

infini[∞]theatre

Presents

David Sherman's

A Daily Miracle

STARRING: TBA

DIRECTED BY Guy Sprung

COSTUME and SET DESIGN BY James Lavoie

LIGHTING DESIGN BY Eric Mongerson

Teacher's Aid Package

January 28 to February 14, 2009

Tuesday to Saturday 8pm, Sunday 3pm
Previews January 26 and 27, 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(Plays unpublished but available for study upon request)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.

David Sherman

Playwright

David Sherman is a playwright, screenwriter, journalist and filmmaker.

He spent three years as playwright-in-residence at Montreal's Centaur Theatre from 2003 to 2006. His play, ***Have a Heart***, was part of the Centaur's award-winning Montréal Stories 2006 season, and was published by Canadian Playwright's Press (2008).

The Daily Miracle was first given a public reading as part of **Infinitheatre's** 2008 *Pipeline Series*.

He is currently at work on a play about American heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis.

He has had two screenplays and one adaptation of a family film produced and has sold several options on original scripts. His film production company is currently in pre-production of a full-length feature documentary with filmmaker Francine Pelletier on the new tango music movement in Buenos Aires.

Sherman's experience in journalism and media is wide ranging. His journalistic credits include contributions to several anthologies including the best-selling ***The Anglo Guide to Survival*** and ***2000 Reasons to Hate the Millennium***. He is a former CBC Montreal daily radio producer, Quebec Bureau Chief for ***Playback Magazine***, a critic, feature writer and copy editor for the ***Montreal Gazette*** and was editor of ***Graffiti Magazine***, a national music and cultural publication. Sherman is the Editor of ***Movie Entertainment***, a national magazine for Canadian pay-TV subscribers, with a readership of more than 1 million readers.

GUY SPRUNG

Artistic Director, Infinitheâtre

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

Working to get the final edition of a daily newspaper down in the dying days of the print media as we know it, Benjamin, Elizabeth, Marty and Carrie struggle to find meaning in their lives and careers. As management cloisters in the boardroom holding secret talks, a snowstorm rages outside. Inside, rumours of the impending demise of not just their paper but of the industry as a whole are rampant. The newspaper “just ain’t what it used to be,” as Benjamin and Marty can attest. Ben works under the shadow of his late illustrious father, a heroic columnist, and tries to keep the faith and get the paper down as Marty snipes at him about the paper’s descent into irrelevance. Elizabeth struggles to break a story that matters and reveal the truth about the corporate machinations going on behind the scenes while Carrie, the editorial neophyte and representative of the “text-message generation,” questions why anyone needs newspapers at all. The staff wrestles with their personal demons while the disintegration of the industry challenges their ideals and thwarts their ambitions, all at the prompting of a shareholder culture that demands revenues ahead of journalism.

Characters

Elizabeth – A late news reporter on the brink of burn out. Elizabeth is a single mother struggling to balance the need of her daughter with a high-pressure and unfulfilling career. She is driven to succeed, still enchanted with the dream of what being a reporter can mean, still chasing the big story that will make her career, win her a prize and get her off the night shift.

Benjamin – The night editor living in the shadow of his father’s greatness. His father was an award-winning columnist from back in the days when hard-drinking columnists ruled the trade. Ben inherited his father’s addiction to alcohol but not to the newspaper life and has allowed himself to be mired in the minutiae of the news desk, obsessed with getting the paper out but seemingly blind to its slide into irrelevance.

Marty – Old-school tabloid journalist returning to the trenches after a breakdown. Propped up by pharmaceuticals and caffeine, he’s walking a fine line. He’s desperate to hang onto the one thing that kept him sane: the magic of a trade that once promised truth, integrity, prose and public service.

Carrie – Neophyte editor and computer whiz, she’s a recent grad, tech-saavy, media smart and far more intelligent than her ditsy exterior suggests. She represents the future of the industry, but struggles against her own stereotype and her ambivalence about her identity and the shape of things to come.

Roland – A former typesetter from back when lay-out and printing were done by hand. Computers forced him and hundreds of his colleagues out of a job and he's been cleaning the toilets and emptying the trash ever since. He, more than anyone, is privy to the workings of the business (pun intended!).

Resonance/Relevance/Themes & Issues

The subject matter is the end of newspapers in Canada as we have known them. The paper in the play may be called the *Star* but it could just as well be the *Gazette* or any big city daily. The majority of by-lines in our English-language daily are from New York or Los Angeles and journalism has taken a back-seat to selling ads and food, sports and lifestyle articles that cost less than substantial national or international news or feature stories. This is a local, national and global issue with implications for our cities and the way we communicate with ourselves and each other.

From “Battle Plans for Newspapers”. *The New York Times*:

“Virtually every newspaper in America has gone through waves of staff layoffs and budget cuts as advertisers and subscribers have marched out the door, driven by the move to the Web and, more recently, the economic crisis.

In some cities, midsized metropolitan papers may not survive to year's end. The owners of the Rocky Mountain News and The Seattle Post-Intelligencer have warned that those papers could shut down if they can't find buyers soon. The Star Tribune of Minneapolis recently filed for bankruptcy. The Detroit Free Press and The Detroit News will soon stop home delivery four days of the week to cut operating costs. Gannett, which owns 85 daily newspapers in this country, recently said it would require most of its 31,000 employees to take a week of unpaid leave.

What survival strategies should these dailies adopt? If some papers don't survive, how will readers get news about the local school board or county executive?”

The problem is one that cuts across international borders. In Canada the newspaper industry is in a similar situation. More and more, local news is being outsourced and small papers and large are shutting down.

David Friend reports in *The Globe and Mail*, a publication facing its own serious challenges, “Many Canadian media outlets are coping with change as advertisers slash their budgets and people migrate to the Internet for their Information. Montreal's *La Presse*, one of the biggest papers in Quebec, has stopped publishing its Sunday edition while *The National Post*, owned by Canwest Global Communications, has canned the Monday edition for the summer.”

In an effort to cope small town papers are shutting down or being regionalized and hundreds of jobs are being cut.

Questions and Ideas for Discussion

How has technology changed the way information is distributed?

How has the way this information is distributed changed culture?

How has the globalization of our economies and cultures affected our relationships? Our understandings of ourselves and others?

How has the internet changed the way we receive our news? Is this a change for the better or the worse?

How has big business changed the news?

Is there an environmental component to the shift from print to web-based media?

Is the lag-time in print significant? What are the implications of minute to minute coverage offered by the web?

Is this crisis in the print media the beginning of the erosion of local culture feared by opponents of “globalization”? Is the one world one voice model inevitable?

Is the print newspaper really that important?

Supplementary Materials/Resources

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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:
