

salon

review



Theatre New Brunswick staged the English translation of Acadian playwright Marcel-Romain Thériault's *The Net* from Feb. 26-March 1 at the Black Box Theatre in Fredericton.

The saltiest sea knows its own way

In staging the English translation of *The Net*, Theatre New Brunswick emphasizes the bilingual struggle of tradition and small-town communities versus change. Review by Kathie Goggin

Leo Chiasson's raw, angry energy is defiant as he paces and talks on a phone, gun at his side, inside a simple fisherman's cabin. It's his father's home, a place of no refinement, where time has stood still. Anthime Chiasson, one of the wealthiest fishermen on the Cape, prefers things to remain as they have been. Leo is desperate to be in control, to take over from the old man and do things his way, even if it involves drug trafficking.

The Net, a *Tragedy of the Sea* is a fast-paced, compact, one-act play written by award-winning Acadian playwright Marcel-Romain Thériault. First staged in French and now translated into English by Don Hannah and Maureen Labonté, the play was staged at the Black Box Theatre, St. Thomas University, Feb. 26-March 1 under the direction of Pamela Halstead. Set designer was Patrick Clark.

This is an important play. It is about the place where tradition, reality, myth and power relations intersect. It is about conflict over declining economic resources, and the grab for wealth and control at the brink of disaster. Using the 2003 crab fishery conflicts in Shippagan as backdrop, and the image of a fishing net as the overlying metaphor, the play untangles the complicated interplay of fishermen, factory workers, politicians and the larger world caught in a power struggle.

The drama unfolds through the story of three main characters who are hopelessly and, as it turns out, dangerously enmeshed. There is the fierce and traditional patriarch of the family, Anthime, brilliantly and consistently portrayed by Michael Chiasson, determined to pass on the family business and his crab fishing boat to his grandson, the son of his firstborn who died at sea. The spurned and tormented second son, Leo, is portrayed by Bernie Henry with the calculated ferocity of *Breaking Bad*'s Walter White.

The catalyst of conflict is the reluctant prodigal grandson, Étienne, home from university and fresh from an anti-globalization demonstration in Mexico. Destined to inherit the Stella Maria and all that goes with it, Jake

Martin portrays the smoldering idealist determined to make the world a fair and just place. He doesn't want any part of the fishing boat or the family business.

The Net casts a bleak picture of what happens in a small town when the economy, built on a single industry, goes terribly wrong and adversity follows. A way of life is destroyed, families are ripped apart and the fabric of the community is tested to the breaking point.

The old ways are dying, but what will replace them? Even the ground on which the town is built is eroding. Anthime is grieving for his dead wife and beseeching her help to maintain the family unit. The play opens with a single spotlight on Anthime who, with the sound of waves in the background, is promising to move the grave of his beloved Rita, vowing "I'm not going to let the sea get you." Rita's is the omnipresent but invisible voice of reason and stability in a world fraught by change and harsh reality.

Thériault, with passion and sensitivity, captures the complex emotional turmoil behind the politics of the future small-town New Brunswick. The production, with its crisp lines, tight dialogue, conflicting points of view and use of language between three generations, highlights the complexity of what Thériault is attempting. In the end, and each in their own way, "the sea" takes them all.

Tradition, prayer and petitioning his dead wife for guidance is not enough. Guns are drawn. Corruption has set in. The atmosphere is odious. Disaster follows in a gut-wrenching conclusion, and I am left to think about dozens of other communities where power issues, social conflict and a grab for depleted resources in forestry, mining, energy resources and agriculture are playing out. Many more plays may yet be written. **S**

Kathie Goggin

A Fredericton-based writer, Kathie facilitates courses and workshops on memoir writing and writing for children, and she belongs to several writing groups.

On the road

In June, a day before her 40th birthday, Danielle Hogan said goodbye to Vancouver Island, and set out East in a Mitsubishi Outlander with her husband and two children. She was leaving the place she had called home since the turn of the millennium, but returning to her roots in New Brunswick.

It took a week and a half to cross the country. Hogan's husband did the bulk of the driving, while she set up a "shotgun" studio. Using the glove box and cup holders, she set up her travel watercolour kit and painted the landscape passing by. Excerpts from this work, and selections of her watercolours from her past decade on Vancouver Island and since her return home, comprise the exhibition *From West to East*, opening March 14 at Gallery 78 in Fredericton.

Hogan has long used watercolours as a form of journaling, and since she is an easy-going traveller – "I like to be on the move, and I'm kind of comfortable in general when I'm on the move" – it was only natural to fill her time with her sketchbooks.

"This is my way of recording," says Hogan. "I'm not looking to paint specifics. This is very much about how things feel for me. I'm getting the gist of a landscape and then I'm painting what that feels like."

"As we drove east, (I was conscious) of being in the process simultaneously of leaving 'Home' and coming 'Home.' The emotional combination of sadness and longing, sitting so closely with excitement and anticipation, resonated with me deeply."

She estimates she probably finished 60-some works during the trip. Although she edited down what to include in the exhibition, the selected work has not been altered from its original.

Hogan, who is working on a PhD at University of New Brunswick, has shelves of sketchbooks and journals. She says they function as "kind of an encyclopedia of my own life."

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Peggy Baker's dance intensive

It's been more than 30 years since dancer-choreographer Peggy Baker has performed in New Brunswick. And she's making sure her coming performances this week were worth the wait.

Baker, along with her "closest associate," protégé Sahara Morimoto, will present performances, workshops and lectures during a six-day intensive visit to Fredericton from March 12 to 17. The series is the brainchild of Tim Yerxa, the executive director of The Playhouse. This will be one of the most comprehensive residencies for the accomplished Baker.

"The best way to introduce your work to the community is by doing many smaller events where you can actually make one-on-one contact with people," says Baker. "One of the big misconceptions about dance is that it is kind of beyond the ordinary person, that they won't understand what it means, or won't find something exciting or significant in what they encounter. I think, for sure, in the last many years, that people are surprised and delighted when they have a firsthand experience with contemporary dance."

And the full menu of Baker's offerings in Fredericton is certainly "first-hand." Baker and Morimoto will perform *Inside the Art* on March 13 at The Playhouse, a program Baker's presented for more than a dozen years, and highlighting the composition and inspirational method behind the choreography for four solo dances. For Fredericton, Baker will be exploring the role of space in each piece.

At noon, on March 14, Baker will deliver a talk, "Figures in Motion," at Gallery

78. On March 15, at 2 p.m., she will hold the workshop, *Modern Moves Made Easy* (\$10), at Charlotte Street Arts Centre, for those older than 13 and at any skill level.

On top of these events, Baker will be rehearsing three hours a day with *Move*, an installation piece she has organized with about 20 local participants. The final performance will take place at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery at noon on March 17.

Instagramming your pride

As someone who's called Saint John home for most of his life, Mark Hemmings always struggled to see his hometown through a tourist's eyes. It's so easy to miss the remarkable in the familiar, and he says he didn't really awaken to the Port City's potential until a few years ago. "It's been a really great experience to fall in love with my own city, that I will say I denigrated most of my teenage life," says Hemmings.

To help share the love, and "present the city in a cool light," Hemmings organized the #lovesaintjohn Instagram Photo Festival. The idea was simple, social media users could take photographs of signature Saint John sites with their mobile device and add the hashtag #lovesaintjohn. This would include your image in a slide show to be presented during a "photo social" at the Saint John Ale House on March 13.

The more than 1,000 images that have been taken far exceeded Hemmings's expectations.

"That richness of architectural heritage mixed with interesting people, those two elements are the foundation of street photography," says Hemmings, noting the city as a hub for the genre. "There's also been people who I do know, but who I had no idea had such cool vision and talent."

#lovesaintjohn Instagram Photo Festival is a free event and begins at 7 p.m., and will feature live music as well as awards for the city's most dedicated Instagram users.

View the photo gallery at telegraphjournal.com

Deichmann by design



JUDITH MACKIN
design driven

expresses your tastes and passions. In some cases, those passions manifest themselves as collections.

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting an owner-designed home in Rothesay, one built to capitalize on the site's dramatic views, designed to take full advantage of the way the sun sets in the late afternoon.

What most struck me was the degree to which the home's interiors were organized around an impressive collection of New Brunswick pottery, principally that of Kjeld Deichmann and Erica Deichmann Gregg.

About seven years ago, the homeowner, then a widow for several years, decided to move from the large home she'd shared with her late husband for 30 years and build a smaller home on an empty lot, just across the street, for retirement. The resulting open-concept home boasts large windows, Scandinavian furnishings and an impressive collection of original New Brunswick art.

An entire wall in the living room houses some of the nearly 100 pieces of Deichmann pottery she and her late husband collected over the last 40 years. Her collection includes the first Deichmann piece she ever bought (a cup for \$5), numerous signature hobnail bowls and several of the llama-looking

creatures known as "Goofus."

Keeping company with the Deichmanns are several framed, hand-painted 18th-century Dutch tiles, and a Dutch spice jar from the same period. The pottery collection also includes a Tom Smith as well as a dramatic Ned Bear sculpture. Occupying a very special place on these shelves of treasures is a stone painted by the homeowner's granddaughter.

According to the homeowner, she wanted the walnut cabinets – built by Queenstown Industries of Fredericton – "oriented to the sun, to capitalize on the way the light brings out the colours, textures and glazes on each of the pieces."

The Deichmann's were known, too, for their ceramic lamps, and this home boasts at least 13 table lamps variously displayed on side, bed and coffee tables. One of the lamps, purchased at a Craft Council fundraiser several years ago, was the last piece Kjeld made before he passed away. Erica glazed it after his passing.

One of the reasons this collection so impressed me, from a design standpoint, was the manner in which it served as a thematic in the interior space. Not only did the collection serve to express the homeowner's taste and speak to her personal history, it put



The living-room wall housing some of the nearly 100 pieces of Deichmann pottery one Rothesay homeowner has collected over the past 40 years. The collection was factored into the design of the home. PHOTO: KÁTÉ BRAYDON/TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

several of the rooms of the open concept into a strong and meaningful relation to each other. In the kitchen, for example, among the cupboards with solid wood faces, is a glass-fronted cupboard, lit from above, used to display a score of small Deichmann pieces. The lower shelf features some very early Majolica passed down to her from her great grandmother.

Collections aren't all that rare; we're all, at some level, inveterate collectors, whether it's of vintage Pez dispensers or the teaspoons of every province in the Dominion. As Goethe once observed,

"Collectors are happy people."

From a design standpoint, however, what is rare is a collection of individual pieces that are strong in their own right, and which cumulatively serve to tie sundry interior spaces together in a necessary relationship with each other, even as it connects interior to exterior space. **S**

Judith Mackin

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