

Leitmotiv





Leitmotiv

leit-mo-tiv or **leit-mo-tif** \ˈlīt-mōˈtēf\ *n* -s [G *leitmotiv*, fr. *leit-* leading (fr. *leiten* to lead, fr. OHG) + *motiv* motive fr. F *motif* — more at LEAD] **1 a** : a marked melodic phrase or figure in Wagnerian music drama expressive of or associated with a certain idea, person, or situation and accompanying its reappearance **b** : a similar principle of construction in other music **2** : something resembling a musical leitmotiv (as a word or phrase, an emotion, an idea) that is repeated again and again : a dominant recurring theme (faith in the saving grace of art has been the ~ of the entire autobiography—C.J. Rolo) (the word "again" has become the ~ of German life—Norbert Mühlen) (a competent designer instinctively chooses a theme or ~ for a given structure, and allows it to influence all his choice of form and line—W.D. Teague)

"LEST WE FORGET"

A Word from the Director

Giving theatrical form to *Leitmotiv's* musical score has been the most complex creative project I have directed thus far. Whereas a dramatic text can be treated in a number of different ways, music offers a virtually infinite range of interpretations. A more abstract language than words, music encourages a freer approach, soliciting the realm of the imagination and individual sensitivities.

An illustration of Michel Robidoux's music was out of the question. What was required was for the scenic elements to accompany that music, in the same way that our resident composer has accompanied movement and text in our previous productions. The stages of creative development permitted me to explore counterpointing the musical images with narrative elements and resonant situations. In this way, little by little, a dialogue was built between the music and the stage elements. Early on,

I was drawn to exploring the theme of pain; a pain tempered by another voice I heard in *Leitmotiv*, one which told of another life.

Fragments of a love story which takes place in a war-torn country were imposed upon the creative team, including the composer. Why war? Why a war story, when we know war only as it appears through the dehumanising veil of our news bulletins? Because war doesn't need to be in our backyard to be an outrage. As Rosa says, in the text by Normand Canac-Marquis: "Our shelter from madness is so fragile..." The music, the singing and the words of *Leitmotiv* are the memory of Rosa, "like any other" and of Pierre, her lover, "like any other". They are also the memory of a barbarity to which I am totally opposed.

Daniel Meilleur



Daniel Meilleur

Ideation, Director and Co-Artistic Director of Les Deux Mondes, Co-Designer of the visual concept of *Leitmotiv*

Daniel Meilleur trained in modern dance before studying theatre at Université du Québec à Montréal in the '70's. He co-founded Les Deux Mondes in 1973 and his career has been closely linked to the company by his involvement in most of their projects. He has acted/appeared in twelve productions and also directed *Crying to Laugh* (*Pleurer pour rire*, 1980), which has been performed 600 times the world over, and *l'Âge de Pierre* (1978), which featured the use of objects, a technique that was later used in both *Promised Land* (*Terre promise / Terra promessa*, the 1988 co-production with Teatro dell'Angolo) and *Mémoire vive* (2000). He co-wrote *Promised Land*, performed more than 500 times, *la Vie à trois étages* (1977), *Parasols* (1986) and *Mémoire vive*, for which he reunited the same team of creators as for *Leitmotiv*.

Meilleur initiated and directed *The Tale of Teeka* (*l'Histoire de l'oie*, by Michel Marc Bouchard), which has toured many countries with a cast of Quebec actors, giving more than 400 performances in French, English, Spanish and German. *The Tale of Teeka* has won numerous awards, including a Governor General's Performing Arts Award and the Prix de l'Académie québécoise du théâtre. For Meilleur, every theatre project is an occasion to explore new artistic avenues, and Daniel Dani's *Les Nuages de terre* (1994) was the result of an ambitious co-creation with the Ki-Yi Mbock Theatre of Abidjan. Meilleur co-directed an international cast of actors, including Ki-Yi Mbock's artistic director, Werewere Liking.

In 1997, he received a grant from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec that allowed him to travel to many European countries, including former Yugoslavia, to carry on further study on the related aspects of theatre and politics.

By his extensive touring with Les Deux Mondes and because of the company's regular appearances at international festivals over the past ten years, Daniel Meilleur has acquired a well-deserved reputation as a specialist in theatre for a general audience.



Michel Robidoux

Ideation, Composer, Co-Artistic Director
of Les Deux Mondes

Michel Robidoux began his professional career as a rock musician in the late '60's and soon became known as a theatre musician and sound designer. He has been associated with Les Deux Mondes since 1976 and became one of the artistic directors in 1989. He was involved in most of the company's productions, including *la Vie à trois étages* (1977), *l'Âge de Pierre* (1978), *Crying to Laugh (Pleurer pour rire, 1980)*, *l'Umiak* (1982), *Parasols* (1986), *Promised Land (Terre promise/Terra promessa, 1988)*, which earned him the Best Sound Award at the Festival de théâtre des Amériques in 1989 and the Best Sound Production Award from the Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre (AQCT), and *Mémoire vive* (2000). In 1992, his music score and sound design for *The Tale of Teeka (l'Histoire*

de l'oie, 1991) were nominated, again by the AQCT, for Best Music Score and Best Sound Design. In 1994, working with African musician and percussionist Boni Gnahoré, he wrote the music for *les Nuages de terre*, a co-creation by Les Deux Mondes and Ki-Yi Mbock Theatre of Abidjan. In 1998, he received a Masque award from the Académie québécoise du théâtre for Best Sound Design in *The Tale of Teeka*, a nomination for Best Sound Environment and the Masque for Special Contribution to Theatre, awarded for the creative originality of his contribution in *Leitmotiv*. Michel Robidoux has also worked with other Québec companies. His artistic approach qualifies him as a poet, a listener of everyday sounds from which he draws musical material that lends itself to countless transformations. Michel Robidoux created the sound environment and composed the music for Les Deux Mondes' new production, *Mémoire vive*, which will be premiered in February 2001 in France.



Normand Canac-Marquis

Consultant-Dramatist and Writer

In 1974, upon graduating from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique in Montreal, Normand Canac-Marquis began his acting career performing with various young companies of the time.

In 1987, his play *The Cézanne Syndrome (le Syndrome de Cézanne)* revealed an astonishing mastery from a relatively unknown young writer. It was subsequently nominated in Canada for a Governor General's Literary Award, selected for public reading and production in New York, acclaimed in Toronto, also selected for a festival of new plays in London, and produced, in English, in cities across Canada and the United States.

Since then, Normand Canac-Marquis has pursued a multifaceted career, writing for the stage (*Children of Urantia [les Jumeaux dUrantia]*), as well as the unpublished *Goël le nom de Dieu!* and *Fils*), television, and radio, and translating works for the theatre. He teaches scriptwriting at Université du Québec à Montreal, conducts theatre workshops, and sits on the Board of Directors for several organizations, all the while remaining dedicated to his career of choice: acting.

Normand Canac-Marquis joined the creative team of Les Deux Mondes' new production, *Mémoire vive*, once again contributing his skills as consultant-dramatist and writer

Yves Dubé

Co-Designer of the visual concept, Creator and Director of the video.

For the past 20 years, Yves Dubé has actively participated in the development of the performing arts and the audio-visual world, bringing them together interactively. From 1981 to 1988, he was a member of the multidisciplinary group *Opéra-fête* and was closely associated with them in several productions. His work on the slides, film projections and sound track, and as director for *le Système magistère* earned him the "Revelation of the Year" award given by l'Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre in 1986. Highly acclaimed as a stage photographer and for his numerous visual collaborations with Carbone 14, for which he has produced video environments and other elements, Yves Dubé is a valued creative contributor to many theatre, dance and opera companies. His latest work on the integration of video into theatre productions as a form of artistic expression can be seen in Les Deux Mondes' new creation, *Mémoire vive* (2000).

Don Franklin

Technical Director and Co-Lighting Designer

Don Franklin had been associated with the theatre in many capacities before joining Les Deux Mondes in 1992. During the company's international tours, he is either production stage manager or lighting director for *The Tale of Teeka (l'Histoire de l'oie, 1991)*. In 1996, he toured Asia as technical director for Quebec choreographer Dulcinée Langfelder. He has also worked as lighting director for the French tour of the opera *la Chauve-souris (The Bat)*, produced by the Arcal company. As technical director for Les Deux Mondes, Don Franklin is presently in charge of equipment logistics and the smooth working order of that equipment for the company's numerous international tours.

Nancy Longchamp

Co-Lighting Designer

After having completed her studies in visual arts at Cégep de Sainte-Foy, Nancy Longchamp became interested in stage lighting. She has worked with many theatre and dance companies, taking on different responsibilities, such as technical director, production stage manager, stage manager and stagehand. With the company Théâtre Sans Fil, and others, she has toured Europe, Morocco, the United States and Mexico. Nancy Longchamp is closely associated with Les Sortilèges, the national folklore dance ensemble. She also teaches stage techniques at Collège Maisonneuve in Montreal.

Jill Thomson

Costume and Props Designer

A graduate of Queen's University (Theatre) and Dalhousie University (Costume Design), Jill Thomson has taught at Bishop's University and the National Theatre School of Canada. She worked on many productions at those institutions, as well at McGill University and Dawson College in Montreal, and Ryerson Polytechnic in Toronto. In the province of Québec, she was associated with the Académie québécoise du théâtre for three years and she was assistant costume designer for the musical *Jeanne la Pucelle (1998)*. Her costume design for *Bob's Kingdom*, a Toronto Factory Theatre production, was nominated for a Dora Award.

Les Deux Mondes

Les Deux Mondes is one of Canada's most celebrated theatre companies. Dedicated to theatrical creation and research since 1973, it has given over 3000 performances in 200 cities from 24 countries on the 5 continents.

Les Deux Mondes' many awards include the Governor General of

Canada's award, in 1993, for *The Tale of Teeka*. Its most recent productions include *Promised Land* (co-produced with Teatro dell'Angolo, from Italy), *Les nuages de terre* (co-produced with Ki-Yi Mbock Théâtre, from the Ivory Coast) and *Leitmotiv*. Over the years, the co-directors of Les Deux Mondes have always endeavoured to create plays that stimulate the imagination, that bear a message and that are highly polished artistically. They have explored several different means of expression to convey, through theatre, a better understanding of the world and the realities their audiences are confronted with, unafraid of tackling subjects that are reputedly difficult ones of the young audiences.

Throughout the years, Les Deux Mondes has broadened its audience and while reaching children remains a priority, its more recent productions have proven to be equally interesting for adult audiences. The company aims its work towards bringing children and adults together in the same place, for the same production and in the same spirit, with plays that call upon the hearts and minds of all for a common delight in theatre.



Touring The Netherlands (January 10th to February 2nd 2001):
Gouda (01/10), Arnhem (01/11), Eindhoven (01/12),
Utrecht (01/15), Den Bosch (01/16), Enschede (01/18),
Breda (01/19), Leeuwarden (01/20), Groningen (01/23),
Almere (01/26), Zotermeer (01/31), Haarlem (02/01), Delft (02/02).

Les Deux Mondes Theatre Company
in association with Van Baasbank & Baggerman present

Leitmotiv



Production
Ideation, Music and Sound Environment
Ideation and Direction
Consultant-Dramatist and Writer
Translation
Visual Concept
Photos and Video
Lighting
Lighting Manipulation and Technical Direction
Costumes and Props

Les Deux Mondes

Michel Robidoux

Daniel Meilleur

Normand Canac-Marquis

Jeffrey Moore

Daniel Meilleur and Yves Dubé

Yves Dubé

Don Franklin and Nancy Longchamp

Don Franklin

Jill Thomson

With :

Renée Lapointe, mezzo-soprano

Martin Rouleau

Isabelle Lamontagne

Rosa

Pierre

Rosa's daughter

Michel Robidoux

Yves Dubé

Jean-François Bisson

Yogo Hideaki

Ben Grappirhaus

Musician

Video Artist

Technical Stage Manager and Extra

Technician

Tour Manager

Leitmotiv was premiered at le Théâtre des Deux Mondes, in Montréal, on November 4, 1996, in French. The characters of Rosa, Pierre and Rosa's daughter were created by Noëlla Huet, Réal Bossé and Caroline Lavigne.

Special thanks to Du Maurier Ltd World Stage at Harbourfront Centre.

The music and the sound environment of the show have brought about the production of an Enhanced CD, on the Analekta label.



Rosa

Renée Lapointe

Mezzo-soprano

A native of the Saguenay region of Québec (Canada), Renée Lapointe obtained her Master's degree in voice performance under the direction of Louise André. Among her many achievements, Ms. Lapointe won the Raoul-Jobin Prize in 1990, and the Prix de Scène (Stage

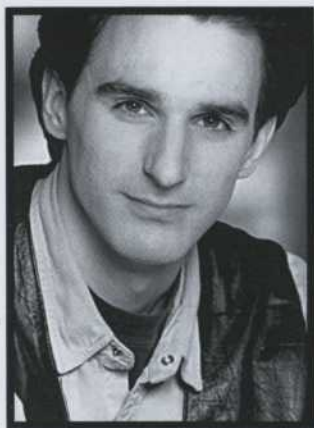
Prize) at the Cultural Excellence Awards in Québec City in 1993, both presented by the Fondation de l'Opéra de Québec. Ms. Lapointe has become reknowned for her interpretations of the great oratorios, among them Händel's *Messiah*.

In addition to her frequent recitals and broadcasts on CBC, Renée Lapointe has performed many roles, among them the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, Mélisande in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Bradamante in Händel's *Alcina*, Hermia in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Pauline in Tchaikovsky's *La Dame de Pique*. With the Opéra de Québec, she has sung Giannetta in Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore*, Oreste in Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* and Frédérick in Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*. She also created the role of Mathilde in *Il suffit d'un peu d'air* by Claude Ballif, under the direction of Lorraine Vaillancourt of the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne in Montréal, and she participated in the creation of the musical drama *Jeanne la Pucelle* by Peter Sipos and Vincent de Tournonet at Place des

Arts in Montréal, and at Théâtre Capitole in Québec City. In Toronto, Ms. Lapointe was warmly received in the roles of Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia* and of Pierotto in *Linda di Chamounix*, both by Donizetti.

Enjoying an active career as a soloist, Renée Lapointe has performed with orchestras and ensembles throughout Canada, including the Newfoundland Symphony, the Québec Symphony, the Montréal Symphony, the Orchestre Mondial des Jeunesses Musicales (World Symphony), the Montréal Baroque Orchestra, the Montréal Classical Choir, the Alcan String Quartet, the Anonymus Ensemble and Les Violons du Roy. *Leitmotiv* marks her first collaboration with Les Deux Mondes.





Pierre

Martin Rouleau

Martin Rouleau studied theatre at Collège Lionel-Groulx, graduating in 1995. Since then, he has played the title role of *Capitaine Fracasse* on tour in the Montreal region and performed in *la Flûte enchantée*, an opera-theatre production for children. He appeared in Calderon's *La vie est un songe* at Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and in the comedy *Ciel, ma mère!* during the summer of 1997. As well, he has performed in numerous television series in Quebec. Martin Rouleau has been touring with Les Deux Mondes in *Promised Land (Terre promise / Terra promessa)* since 1998.



Rosa's daughter

Isabelle Lamontagne

Isabelle Lamontagne studied at Conservatoire Lassalle before enrolling at Université du Québec à Montréal to study theatre. Since graduating in 1996, she has worked with a number of young companies based in Montreal whose productions are exploratory and creative in nature, including Théâtre Kafala (*Le Choeur des silences*, *Richard moins III* and *Mémoire vive*), Théâtre Persona (*Ushuaïa* and *Une livre de chair*), and La Gamique (*Jes Chroniques de l'humanité*). Isabelle Lamontagne has also appeared on series television. *Leitmotiv* marks her first collaboration with Les Deux Mondes.





The Astonishing Evolution of *Leitmotiv*

A conversation with Michel Robidoux, composer and co-artistic director for Les Deux Mondes

Leitmotiv (1996), Les Deux Mondes, latest production, appears to be the result of a complex creative process. The composition of the music was the starting point of the project. How would you assess the experience?

M.R. - For several years now, audiences and reviewers alike have remarked on the particular use of sound in Les Deux Mondes' productions: its importance within the performance, as well as its expressiveness and originality. As a composer, I wanted to know if, working in a theatrical context, I would be able to tell a story with the music. It's an interesting proposition and quite a challenge! This was also the first project that I initiated as co-artistic director of Les Deux Mondes. The work began in 1990 with 4 sound ideas: a train pulling into a station, rain, church bells, and orchestra musicians tuning their instruments before a concert. I worked with an initial group of actors, and together we did improvisations based on these sounds, which I adjusted gradually. After this first exploratory phase, we decided to start from scratch with Daniel Meilleur as the director, and a new group of performers. It had become clear to me that the project required the participation of an opera singer, later to become the central character. I had developed the arrangements around a selection of train sounds and some of the musical pieces were finished,

although the various sections were still not connected. At that time, I imagined the music flying over the earth, as though everything were being observed from the stratosphere! But this concept was rather difficult to dramatise. A musical composition can evoke completely different things for two listeners. As well, the creation process took a long time and included numerous stops and starts, before a solid dramatisation finally emerged from the images created by the group, based on the music.

Wasn't part of the problem the fact that the music worked on its own?

M.R. - Yes, and in a sense we had to ask ourselves why we should make it into theatre. Music is made up of sensations (rhythms and tones), while theatre calls for a location and at least one event. Even though *Leitmotiv* has become a highly successful theatrical production, it is now clear to me that music can't be the sole starting point for the creation of a work of theatre because it invites such an impossibly wide range of interpretations. But, to get back to the development of the production, we were trying to define the connection between the various pieces of music I had composed based on train sounds.

We continued to ponder this question during our travels as part of a foreign tour, when Daniel Meilleur and I realized that the connective thread was war. Our stay in Hanoi, where we performed *Promised Land (Terre promise / Terra promessa)* in 1994, confirmed the choice of war as the subject for the new production. We visited the Conservatory of Music, where we were told that, during the war, the instruments had been transported on the backs of the workers to subterranean trenches outside the city. The students had literally studied music under ground, and some of them had learned to play on hand-drawn keyboards so as not to make any noise! The world famous pianist Dang Thai Son had studied music in this very underground conservatory – and he now lives in Montreal! This story touched us deeply. We also thought of the day in 1991 when we had been in the Gare du Nord in Paris. It was during the Gulf War, and this well-known train station had unexpectedly been filled with soldiers; the situation underlined for us the strong link between trains and wars. Suddenly, the subject of war seemed to connect the various pieces of music I had composed. And what's more, it provided a solid foundation for the project, as well as a rich potential for the development of both the production's structure and its content. Once we had returned to Quebec, we started to work on the project again, this time with two characters situated in the Vietnam War: Rosa was a member of the Vietcong and Pierre was a G.I. But soon, we realised that we were setting a trap for ourselves with this particular setting. We were confined to images of a relatively recent conflict and risked a simplistic interpretation of a highly politicised and publicised war. Also, the

exoticism of the setting didn't seem to fit with our concept for the production. We decided instead to set the action during the Second World War, and we concentrated on the fate of a few individuals whose war-time experiences would have a universal resonance. It was at this same time that the videographer Yves Dubé joined the group and that the scenography of the production was adapted to include video.



June 1994 workshop. The action of *Leitmotiv* is then set in Vietnam. The character of Rosa's daughter has not yet been created. Yet, a shadowgraphed figure, manipulated from behind a screen by mezzo-soprano Noëlla Huet, evokes a baby, or a foetus.

It was the company's first experience with this new theatrical medium. The project explored many ideas before the company came to concentrate on one specific story, that of Pierre and Rosa. The story allowed the production to accomplish one of its original objectives: universality. The credit would go to the writer Normand Canac-Marquis. He studied all the preparatory work that the company had documented on video and was then able to bring the varied and disparate elements together to create a coherent story. His story seems quite simple at first, but actually leaves much to the imagination of the spectator: Which country are we in? Which army is Pierre enlisted in? From which side are the soldiers who rape Rosa, and those who reclaim Pierre to torture him after his desertion? Who is the father of Rosa's unborn child? At the same time, the impact of the production is not due to the straightforward thematic structure of the story, but to its mysterious intensity, stemming from the contrasting climates and evocative images that are a direct result of the music. So, the production is truly a musical drama.

Why have you given *Leitmotiv* the label "musical drama"?

M.R. At Les Deux Mondes, we consider music and other forms of artistic expression not as ends in themselves, but rather as the means to tell a story, generally a simple story. Opera requires an elaborate stage setting which is inconsistent with our production, and we do not utilize singing in a way that would satisfy the expectations of opera lovers. What's more, we amplify the voice, a heresy for opera fans! We chose the term "musical drama"

because it seemed to best describe the hybrid nature of our production.

Theatre is the artform of live performance. Don't you run the risk of losing that essential dimension by using too much technology?

M.R. - The relationship between spectators and live actors has always been mediated, whether it be by the projection of the actors' voices, by the careful engineering of acoustics in theatres, or, as is generally believed, by the wearing of masks which amplified the voice in Ancient Greek theatre. Our productions are created in our own intimate laboratory space, but they are later performed on tour, in theatres accomodating up to a thousand spectators at a time. In my opinion, the best way to preserve that original sense of intimacy is to use the technology at our disposal to diminish the distance between the spectator and the action. But more fundamentally, the live performance of the actors allows us to experiment and innovate, making the most of this technology, not simply creating special effects. However, to quote Daniel Meilleur, there were no doubt those who said that the introduction of gaslight in the theatre destroyed the magic of candlelight. For my part, I believe that live performance is the essence of theatre. As long as the technology we use doesn't change this basic fact, the result is inherently theatrical. Recording, however, is part of the universe of film. Consequently, I think that the spectator experiences *Leitmotiv* as a profoundly theatrical event, in spite of the production's significant technical dimension: the amplification of voices and sounds, the integration of video, etc. As the primary transmitter, the actor is never at the service of the technology; it is there to prolong (or amplify, or magnify or multiply) the movement, the voice, the very presence of the actor on stage.

LES DEUX MONDES

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Tour Manager: **Sophie Préfontaine**

Technical Direction : **Don Franklin**

Assistant to the Direction: **Francine Séguin**

Les Deux Mondes wishes to thank the following for their assistance, for regular activities and special projects:



