

MICHEL TREMBLAY

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Michel Tremblay has been a dominant figure of Quebec theatre since the late 1960s. He is also renowned as a novelist, translator and screenwriter.

Michel Tremblay was born June 25, 1942, in the industrial east end of Montreal. While still in high school, he began writing poems, plays, and novels. At 18, after completing the eleventh grade, he enrolled in the Graphic Arts Institute of Quebec, where he learned the trade of linotypist. It was at that time that he began writing the short stories which were later published as **Stories for Late Night Drinkers**.

From 1963 to 1966 he worked as a linotypist. In 1964, he won first prize in a competition for young writers, sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, for his play **Le Train** which he wrote in 1959. During the same year, he met André Brassard, who has gone on to direct the premieres of nearly all his plays.

In 1965, Michel Tremblay wrote **Les Belles-Soeurs**, which was first produced in 1968 at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert, in Montreal. It was immediately acclaimed by critics and public alike and has since been performed in many countries. In 1973, the Paris production, presented at l'Espace Cardin by the Montreal-based Compagnie des Deux Chaises, was declared "the best foreign production of the year". **Les Belles-Soeurs** has been called "the single most important event in the history of Quebec theatre". The 25th anniversary production in 1993, by La Compagnie Jean Duceppe, played to more than 100 sold-out houses at Place des Arts in Montreal and on tour throughout Quebec.

In 1972, Michel Tremblay wrote his first full-length film script, **Il était une fois dans l'est**, which was directed by André Brassard in 1973. In 1974, the film represented Canada at the Cannes and Chicago Film Festivals. Brassard and Tremblay had previously collaborated on a short film, **Françoise Durocher, Waitress**, which won three Canadian "Genie" prizes in 1972. In 1976, Tremblay wrote a second full-length film script, **Le Soleil se lève en retard**, which was also directed by André Brassard.

Beginning in 1978, Leméac Editeur published the six novels that make up Tremblay's *Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*, all subsequently translated in English and published by Talonbooks, in Vancouver :

- 1978 **The Fat Woman Next Door is Pregnant;**
- 1980 **Thérèse, Pierrette and the Little Hanging Angel;**
- 1982 **The Duchess and the Commoner;**
- 1984 **News from Edouard;**
- 1989 **The First Quarter of the Moon;**
- 1997 **A Thing of Beauty.**

In 1986, Leméac published a more intimate novel, **The Heart Laid Bare** and its sequel, **Le Coeur éclaté**, in 1993. In 1990, **Les Vues animées** (Bambi and me), twelve autobiographical stories that revolve around a young boy's discovery of French, American, and Québécois cinema appeared, followed

in 1992 by **My Early Life in Twelve Acts**, a second collection of autobiographical stories, and in 1994, **Un ange cornu avec des ailes de tôle**, on his discovery of litterature. **La Nuit des princes charmants** appeared in 1995 and **Quarante-quatre minutes quarante-quatre secondes** in 1997, **Hôtel Bristol, New York, N.Y** in 1999. In 2001, Leméac publishes **L'Homme qui entendait siffler une bouilloire**, in 2002, **Bonbons assortis**, the fourth collection of his autobiographical stories, in 2004, **Le cahier rouge**, in 2005, **Le cahier bleu**, in 2006, **Le trou dans le mur**, in 2007, **La traversée du continent** and in 2008, **La traversée de la ville**.

Many of Tremblay's plays have been well received abroad. Productions of **Bonjour là, bonjour** mounted in New York in 1980 and in Tokyo in 1981, of **Les Belles-Soeurs** in Chicago in 1982 and Glasgow in 1989, and of **Hosanna** in Paris in 1987 were particularly successful. His plays have been performed throughout Canada and the United States, as well as in England, France, Germany, Scotland, Belgium, Finland, Poland, Australia, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Venezuela, Brazil, Romania, and Japan. All of his plays, 3 novels, and 1 collection of tales have been published in English translation, and some of his work has been published in France, England and Germany as well.

Tremblay's work now includes 27 plays translated in more than 30 languages, 3 musical comedies, 21 novels, 1 collection of tales, 4 collections of short stories and 7 film scripts. He has translated more than 20 plays by Aristophanes, Paul Zindel, Tennessee Williams, Dario Fo, Chekhov, Gogol, Edward Albee and Terrence McNally. He has also written the lyrics for songs interpreted by some of Quebec's best known singers, and in 1989 he wrote the libretto of an opera, **Nelligan**, which was produced by the Montreal Opera Company in February, 1990.

In 1993, Michel Tremblay directed **Natures mortes**, the first play by the young Québécois playwright, Serge Boucher, at Montreal's Théâtre de Quat'Sous. In December, 1995, the musical comedy **Demain matin, Montréal m'attend**, first performed in 1970, was revived in a new production. His most recent play **For the Pleasure of Seeing her Again** was first produced in 1998 at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert and almost simultaneously performed by Centaur Theatre, in the English version. In 1999-2000, this last production was produced in a Canadian tour. In February 2002, this play is presented by the National Theatre Society of Dublin, at Peacock Theatre and in May 2002, at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, starring Olympia Dukakis as Nana.

Michel Tremblay has received six grants from the Canada Arts Council, as well as many honours, including "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de France" in 1984 (promoted to "Officier" in 1991) and in 2008 "Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur de France". In 1991 he was named "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Quebec". He has been given five honorary doctorates by Concordia University and McGill University in Quebec, the University of Windsor in Ontario, Stirling University in Scotland and Queen Margaret University College in England. In 1999, Michel Tremblay received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award.

Many national and local newspapers and magazines, in Canada and abroad, have published articles on Michel Tremblay and his works. Several books have also been devoted to his work, including: Voix et Images in 1982 published by Les Presses de l'Université du Quebec (Quebec); Michel Tremblay by Renate Usmiani in 1982 published by Douglas & McIntyre (Vancouver); The Theatre of Frustration also by Renate Usmiani in 1990 published by Garland (New York and London) Le Monde de Michel Tremblay in 1993 published by Cahiers Théâtre Jeu/Éditions Lansman (Montreal and Carnières in Belgium) and, in 1996, a dictionary of his work. His name can also be found in the "Larousse" dictionary, "Who's Who", and the "Dictionary of International Biography".

In 1987, **Les Belles-Soeurs** was mentioned in the Paris publication LIRE, in a section entitled "La bibliothèque idéale : le théâtre", as one of 50 plays that should be included in the home library of anyone who is interested in theatre since its origins.

For the originality of his style, the broad range of expression, and his profound vision of the world in which we live, Michel Tremblay is undoubtedly one of the most significant writers of our times.