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Marie Brassard
and
Infrarouge
(Montréal)

The Invisible

**Enwave Theatre
231 Queens Quay West
December 3-6, 8:00 p.m.
\$15-30**

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Marie Brassard/Infrarouge – *The Invisible*

Production Notes and Overview

An English-language premiere!

Marie Brassard returns to Toronto with a theatrical exploration of the double and of otherness.

Following on the heels of her smash sell-out hits, *The Glass Eye*, *Peepshow* and *Jimmy créature de rêve*, Brassard returns to Toronto with a theatrical exploration of the double and of otherness. *The Invisible* attempts to harness the mysterious and elusive forms that lurk within us.

Working in collaboration with Finnish artist Mikko Hynninen and composer/sound designer Alexander MacSween, Brassard describes her new work as an "impossible geography. I will go there, lose control and fall before your very eyes."

Don't miss this incredible opportunity to witness a mesmerizing performer render the invisible visible.

The city of Berlin, ectoplasms (vaporous emanations of the body supposedly visible to mediums) and the literary hoax involving J. T. Leroy, a writer dreamed up by a woman looking to get published, provide Marie Brassard with ideal metaphorical material for a reflection on art and creation, on the porous boundary between the creator and the resultant creature.

Since the days when she worked with Robert Lepage on *Le Polygraphe*, Marie Brassard has been spending more and more time in Berlin. With both hemispheres of its brain apparently reunited, Berlin is at the heart of *L'Invisible*. This new work by Marie Brassard, following on the heels of *Jimmy*, *créature de rêve*, *La Noirceur* and *Peepshow* (all three premiered at the Festival de Théâtre des Amériques), is a theatrical exploration of the double and of otherness, an attempt to harness the mysterious and elusive forms that lurk within us. In collaboration with the Finnish artist Mikko Hynninen and the composer and sound designer Alexander MacSween, the singular and yet very plural Marie Brassard incarnates minds and the bodies that live therein, making their ghostly voices resonate, rendering the invisible visible.

Biography

Marie Brassard is a Montreal-based director, playwright and performer renowned for her imagistic collaborations with Robert Lepage. The two have virtually nothing in common, save their love of their work; yet from their differences of age, gender, culture and sensibility has sprung a theatrical hybrid unlike any other: not so much a play, as a theatrical objet d'art.

For several years, Marie Brassard's career has been intimately linked with that of the director Robert Lepage. With him and a few other artists, she elaborated concepts, wrote and performed many parts in *The Dragons' Trilogy*, *Polygraphe*, *The seven streams of the river Ota*, and *Geometry of Miracles*. Initiating her exploration of the use of sound, she created her first solo play *Jimmy, créature de Rêve*, at the Festival de Théâtre des Amériques, in Montreal in June 2001. In her more recent work, *The Darkness* (2003) and *Peepshow* (2005), she continued her technological investigation, interweaving voices and soundtracks, shifting between levels of reality, bringing us face to face with a world where the boundaries between public and private are increasingly fluid and the relationship between individuals and technology is increasingly intimate. Artistic director of the production company Infrarouge, which was founded in 2001 with administrator Michel Bernatchez and stage designer Simon Guilbault, she continues to explore unfamiliar landscapes and to develop a personal theatrical language involving the use of new sound related technologies. Establishing her as a unique voice in contemporary theatre, her work, presented in English and French in several cities all over Americas, Europe and Australia, earned rave reviews and enormous public success worldwide.

Recent Performance History

***The Glass Eye* (2008)**

(performed at Harbourfront Centre's Enwave Theatre, part of Luminato 2008)

{abstract}

By Louis Negin and Marie Brassard

"The histoire of a child maturing in a world of movies and movie stars layered over the realities of a lonely disciplined existence. The realization that sometimes even glamour can become tarnished. The show is a collage of memories, dreams, fantasies and truth."

Louis Negin

"There is something about this city that's a bit like Hollywood. Not the real Hollywood of course, because it's awful, but the kind of dream Hollywood, like you see in all those movies..."

A clash of culture, style and time, reality and fiction are subtly intertwined in this hybrid performance, *The Glass Eye* is an odd piece that draws its inspiration from a man's life, both dreamed and real. The man is Louis Negin, an actor who's been active for more than forty years in the cinema and theater world. The starting point of this production is *Polo's fantasy*, a faux memoir, a play written by Louis Negin. It deals with Irving, a young Jewish homosexual who lives in a stifling atmosphere with his mother in a small apartment in Toronto in the 1940's. Unable to deal with the intolerance and the restrictions imposed by a rigid and conservative society, the imaginative protagonist invents himself an alter ego, Polo, an extraverted actor, who moves to Montreal and among the celebrities and gangsters, becomes an important member of the underground night-club society that flourished in the fifties. Eventually Polo leaves Montreal for New York and London.

The Glass Eye is a play created in reaction to the writing and reading of Louis Negin's story, a play within a play made up of reflections about celebrity, theatre, movies, sex and love.

Marie Brassard endeavors in this new work to move us through troubling disruptions in an exciting journey into the present and past of an extravagant dreamer, a privileged witness of the Golden Years of cinema and theater.

Picture starts as numbers go backwards. Little boys play cowboy and Indians. Intoxicated with the world around him, a child who dreams of becoming a showgirl is caught in unguarded moments. As he is showered by false applause, he kisses the soft fur on the MGM lion's head before heading out into the streets, running to escape imaginary paparazzi, blinded by the flashes of their cameras, as bright as the shiny surface of a polished glass eye.

Full performance history available at:

<http://www.agencegoodwin.com/pdf/brassard-m-fr.pdf>

Press Notes and Reviews – *The Invisible*

"*Marie Brassard could be reading the phone book and still enthrall an audience.*"
- The Montreal Gazette

Playwright inspired by Berlin Wall. Sound and light woven into narrative

Published: Tuesday, June 03, 2008 - The Gazette

Call it the wedding of Cana syndrome.

The Festival TransAmériques, which ends Thursday, appears to have saved its finest theatrical wine for last.

Last night, two plays (*Import/Export* and *L'Invisible*) opened at the FTA. And Iwanow, which played Sunday and Monday only, was the most impressive theatre production seen yet at the festival. (Full review in my blog at www.montrealgazette.com/stageandpage)

<The seeds of Marie Brassard's *L'Invisible* were planted in Berlin, where she lived from 1993 to 1996.>

While Iwanow came with the pedigree of the Volksbühne of Berlin, and the signature of noted director Dimiter Gotscheff, *L'Invisible* needs no other guarantee than the name of Marie Brassard.

Those of us who have followed Brassard's career since the days when she collaborated as a co-author and performer with Robert Lepage in stunning shows like his *La Trilogie des Dragons*, *Le Polygraphe* and *Les Sept Branches de la Rivière Ota*, cannot resist her solo shows. Each one is more intriguing and innovative than the last.

From *Jimmy, créature du rêve* (2001), she moved on to *La Noirceur (The Darkness/Die Dunkelheit)*, and, most recently, *Peepshow*, in 2005.

All of them created at the FTA. In each one, she cast a spell that soon proved foolproof around the world. She has toured Europe, Asia, Australia and the U.S. with her works.

The flashes of inspiration for her newest solo, *L'Invisible*, began in Berlin, where she lived from 1993 to 1996.

Brassard had been familiar with the city prior to the fall of the famous wall in 1989. And, while living there, she became fascinated with the speed with which the traces of the wall had been wiped out, even on the maps. "What used to stand for truth was erased," she said, "All the things that used to stand for truth were now kind of obsolete. It was like this frontier between truth and lies and communism and capitalism was destroyed."

Later, the line of wall was put back on the maps. "Even if the wall is not there anymore," she said, "in a certain way it is still there, in between the worlds."

This is where she began thinking about "the invisible" and decided to use it as a metaphor.

It fit because she does so much work with sound and light in her shows. "Light makes the word visible. And sound is invisible," she explained.

Her exploration of what is present yet unseen brought her into the realm of "things we cannot understand," such as death and mysterious phenomena, such as ghosts.

More than ever, she wanted to distance herself from a "plainly narrative" form of theatre and move into more abstract forms.

For this show she's working with an artist from Finland, Mikko Hynninin, who has created a visual environment for *L'Invisible*, and composer/sound designer Alexander MacSween, who has mastered the sound.

Then she wove in pieces of the story of a U.S. literary hoax involving a fictitious author named J.T. Leroy, author of *Sarah*, the tale of a cross-dressing teenager whose mother acted as his pimp, working the trucker trade. It was eventually discovered that Leroy did not exist - an invisible author. – Pat Donnelly, *The Gazette*