

## THEATRE REVIEWS

## A triple of plays, covering different bases

## ALL FRENCH, BUT INSPIRATIONS VARY

## Rimbaud, Mozart opera, and American love

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Before taking a look at a dramatization of the dying days of Arthur Rimbaud, and at an inspired reworking of a Mozart opera as a chamber mime-piece, let's begin today's session of French immersion with *Nager en surface*, a Théâtre Opsi production that will be paddling around Espace Go until March 17.

Directed by Serge Denoncourt, *Nager en surface* continues the latest play cycle being masterminded by Opsi, the company that has put together a groundbreaking Chekhov series and, most recently, *Le Cycle Oreste*.

The new Opsi project, the *Cycle États-Unien*, was launched last fall with Charles L. Mee's *Under Construction*. It now continues, fittingly enough, with a play written in 2000 as *Swimming in the Shallows*, by a green-card-carrying Canadian named Adam Bock.

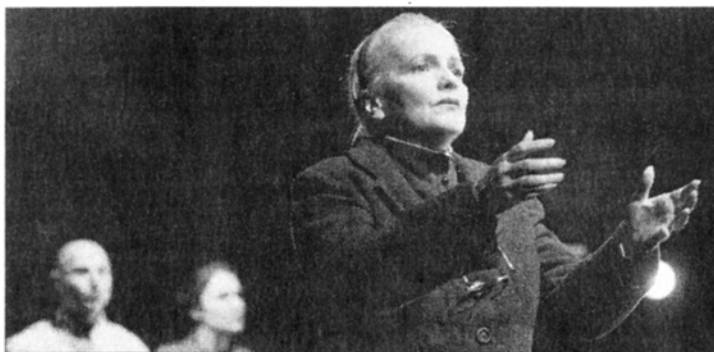
*Nager en surface* is another

one of those looking-for-love stories and the point, if there is one, is that while gay marriage thrives in America, the other kind could be a goner.

In the play, it is only the breeder couple that is unencumbered by blind lust. Barb (Annick Bergeron) wants to embrace a Buddhist precept of owning just eight things, but her husband Bob (Stéphane Breton), in his desire only to please her, keeps replacing what his better half throws away.

Two unmixed couples yearn only for each other, even if Carla Carla (Élise Guilbault) won't wed Donna (Marie-France Lambert) until the latter quits smoking. And Nick (Pierre Bernard) fears being devoured too quickly when he meets Le Requin (Patrice Godin), the leather-clad star of his sex fantasies.

Despite some intriguing staging elements in the fantasy sequences, and superior acting throughout (Guilbault and Breton are particularly effective), the production feels curiously



ROBERT ETCHEVERRY THÉÂTRE COMPLICE

Ginette Morin plays the mother of poet Arthur Rimbaud.

soulless, perhaps by way of comment on the main subject of this play cycle.

■ *Les Jours fragiles*, a Théâtre Complice production running at Prospero until March 10, dramatizes the final six months in the turbulent life of 19th-century French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud.

The text was adapted from a 2004 novel by Philippe Besson by director Denis Lavalou, who delivers a formidable mix of poetry and drama.

Perhaps a little too formidable. Ostensibly a younger sister's account read by Rimbaud's mother some years after the poet's death, *Les Jours fragiles* stretches over

two hours, some of it sufficiently static to serve as a reminder that Rimbaud believed it a poet's duty to become the instrument for the voice of the eternal.

Marcel Pomerlo suffers stylishly as Rimbaud, with frequent outbursts of transcendent verse, the evening's most rewarding moments. Ginette Morin plays Mme Rimbaud and Marie-Josée Gauthier is the poet's sister Isabelle.

■ Just a few blocks east along Ontario St., at Espace Libre on Fullum St., director Jean Asselin's must-see production of *L'Amour est un opéra muet* winds up a successful run on Saturday.

The opera is *Così fan tutte*, Mozart's comic celebration of love's caprices, and it gets the wordless treatment from mime-master Asselin, who also conceived this wondrous hybrid of music and physical narrative.

Beautifully imagined and executed, the Omnibus company production features a cast of five silent actors, including the director as a sort of stage-traffic cop.

The mimes are accompanied by the Pentaèdre wind quintet, whose members not only play Mozart's rich, whimsical music with great skill and joy, but join in the storytelling, adding body language of their own.

**L'Amour est un opéra muet**, until Saturday at Espace Libre, 1945 Fullum St.; 514-521-4191.

**Les Jours fragiles**, by Philippe Besson, until March 10 at Théâtre Prospero, 1371 Ontario St. E.; 514-526-6582.

**Nager en surface (Swimming in the Shallows)** by Adam Bock, until March 17 at Espace Go, 4890 St. Laurent Blvd.; 514-845-4890.

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