. Numerous masterpieces of the stage (too many to mention) were directed by Sprung as a free-lance director across Canada, while at The Half Moon Theatre, while Artistic Director at The Toronto Free Theatre (which, under his seven-year leadership, became one of the most dynamic and innovative theatres in the country and played to virtually sold-out houses for twelve months of the year), at The

Canadian Stage Company, as Associate Director at the Stratford Festival, and as Interim Artistic

Director of the Vancouver Playhouse, at many training institutions such as the National Theatre School and the Conservatoire d'art dramatique, and now through his Montréal company Infinithéâtre. The new Canadian plays that Sprung brought to fruition as a producer, through dramaturgy and by directing their award-winning premieres, are now household names in the Canadian repertoire: **Balconville, Nothing to Lose, Les Canadiens, Paper Wheat, Quiet In The Land, Doc, Donut City, Thunder Perfect Mind, How Could You Mrs. Dick?, L'Affaire Tartuffe, Sliding In All Directions, Food/Bouffe, Barnacle Wood, and Long, Long, Short, Long** (first in English with Infinithéâtre, then as, **Le Pont**, in French at the Compagnie Jean Duceppe at Place des Arts), to name only a few.

Recently, Sprung has brought his tremendous vitality, his broad vision, his unceasing determination and unique vision to the artistic management of Infinithéâtre, described by Hélène Jacques in **Jeu** as one of the most vital theatre companies in Montréal. With its mandate to support, develop, produce, and broker new work by Québec writers, the company has made a tremendous difference to artists all over the city, giving young creators opportunities unheard of a decade ago, and inspiring the larger companies in this city to follow suit. Two of Infinithéâtre's productions won the prestigious soirées des masques award for Best English-Language Production. Writes Amy Barratt in **Hour**, "Infinithéâtre has become an essential feature on the artistic landscape; where young talent goes to grow." Marc Coiteux from

Radio-Canada writes that "Infinithéâtre... une porte grande ouverte à la découverte de notre univers commun. Et c'est extrêmement stimulant, enrichissant... et rassurant."

Sprung has done much to bridge the gap between the proverbial 'two solitudes' in this city by producing bilingual work, mixing artists originating from Anglo, Allo and Franco communities. The doyen of Montréal theatre critics, Hervé Guay of *Le Devoir*, in his September 18, 2007 review of Infinithéâtre's production of *That Woman* went so far as to make the stunning assertion that the Montréal public needed Infinithéâtre as much as it needed the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. One of Mr. Sprung's greatest talents has always been the ability to identify, and then nourish young talent, and he does so without regard for established reputation or financial resources. He has a way of making things happen when he believes they have merit. As an example, in 2003 he flew directly from Winnipeg where he had directed a \$800,000+ production of *Richard III* starring William Hurt at the Manitoba Theatre Centre, back to Montréal where he then directed a new play by the entirely unknown young writer, Jason Maghanoy, at the Montréal Fringe Festival with a production budget of \$400. The nurturing venture paid off. Mr. Maghanoy was subsequently invited to join the National Theatre School Playwriting section and his first full professional production after he graduated was the hit of Infinithéâtre's 2007-08 season, *GAS*. As a producer Mr. Sprung has placed together individuals of outstanding caliber, particularly writers and actors, who have gone on to win many awards: Governor Generals, Dora Mavor Moores, Soirées des Masques and Chalmers. Vancouver playwright Michael Groberman writes that "Canada is fortunate that Guy Sprung has chosen to focus so much attention on the development of new scripts. Montréal is also fortunate that Québec plays written in English have such a valuable ally."

In closing, there is the personal loyalty that Guy Sprung has for the people he works with, a loyalty which is returned in kind. The following is a testament from David Fennario: "...theatre comes first to Guy Sprung, even before his own self interests, because of his love of our chosen art form. It's this commitment to theatre that is the source of Guy's talent as a director, teacher and producer. It's what makes him special. It's what makes his productions special. He will always serve the artist first."

Synopsis and Character Breakdown

Synopsis

Father Land examines the bonds – and the limits – of family loyalty, exploring what it means to be a man, a father and a brother in two very different cultures. The play follows two parallel narratives. The first involves Joe Brook, a successful Montreal accountant, and his brother Victor, a recovering drug-addict: they're bitterly at odds over how to deal with Victor's gaming debt to a local mobster. In the second narrative, Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay are hiding out in the American-occupied city of Mosul: they too are angrily divided over how to deal with the imminent threat posed by a menacing enemy – the US Army. In each narrative there is a defiant teen-ager caught between the competing expectations of his father and uncle: Joe's fifteen-year-old son Eric in Montreal, and Qusay's son Mustapha in Mosul. Alternating between the Brook home and the Iraqi villa in which the Hussein brothers have taken refuge, **Father Land** advances toward twin resolutions: one decreed by history, both by loyalty mixed with spite. It is a story of the debt owed by sons to fathers, by fathers to sons, by blood to blood.

Characters

Victor Brook A 42-year-old recovering addict. He is as wild as his brother is controlled. As the play opens, an ill-advised sports bet has put him in dire need of financial help. In the parallel story that unfolds in Iraq, Victor becomes Uday Hussein, the notoriously violent elder son of Saddam Hussein.

Joseph (Joe) Brook Victor's younger brother (aged 40). Joe is a successful accountant, married, with a fifteen-year-old son and a Westmount home. He cherishes the life he has built and prides himself on being sensible and responsible, looking after his son, his elderly father and – reluctantly – his older brother. In the Iraqi half of the play, Joe becomes Qusay, Saddam's younger, saner son.

Eric Brook: Joe's son. Under his uncle's influence he experiments with high-stakes gambling and encounters the dark underworld from which his father has tried to shield him. When the threatening consequences of Victor's recklessness become apparent, Eric sides with his uncle, defying his father. In the parallel narrative of the play, Eric becomes Qusay's son Mustapha: also proud, heedless of danger and defiant of his father.

Resonance/Relevance/Themes & Issues

The definitions and benchmarks on the way to manhood are often different culture to culture and generation to generation and even individual to individual. The play explores what the idea means to the different characters.

Questions and Ideas for Discussion

Manhood is something all the characters talk about in this play. Do they seem to agree on what it is?

In your opinion what behaviors and qualities make a man a man? How does this differ from culture to culture? Generation to generation?

How is being a man in Montreal today different from being a man in Mosul in 2003? How is it the same?

Is Joe a man? Is Victor? Eric? What about their Iraqi counterparts?

Is it fair to draw comparison between two brothers in Westmount and the plight of Uday and Qusai Hussein?

What do you think of Eric and Mustapha's behavior in the play?

What is your opinion on gambling? What do you think the play is saying about gambling? Or reckless behaviors generally? Are these types of behaviors (ie. Risk taking) glorified?

Family loyalty is generally seen as a universal human value. But if Joe Brook thinks his brother is going down the path of destruction and taking an innocent boy with him, does he have a duty to back him up? Or does paternal responsibility oblige him to cut his brother adrift, saving his son and himself?

Faced with a parallel dilemma, what is Qusay's duty? Is it meaningful to say he wants to save his son, if he's prepared to trade Mustapha's freedom for his life?

What rights does money buy? If Joe Brook is a good provider who shelters his son, feeds him and pays for his private schooling, does that mean he can decide on Eric's behalf what is right and wrong?

If Joe pays his elderly father's bills at the seniors' residence, does that mean it's okay for him to monitor the old man's every movement?

And having provided the cash to put Victor through rehab and find him a job in Mississauga, does Joe have the right to cut him off in his hour of need?

There's an old saying: all power corrupts. Joe Brook's wealth gives him power over his relatives. Does he use it wisely, with nothing but their best interests in mind?

As Uday points out, Qusay Hussein's lifetime of luxury and privilege was paid for by the blood of his father's victims. Even if he personally hasn't committed atrocities of the kind Uday engaged in, does that make Qusay innocent? Now that their power is gone, does Qusay have a right to reject the blood loyalties of the Hussein family if that's what it takes to save his son?

The action in "Father Land" unfolds in two very different places, at two different times. Does that mean it tells two different stories?

Would Victor understand Uday? Would he admire him?

Would Joe admire Qusay? What would Eric think of Mustapha?

Are there villains in "Father Land"? Are there heroes? Can we sympathize with a character we don't admire?

Who wins at the end of the play? Who loses?



Dear Teachers,

Thank you for your on-going support. Please take the time to give us some feedback. Attached is a form intended to help us tailor our packages and performances for future seasons.

Also, if you like our work please take the time to write us a letter of support! These letters become part of our funding applications and help us to continue to operate. Its easy. Simply describe your experience and share your thoughts on our work and our contribution.

If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me at:
education@infiniteatre.com.

Thank you, sincerely,

Jaime Haraldson
Dramaturge

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ACTION INFINI 2009-2010

Name:

Phone:

School:

Email:

Circle the Infinithéâtre production you saw:

Rabbit Rabbit***A Daily Miracle******Father Land***

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

An answer of 1 indicates that you strongly disagree, and an answer of 5 indicates that you strongly agree.

1. The teacher's aid kit was helpful and useful when discussing the play.		1	2	3	4	5
2. The students and I found this play stimulating and insightful.		1	2	3	4	5
3. This production encouraged students to expand their interest in live theatre and the creative arts.		1	2	3	4	5
4. This production stimulated discussions and debates on a variety of topics.		1	2	3	4	5
If so, list here: _____ _____						
5. I learned a lot from the talkback session (if applicable).		1	2	3	4	5
6. Our guest speaker was well prepared and helpful to the students (if applicable).		1	2	3	4	5
7. Circle the following departments that you believe the play is most relevant to						
<i>Literature</i> <i>Political Science</i> <i>History</i> <i>Philosophy</i> <i>Communications & Media</i> <i>Women Studies</i>						
8. After this seeing this performance, I am interested in bringing my classes to future Infinitheatre productions.		1	2	3	4	5

In the space below, please provide any additional comments you have:
