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DynamO Théâtre

pointfixe

newsletter

Red noses

This issue features an introduction to the world of clowns and to *Misstart*, our latest creation. Its style is totally different from our previous other productions, although it uses the company's creative tools. It is a production for stage clowns.

Stage clowns!! What does a stage-clown production look like? Last I heard, DynamO Theatre wasn't a clown company. By the way, what is a stage clown? You'll find answers to these and other questions in this introduction to the approach that led to this work and its background.



Clowning!

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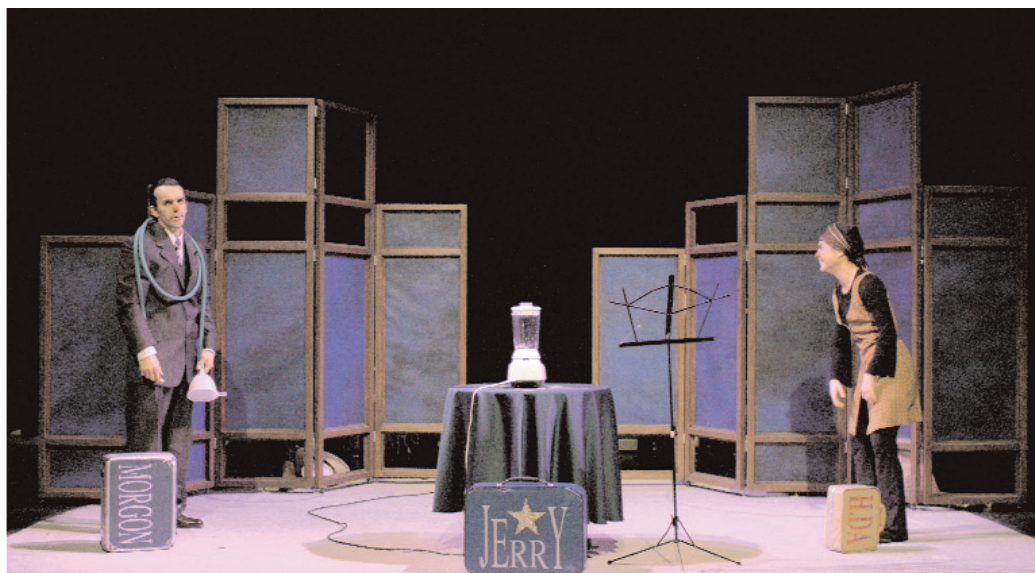
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CLOWNS TAKING THE STAGE!



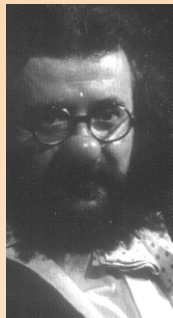
Drawing: Don Lay

Ladies and Gentlemen, acrobatic movement may be the soul of DynamO Théâtre, but clowning is its breath of life. Under the watchful eye of Robert Dion, Circus offered delightful clown entrances in solo or duet as performed by Jacqueline Gosselin and Reynald Laurin. The other clowns who took the stage later on have all left for other parts of the Theatre World as imagined by Yves Hunstad, cowriter of the unforgettable *Tragédie comique*. The clowns stood waiting for a new actor or actress. Meanwhile, time did not stand still: Circus became DynamO Théâtre, the writing of theatre of acrobatic movement began, as did scripts that inevitably featured characters painted monochrome red: Ralfie in *Mur-Mur* (The Wall), Gayle in *The Challenge*, Chester in *Lili*. Impossible to deny their roots. This fall, the clowns are back, without noses or circus garb. In fact, a training session and a production provided opportunities to discover two marvelous performers: Marilyn Perreault and Yves Simard. The Loy of this new theatre production is none other than Jacqueline Gosselin whose passion for clown work never weakened over the years. *Misstart* has been in production for four years now and she has just finished directing it. After the technical complications of the theatre-of-acrobatic-movement productions, she began dreaming about small-size shows that provided a more intimate relationship with the audience. Through her words, driven by her passion for the actor's craft and the fun of performing, let me take you behind the scenes of the crazy adventure of Mister Jerry, Morgon and H. Da!

If a clown isn't funny, then a clown is not a clown. Aside from this, clowns can do anything, but they have one duty: being very personal with their own silhouette, having an individual style and a distinctive expression [...] Clowns are the most naked of artists because they put their whole beings on the line. They can't cheat. If they don't want to disappoint the audience, clowns must be genuine and have the feeling that they never give enough.
Dimitri



Clowning and the mechanics of laughter appealed to her. During the summer of 1996, Jacqueline Gosselin traveled to London to study at the school of Philippe Gaulier, one of Jacques Lecoq's foremost pupils. In his classes, the basic principle is very simple: "If you don't make people laugh, out you go." And he



Philippe Gaulier

would push us off the stage. It wasn't funny at all. He worked with the personality of each student. He felt my frustration and played with it. I wanted to stay on stage and he would push me off earlier and earlier. Three weeks later, something absolutely had to give. So I dove in head first. Clowns are open books and they must take risks. That last week, I made some extraordinary dives and faced incredible fears. It was fantastic. And I finally discovered what the fun of clowning was and how difficult it is. You can't cheat and there are no safety nets. The audience allows you to stay on stage. Of course, clowns will do anything to stay there, but they must also learn to leave to be able to return. The audience has to want you." She claims that she owes everything to her master stating that artists have the right to borrow. So she uses this approach in clown creation today. The wind-up, the fun of performing, leaving the stage, staying there, winning the audience's heart, working with the audience, those are only some of the learnings that help bring out the clown that lives within each of us.

If you aren't born a clown, you aren't one.
Pierre Étaix



Every year, DynamO Theatre offers two professional training sessions for in-house performers and recruits. Sometimes, there is a third session, time permitting, in which the ambitions of the artistic directors are let loose. In the late 90s, at the end of a very busy year, Jacqueline Gosselin suggested a clown workshop: a very talented Marilyn Perreault was revealed, full of zaniness and mockery. A clown was born and a momentous meeting between the two women opened new research avenues for a clown duet. The choice of a partner led them to Yves Simard, a company regular who performed in *The Challenge* and whose physical features and personality provided an amazing contrast: "Yves and Marilyn did not know each other. My dream ... was to shut them up in my closet and open it up a month later to see if clown possibilities existed." At this point, nobody is even thinking of a production. Rather what is considered is a 30-hour research period aimed at answering two fundamental questions: "Can one be a clown even if one is not born in a clown family, such as the famous Gruss, Fratellini or Colombaioni?" And the second question was "Can a clown show be scripted?" The starting point and trigger for the imagination: nothing. No themes, clowns in a dormant state, an approach to the work and the wide open play space to let things emerge. The team puts



Yves Simard

together a slow and demanding creative process that requires loads of mutual trust, a large dose of humility and total surrender on the part of all the creative artists: "If an idea was good enough to last until the next step, it was then viable."

Traditionally clowns are funny, but like any other actor or artist, they can also be poetic, ironic, burlesque, sarcastic or tragic. Nothing in the definition of clowns forces them to perform productions consisting of small acts and not in plays lasting an entire evening, nor even to perform in circuses, even if up to the 70s, the circus was their favourite place.

**Jacques Fabri
Clowns et farceurs**

February 2000, first session: applying the Gaulier method and developing a connection between the three team members. A strong need to keep on exploring during a second session will emerge. The very stereotypical concepts of white (oppressor) and red (oppressed) clowns give way to a more subtle work by contrast, providing performers with freedom to create, a broadening of their scopes of concern and the permission to explore any fantasy. Second session: a great leap into the unknown, development of a more personal clown approach, improv work, notes, elements of characters, notes, names given and development of an original language, notes, clown-entrance ideas, notes and emergence of a dramatic pretext: "You have to be three, but they'll be two of you." The urgency of the research calls for a third session and leads to the development of a production project. During this last stage, each character goes through interviews in which every detail of the clown's life is scrutinized: phobias, whims, interests, dwelling, family. Everything is examined. Very rich material that today makes up an impressive scrap book and book of references.

The nature of a clown entrance is both shifting and definitive, like in the circus. Even when an entrance is considered perfect, it never stops developing, as it is not part of the arts that are never retouched.

**Tristan Rémy
Entrées clownesques**

CLOWNS TAKING THE STAGE!



Jacqueline Gosselin

From the very beginning, some 90 hours in workshop have been logged over the three years. Jacqueline Gosselin compiled notes, redesigned improvisations in the light of the production's goals and wrote a first script in which she devised a beginning, a few acts and an end. The move from the paper to the stage didn't work. "Clowns never do what you want them to and the proposal was simply thrown out, no regrets. "Writing helped to sort things out, that's all. Even better, it helped to immerse ourselves and start over even stronger. We used it like a springboard. This final script is the fourth version. And it still is changing." As the work progressed, the need to perform for an audience was felt. Bear in mind that the audience is the one that decides the fate of clowns. So, residences are needed as important test phases. "Inch by inch, we tiptoed forward. We began by inviting two people to see ten minutes. Next, we invited a few friends. Then, we felt that we needed to test the production in front of classes to find out the type of audience the production appealed to and above all if the clowns were able to have the same zest every time. Last spring, I had the pleasure of seeing the results of the last residence at Théâtre de la Ville in Longueuil. In the fall, keep an eye out for the clowns!

In any act, there has to be a development. First, it is surprising, then touching, interesting, thrilling and again



surprising. Being humble enough to know that you can't make people laugh continually [...] The laughter that the clown produces is not theoretical, it is Homeric.
Annie Fratellini, Destin de clown

The great Swiss clown Dimitri says that in the art of clowning what is most valuable and important is the laughter and that clowns must have a knack, indeed a genius, for comedy. In our consumer world, the image of clowns used for commercial purposes is not always very reassuring. With their face painting, colored wigs and balloons, they inspire more fear than laughter when they slip into the intimacy of our homes for parties of all kinds. The clowns in *Misstart* are stage clowns. Inspired by *Tragédie comique* by Yves Hundstad and Eve Bonfanti, *Auguste, Auguste, Auguste* by Pavel Kohout and by the clowns Sol and Gobelet, they are bearers of great humanity. They are naïve, sensitive and funny beings who want to share feelings and parts of their lives with the audience. In a very subtle manner. Mister Jerry is the brain of the group, Morgon is his assistant and H. Dal is the stage manager. A major event is going to upset the performance, throw a monkey wrench in the hierarchy and create an unbelievable mix-up. As they do in the circus, the clowns in *Misstart* perform musical acts, acrobatic acts, magic acts,

but their feats are not important even though the wilful and calculated clumsiness actors' performance is filled with beauty and virtuosity. In her clown work, what interests Jacqueline Gosselin is obviously to make spectators laugh. But what impresses her and moves her above all is the humanity of clowns: I loved Hunstad, I loved the Colombaioni. So we searched for greatness in human frailty. We looked for the clown in the most insignificant part of humans." When the work began, they used all the circus paraphernalia as a safety net: red noses, weird tattered costumes and a host of props. Little by little, they undertook together a drastic clean-up. They swapped the lively colours for black and costumes for street clothes, they transformed the small acts into scenes of self-examination and reduced the number of props to the essential basics: two screens, two suitcases, one table, one stepladder and an electric mixer. This change creates as much insecurity as it is magnificent. "We had to go through excess to find what is essential." Relieved of all their tricks, clowns appear as a great mirror of humanity. And that is where laughter comes from, from the absurd and vulnerable image of ourselves that they mirror back to us. Behind DynamO Théâtre's last creation, *Misstart*, is a production for stage clowns dealing with solitude and the search for the other, which constantly forces us to make compromises. There is nothing sad about it. Take a clown's word for it!

Annie Gascon



Marilyn Perreault



Marilyn Perreault and Yves Simard

New cast for de me me me ...

For ithe third season, the cast of *me me me...* our production on school rejection, is almost completely new.

Here are the four new cast members:

Playing **Mathilda** is Émilie Grenon-Emiroglou who spent 3 years as an aerial ring specialist in the *Quidam* production by Cirque du Soleil .



In the role of **Nathan** is Tom Cholot who was featured in several productions including, *Les Clownés*, *On s'arrache au jazz*, *Vive la reine!*, *Les futurisques*, *2000 le temps d'une nuit* and *Charivari acrobatique Fratellini*.



Playing **Stanley** is Rémi Jacques who studied several circus techniques (rings, trampoline, diving, contorsion), gymnastics and dance (classical, ballet jazz) before moving on to college and university studies in drama.



And playing **Suzanna** is Lysanne Richard who worked as a high diver, an aerialist and a trampoline specialist and played various theatre and clown characters in *Les Clownés* for various Montreal events. She also performs acrobatic and clown acts as part of Duo TomLys.



Richard Fréchette remains with the cast this season as the **Janitor**.

There is also some new blood backstage. Marie-Eve Rochon is taking on the stage management duties for the production.

On tour

Schedule Fall 2004 and Winter 2005

moi moi moi... me me me... yo yo yo ...

| Date | Location | Theatre |
|------------------------|----------------|---|
| UNITED KINGDOM | | |
| October 22-23 | Sitrling | MacRobert Theatre |
| SPAIN | | |
| October 30 | Almadro | Teatro Municipal de Almadro |
| November 1 | Burgos | Teatro Principal de Burgos |
| November 3-7 | Seville | Teatro Alameda |
| November 12 | Valladolid | Teatro Ambigu |
| November 14 | Marbella | Teatro Ciudad de Marbella |
| CANADA | | |
| December 7-12 | Laval | Maison des arts de Laval |
| December 14 | Montréal | Théâtre Outremont |
| January 11-12, 2005 | L'Assomption | Théâtre Hector-Charland |
| January 21, 2005 | Montréal | Maison de la culture Villeray |
| UNITED STATES | | |
| February 8, 2005 | Cleveland | Playhouse Square |
| Lili | | |
| CANADA | | |
| October 28- November 7 | Winnipeg | Manitoba Theatre for young People |
| November 10 | St. Albert | Arden Theatre |
| November 14 | Banff | Banff Centre for the Arts |
| UNITED STATES | | |
| November 22 | Billings | Alberta Bair Theatre |
| CANADA | | |
| February 3-20, 2005 | Toronto | Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People |
| Misstart | | |
| November 17 | Montréal | Théâtre Prospéro |
| January 30, 2005 | Sainte-Thérèse | Théâtre Lionel-Groulx |
| February 2-13, 2005 | Québec City | Théâtre Les Gros Becs |

For more nformation on the productions and touring activities of the company, please visit the company's Web site at www.dynamotheatre.qc.ca where you will find tons of information.

A new Lili

Lili is beginning its fourth season on tour. Violaine Paradis who played the title role for two seeasons is moving on and a new performer is taking on the role, **Sandrine Merrette**.

She studied circus arts during 7 years at the National Circus School in Montreal. An acrobat, a contorsionist and a hand



balancer, she was involved in many of the school's productions. She also worked with Cirque Fantastic and Cirque Éloize performing balance acts for corporate events. She was involved in exploratory workshops with Cirque du Soleil.

The rest of the cast remains the same: Julie Beaulieu as Celest and The Mother, Frédéric Nadeau as Francis, Christian Perrault as Chester and Martin Vaillancourt as Gary and The Father.

The production also has a new stage manager: Nicolas Marion.

Point fixe is an information newsletter published by DynamO Théâtre. This English language issue is a special one. However if you are interested in receiving the French issues, please write to Point fixe DynamO Théâtre 911, rue Jean-Talon Est, bur. 131 Montréal (Québec) Canada H2R 1V5 or email your request at info@dynamotheatre.qc.ca

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