

Mexican company gives us a history lesson. THE (MONTREAL) GAZETTE BY PAT DONNELLY, THE GAZETTE JUNE 10, 2010 3:03 AM

More than 20 million people live in the Mexico City metropolitan area.

Which means that its water problems need to be taken seriously, by everyone.

Luisa Pardo and Gabino Rodriguez explore the situation in their *Asalto al agua transparente* (Assault on Transparent Water) at Festival TransAmericas, within the context of ancient Aztec and Spanish-occupation history.

Dressed casually (she in spike heels and short pink skirt, he in business shirt and tie), these two young performers lighten up their didacticism with deadpan humour, clever prop manipulation, projected photos and a dash of the personal.

As Janet and Ixca, two young people trying to survive in the big city, they speak on behalf of a generation burdened with the follies of the past that have led to ecological disaster.

Back in 1325, when the Aztecs founded the city then known as Tenochtitlan, it was surrounded by a lake that served as an excellent means of defence against invaders. Unfortunately, it also made the settlement vulnerable to frequent flooding. Over the centuries, various means of controlling the floods through drainage led to a situation where the lake has disappeared, the city is slowly sinking into the clay of the former lake bottom, and water is in short supply. (As for Mexico City air pollution, among the world's worst, that's another topic. Water is at issue here.)

For *Asalto al agua transparente*, the Espace Libre stage is furnished with wooden crates, empty pop cans, a couple of tables and a chair. Objects hanging from the ceiling include a soccer ball, a flag, a small pinata, dolls and three plastic bags plump with water.

As Pardo and Rodriguez rattle off facts in Spanish (surtitles flash above in English and French), they rearrange the crates for emphasis. They also flirt and squabble with each other, puncture the water bags to create mini-

showers, kick the cans and toss garbage around until the entire stage looks like a dump. (We empathize with the cleanup crew.)

Within 55 minutes, much is taught and a sense of joie de vivre is conveyed.

Although the final performance of this show at the FTA took place last night, the same company, Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol, will be presenting another work, Catalina, about a failed love affair, tomorrow at 9 p.m. and Saturday at 4 p.m., also at Espace Libre.

As we move into the final weekend of the FTA, theatre options include The Greatest Cities of the World, presented by Vancouver's Theatre Replacement, tonight and tomorrow at 7 p.m. at the Cinquieme Salle of Place des Arts; and a Latvian work titled Sonia, directed by Alvis Hermanis, presented by the New Riga Theatre tonight and tomorrow at 8 p.m. at Usine C. Many will remember Hermanis and company from last year when they presented their Sounds of Silence, a wordless take on the 1960s inspired by Simon and Garfunkel.

Wajdi Mouawad's Ciels also continues at PdA through tomorrow. And Une journee pour Haiti, on Saturday, includes three monologues by noted actors Pol Pelletier, Christian Pasquier and Magali Comeau-Denis. This is a fundraiser for the Haitian cause, with proceeds donated to CECI (Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The staged readings are at 2 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., at Usine C, 1345 Lalonde.

Meanwhile, phase two of the Montreal Fringe Festival begins tonight with an opening-night party and a second fringe-for-all showcase for out-of-town performers, beginning at 10 p.m. This one should be extra speedy: only one minute is allotted each company to render itself unforgettable.

Four Fringe "off " shows are also scheduled for tonight, beginning with Esther Goes Pro at 6:15 p.m., followed by You & Me and Me & You at 7:30 p.m., Keir Cutler's Rant Demon at 9 p.m., and Dead Pigeons Society at 10:30 p.m., all at Theatre Ste. Catherine, 264 Ste. Catherine St. E.

Full Fringe programming begins tomorrow, with the earliest shows beginning at 6 p.m. and several running past midnight.

Having already caught the preview of Dance Animal's Freaks of Nature,

which involves a mock ballet and a sketch on Stephen Harper as well as their usual joy-of-dancing routines, I'd recommend early ticket purchase. Their opening show is on Saturday at 7:15 p.m. at Venue Five, 2109 St. Laurent Blvd.

The best place to get started is the beer tent pitched in Parc Ameriques at the corner of Rachel St. and St. Laurent. Just pick up a program, sip a beer, then head out to the show of your choice.

The Montreal Fringe Festival continues through June 20. For info visit www.montrealfringe.ca

pdonnell@thegazette.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette
