

## **Laudatio Robert Lepage**

by prof.univ.dr. Theodor-Cristian Popescu

Toward the end of the seventies, he graduates the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique de Québec. He does not feel at ease and he is one of only two graduates who does not get immediately employed as actors. He was told repeatedly that he does not show his emotions on stage, that he does not commit himself enough, that he does not tell his own story, that he does not connect with the others. So, he enters the world, looking for a way to connect to it and to tell his story.

In his shows (often solo works), a character enters a new environment, sometimes a new country. He feels dislocated, not at ease and everything starts there: an exploration, a trip, a discovery. What follows is movement, change, transformation. The process matters, life is a process, a transformation so art should somehow try to deal with this.

When we look at someone's biography, everything seems ordered according to a perfect logic. Immediately after graduating the conservatory, Robert Lepage attended some workshop in Paris that stimulated him by exploring ways for an actor to become creator. He came back to Québec and tried to find his place in collectives that were looking for new ways of creating theatre. He founded a company with his other wandering colleague, then joined Théâtre Repère, where he soon became responsible for devising projects with a separate group of performers within. He pushed himself in the battle arena of the Ligue Nationale d'Improvisation, where this introvert young man made a surprising impact and won the award for beginners, the Rookie Award. His breakthrough show was titled premonitorily: *Circulations*. The movement begins.

Then more and more multi-layered shows: *The Dragon Trilogy*, *Vinci*, *Le polygraphe*, *Tectonic Plates*. Touring the world. Artistic Director of the French Theatre at the National Arts Center in Ottawa. *Needles and Opium*, *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Then Ex machina, a multidisciplinary production company, which states:

The work of the creators brought together by Ex machina does not start from predetermined themes or principles. Rather, it is based on so-called “sensitive” resources: objects, sounds, texts, places, anecdotes, dreams, memories... The pertinence of these resources depends on what they evoke in creators. The initial matter of a show begins as a nebula of which the dramatic rules will gradually reveal themselves, a chaos that often proves fertile because it allows chance to insinuate itself into the creative process.

The Seven Streams of the River Ota, Elsinore. Geometry of Miracles, The Far Side of the Moon. Films. Operas. Peter Gabriel’s World Tour. Cirque du Soleil.

La Caserne, and then Le Diamant, hosting Ex machina in Quebec.

A meeting point.

The world. The connection with the world, beyond any doubt.

But does it feel so logical, so implacably ordered when you are in the middle of it, fighting your everyday battles?

Or does it feel more like the timid, imperfect attempts to communicate of your fragile characters and that is precisely why we connect so strongly with your work, with you?

“Poetry and art depend on our ability to recount events through the imperfections of our memories”, you say.

You have decided to show your creations not as products rehearsed to perfection, but as not ready, raw, in the process of becoming works, maturing only in the process of communication with an audience. That is: with audiences almost everywhere.

Cycles, circularity, not linear development - like our planet, whose shape of a sphere, not flatness we have learned to accept, painfully. Thus, the work can begin and end (but does it ever end?) at any point.

Mixing, shifting, moving, transforming, multi-layering.

You have been called a Renaissance figure, a multi-faceted artist. And your theatre is a travelling theatre, connecting us again to our myths.

En reconnaissant notre humanité dans votre vie d'explorateur dans et au-delà du domaine des arts du spectacle, l'Université Nationale d'Art Théâtral et Cinématographique de Bucarest a l'honneur de vous confier aujourd'hui le plus important titre que nous pouvons accorder.

Félicitations et Merci !