

## **Six Outstanding Canadian Playwrights Short-Listed for 2011 Siminovitch Prize in Theatre**

*Playwrights from British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, Newfoundland, and Saskatchewan in the Running for \$100,000 Prize – the Largest in Canadian Theatre*

**TORONTO, October 4, 2011** -- BMO Financial Group, sponsor of the Elinore & Lou Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, today announced the names of six Canadian playwrights who have made the 2011 short-list for the largest prize in Canadian theatre. The finalists are:

- Robert Chafe, Newfoundland;
- Jasmine Dubé, Quebec;
- Greg MacArthur, Alberta/Quebec;
- Joan MacLeod, British Columbia;
- Mansel Robinson, Saskatchewan; and
- Larry Tremblay, Quebec.

The six finalists were selected from 23 nominated Canadian playwrights.

“On behalf of BMO Financial Group, I’d like to congratulate each of the finalists for their inspiring work and innovation, which have helped advance Canadian theatre,” said Gilles Ouellette, President and CEO, Private Client Group, BMO Financial Group. “I’d also like to thank Maureen Labonté, our jury chair for the third consecutive year, and this year’s jury for lending their time, effort and talents to select and subsequently honour such excellence.”

“The jury was thrilled with the range and quality of the work of all the playwrights nominated this year,” said jury chair Maureen Labonté. “The finalists demonstrate passion and imagination in their writing, as well as extraordinary voice and vision all of which contribute to building a strong Canadian theatre scene.

“The Prize recognizes both excellence within an evolving body of work as well as innovation, exploration and risk-taking. It opens up the possibility of making a

real difference in the recipient's art and help further their pursuit of creativity and excellence," said Ms. Labonté.

Joining Maureen Labonté on the Jury are:

- Yvette Nolan, award-winning playwright, dramaturg, director and educator, was the Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts from 2003-2011 and was recently awarded the City of Toronto's Aboriginal Affairs Award.
- Carole Fréchette, 2002 recipient of the Siminovitch Prize, is a Montreal-based playwright and has been a force in Québec theatre for more than 25 years.
- Craig Holzschuh has worked as director, playwright, actor and designer and has been Artistic and Managing Director of Théâtre la Seizième in Vancouver since 2001.
- Scott Burke is an award-winning director, playwright and producer and is the Artistic Producer of Eastern Front Theatre, curator of the SuperNova Theatre Festival, and a founding member of In Good Company.
- Vanessa Porteous has worked extensively as a director and dramaturg. She is presently Artistic Director of Alberta Theatre Projects, having been in the role since May 2009. Previously, she oversaw ATP's annual Enbridge playRites Festival and the production of over 30 new Canadian plays.

The recipient of the Siminovitch Prize will receive \$100,000, of which \$25,000 will be awarded to a protégé or organization of the recipient's choice. The Prize will be presented on November 7, 2011 at a ceremony in Toronto.

### **The Selection Process**

The Jury reviewed nominations of professional Canadian playwrights who have advanced Canadian theatre through a body of work achieved in recent years while influencing and inspiring younger theatre artists. The jurors assessed the nominees' originality, sense of evolution, growing maturity, continuing experimentation, impact upon audiences, and/or influence upon younger artists. They also considered whether the artists were at a point in their professional career where the recognition and resources associated with the prize would make a significant difference, allowing and encouraging the artist to go further in the pursuit of his or her craft.

### **About the Siminovitch Prize**

The Siminovitch Prize in Theatre was introduced in 2001 and dedicated to renowned scientist Lou Siminovitch and his late wife Elinore, a playwright. Sponsored by BMO Financial Group, Canada's largest annual theatre arts award recognizes direction, playwriting and design in three-year cycles. Previous recipients include:

- Toronto director, Daniel Brooks in 2001;

- Montreal playwright, Carole Fréchette in 2002;
- Montreal designer, Louise Campeau in 2003;
- St. John's director, Jillian Keiley in 2004;
- Toronto playwright, John Mighton in 2005;
- Toronto set and costume designer, Dany Lyne in 2006;
- Montréal director, Brigitte Haentjens in 2007;
- Toronto playwright, Daniel McIvor in 2008.
- Calgary and Toronto designer, Ronnie Burkett in 2009; and
- Vancouver director, Kim Collier in 2010

## About the Finalists for the 2011 Siminovitch Prize

### Robert Chafe

Robert Chafe is a St. John's-based playwright whose work has been seen across Canada, the UK, Australia and in the United States. He is the author of 17 stage scripts and co-author of another 10. He frequently collaborates with director and 2004 Siminovitch Prize winner Jillian Keiley. He was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Drama (*Tempting Providence* and *Butler's Marsh*) in 2004, and won the award for *Afterimage* in 2010. *Tempting Providence*, directed by Keiley and produced by Theatre Newfoundland Labrador, is entering its ninth year of national and international touring. He has been writer-in-residence at Artistic Fraud, Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre, Playwrights Workshop Montréal, and Forest Forge Theatre, Hampshire, UK, and a guest instructor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and The National Theatre School of Canada. His newest play, *Oil and Water*, premiered in a sold-out run in February 2011 in St. John's and tours nationally next year. He is Artistic Associate and playwright for Artistic Fraud of Newfoundland.

### Jasmine Dubé

Jasmine Dubé, the co-founder and artistic director of *Théâtre Bouches Décousues*, studied acting at the National Theatre School. Since then, she has worked as an author, actress and stage director. Her play, *Bouches Décousues* played over 350 times in Quebec before moving on to European stages. *Petit monstre* garnered the prize for outstanding production for young audiences from the Quebec Theatre Critics Association in 1992. Another effort, *La bonne femme*, was awarded three *Masques* by the *Académie québécoise du théâtre* in 1996, in the young audiences, script and stage direction categories. Three other plays, *Le pingouin* (2002), *La mère merle* (2000) and *Le bain* (1998) were given the public appreciation award by the Beloeil theatre. *L'arche de Noémie* was a finalist in 1997 in the course of the *RFI/Francophonie Jeunesse* contest, while the *Nazaire* series was a finalist in the Chronos 1997 awards in France and Switzerland. In 1998, the album titled *L'ourson qui voulait une Juliette* was awarded the Alvine-Belisle prize for best youth book. Some of its texts have been translated into English, Portuguese and Italian.

In 1996, Jasmine Dubé took the Arthur-Buies award for lifetime achievement. In

1998, she was honoured with the medal of French culture, and the Artquimédia gala awarded her the distinguished Agathe for her artistic influence both nationally and internationally. In 2006, *Théâtre Bouches Décousues* was awarded the *Grand prix du Conseil des arts de Montréal* for its immense contribution to the vitality and development of local theatre.

### **Greg MacArthur**

Greg is a playwright, dramaturg, teacher and, occasionally, a performer. He graduated from *Ryerson Theatre School* in Toronto in 1992. Since that time, he has been devoted to the creation and development of new work for the stage. His plays have been produced extensively across Canada, as well as in South Africa, Germany, the UK, Hungary and the United States. They have been translated into numerous languages. He has held residencies at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre (Toronto), Centre for the Book (South Africa), Playwrights Theatre Centre (Vancouver) and The Stratford Festival. His work includes: *The Decameron: things we leave behind*; *Tyland: The Toxic Bus Incident*; *Recovery*; *Get Away: Beggar Boy* (a play for children); *Stem* (a collaborative collection); *Snowman*; and *girls! girls! girls!*. His plays are published by Coach House Books. He has been Artist-In-Residence at Playwrights' Workshop Montréal for the past five years. He is currently the 2011/12 Lee Playwright-In-Residence at the University of Alberta.

### **Joan MacLeod**

Joan MacLeod's plays include *Jewel*, *Toronto*, *Mississippi*, *Amigo's Blue Guitar*, *The Hope Slide*, *Little Sister*, *2000*, *The Shape of A Girl*, *Homechild* and *Another Home Invasion*. Her work has been translated into eight languages. She is the recipient of two Chalmers Canadian Play Awards, the Governor General's Drama Award, the Betty Mitchell Award, Dora Mavor Moore Award and the Jessie Richardson Award. For seven years she was a playwright-in-residence at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre. Joan also writes poetry, prose and for television. Since 2004 she has worked at the University of Victoria as an Associate Professor in the Department of Writing. The Tarragon's production of *Another Home Invasion* is currently on a national tour. *The Shape of a Girl* is also back touring with Green Thumb this year. It has been produced continuously since its premiere in 2001.

### **Mansel Robinson**

Mansel Robinson's plays include *Bite The Hand*, *Scorched Ice*, *Street Wheat*, *Downsizing Democracy*, *The Heart As It Lived*, *Collateral Damage* and *Colonial Tongues*. He has won the City of Regina Writing Award, *Geist Magazine's* Award for Distance Writing and the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild Manuscript Award. He is a two-time winner of the John V. Hicks Award, most recently for *Two Rooms*, which also won the 2010 Uprising National Playwriting Competition.

In 2007, *Picking up Chekhov* was selected as one of five Canadian plays to be introduced and promoted into the German market. In 2008, *Prise de Parole*

published *Roc & Rail*, Jean Marc Dalpe's French translation of *Ghost Trains and Spitting Slag* - the work was short-listed for the Governor General's Award for Translation.

Mansel has been writer-in-residence at the Berton House in Dawson City, Northern Light Theatre in Edmonton, the University of Windsor, the Regina Public Library and the Surrey Public Library. He is a past president of the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre and is a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada and the Writers' Union of Canada.

A long-time resident of Saskatoon, Mansel now lives in Chapleau, in Northern Ontario.

### **Larry Tremblay**

Larry Tremblay is a playwright, stage director and actor as well as a specialist in the art of *kathakali*, a form of dance theatre he learned over many trips to India. He has had some 20 books published, and his work is now recognized throughout Canada and worldwide. His plays have been translated into more than a dozen languages and staged in several different countries. Larry Tremblay's work has brought him a multitude of tributes. In 2006 alone, four of his plays were staged in Montreal, including *La Hache* (the axe) on the boards of the *Théâtre de Quat'Sous* which garnered three nominations at the Gala des Masques 2006. He won the Victor-Martyn-Lynch-Staunton Award the same year. In 2008, *Abraham Lincoln va au théâtre* was produced by Espace Go in Montreal, with Claude Poissant (Théâtre Pàp) as its stage director. In 2010, the Alberta Theatre Project produced the play's English version in Calgary. *Abraham Lincoln Goes to the Theatre* featured Bob White as its stage director. Since then, the play has been translated into several languages and produced in both Switzerland and Germany.

### **About BMO and the Arts**

BMO Financial Group is one of Canada's largest corporate benefactors, and a major contributor to arts and culture. In 2010, BMO contributed more than \$54 million in donations and sponsorships. BMO's funding supports numerous cultural charities and organizations, ranging from grants for music and art programs in schools, to sustaining grants for national cultural institutions.

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