

## Dossier de presse Mélissandre T-B





23 septembre 2016

**Mélessandre Tremblay-  
Bourassa et Gabriel  
Girouard reçoivent le Prix  
du CALQ – Œuvre de  
l'année dans Lanaudière**

Blind Date, spectacle de  
Mélessandre Tremblay-Bourassa  
et Gabriel Girouard,

© Christian Rouleau

**Joliette, le 23 septembre 2016** – Le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), en collaboration avec Culture Lanaudière, est heureux de décerner le **Prix du CALQ – Œuvre de l'année dans Lanaudière** au duo formé de la danseuse **Mélessandre Tremblay-Bourassa** et du musicien **Gabriel Girouard**, pour leur spectacle multidisciplinaire *Blind Date*. Ce prix, assorti d'un montant de 5 000 \$, leur a été remis par **Céline Lavallée**, directrice du soutien aux artistes, aux communautés et à l'action régionale au CALQ, lors du 25<sup>e</sup> gala des Grands Prix Desjardins de la culture, tenu au Théâtre du Vieux-Terrebonne.

*« Les membres du comité de sélection du CALQ ont été charmés par ce spectacle à la fois drôle, intelligent et accessible. Le duo d'artistes démontre une belle complicité, et le métissage des disciplines artistiques convoquées dans le spectacle est des plus réussi », a mentionné Céline Lavallée lors de la remise du prix.*

<https://www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/en/actualites-et-publications/melissandre-tremblay-bourassa-gabriel-girouard-oeuvre-annee-lanaudiere/>

# L'AMOUR À DEUX!

août 21, 2014 · par accoutageoffroy · [Bookmarquez ce permalien.](#) ·

BLIND DATE / Les Bordéliques danse et musique

Critique de : Julie Pilon

(Critique publiée sur le blogue de la danse du Théâtre Hector-Charland :

<http://hectorcharland.wordpress.com/2014/08/21/lamour-a-deux/>)

Photo : Christian Rouleau



Ça commence dans l'assistance, au son d'une bossa nova bien connue. Elle, timide, cherche son rendez-vous dans la foule. Peut-être que ce sera le grand amour tant attendu... Lui, séducteur, imbu de lui-même, la remarque à peine et trouvera un peu plus tard une femme dont la personnalité lui correspond à merveille. Ouf ! Pas facile, les "blind-date". On a l'impression, en 70 minutes, d'assister à une séance de "speedating" au cours de laquelle s'entrecroisent une timide, un prétentieux, une femme fatale, un névrosé, une rebelle et un romantique, tous très typés. Au grand bonheur des spectateurs, qui s'y retrouvent et prennent plaisir à observer ces rencontres improbables. Au fil des mimiques et des pas de danse

des deux comédiens-danseurs, les occasions manquées se précipitent.

On assiste à une série de rendez-vous extrêmement bien ficelés, techniquement impeccables, qui font vivre au public une gamme intense d'émotions. Le jeune public est d'ailleurs ravi car les traits de caractère des personnages sont facilement reconnaissables. On passe par des situations souvent grotesques et loufoques, où le désarroi côtoie l'attente et le désir devient urgence. Comme dans le numéro de la femme fatale, qui est particulièrement bien rendu par Mélissandre Tremblay-Bourassa, dans lequel le lien entre l'inspiration musicale et l'orgasme est subtilement souligné. Ses étranges contorsions feront franchement rire l'assistance. Plus tard, l'archet du névrosé qui vibre d'angoisse amène Gabriel Girouard dans une performance physique audacieuse, inspirée de la musique contemporaine.

L'arrivée de la rebelle provoque un "clash" et arrive à un bon moment dans le spectacle. Son entêtement, sa bouderie, son mal-être, la rendent fragile aux yeux des spectateurs. Sa frustration est mise en évidence par un langage chorégraphique différent et une danse plus percussive, où la rage se transforme en désespoir. Le retour de l'échassier agit comme un baume avec sa complainte qui exprime toute la solitude de l'être humain.

Avec le romantique qui revient calmer la tempête, on perçoit un certain espoir. La femme timide se dévoile et devient la femme-archet, une des images les plus magnifiques du spectacle. Elle nous offre sa vraie nature et le couple est enfin possible. Le violoniste joue d'elle et la fait vibrer dans une finale qui termine le cycle de toutes ces histoires rocambolesques dont le spectateur vient d'être témoin. On sort de "Blind Date" avec un véritable sourire, la tête pleine d'images et de moments qui nous font songer à nos propres relations: nos déceptions, nos attentes et nos désirs d'humains. /

## *Les châteaux de sable (2017)*



« Ici, tension cohabite avec beauté, différence, acceptation et naïveté. »  
-Annie-Claude Coutu Geoffroy, diffuseur en danse, Théâtre Hector-Charland

"... la force des trois interprètes est remarquable et émouvante..."

Tout comme après une sortie à la plage, où nous retrouvons des grains de sable dans notre maison durant des jours, ce spectacle vous laissera des traces et vous fera réfléchir sur votre rapport aux autres et les relations sociales parfois chaotiques qui nous entourent."

Yaëlle Azoulay  
Chorégraphe, interprète et agente de diffusion en danse

## Quelques commentaires des enseignants ayant accueilli *Les châteaux de sable*

- Je crois que les adolescents apprécient ce thème, car c'est une réalité qui fait partie de leur quotidien. Les différents tableaux du spectacle amènent l'élève à comprendre le cheminement d'une personne et de cette réalité. Je trouve que le choix des costumes, le choix musical ainsi que des accessoires était très original et pertinent.
- Je crois que c'est grâce aux ateliers et aux cours préparatoires que le jeune est plus préparé à recevoir ce spectacle. Prendre le temps et plusieurs cours sur ce sujet était primordial.
- Le cahier m'a beaucoup aidée en classe avec mes élèves! BRAVO!
- TRÈS BIEN, grâce aux nombreuses démarches et grâce à une excellente préparation. Les interprètes qui ont enseigné en classe ont grandement aidé à la mise en situation, compréhension et appréciation de ce spectacle!





- Certains élèves se sont **ÉNORMÉMENT** ouverts grâce à ce sujet. J'ai eu l'occasion de vivre des moments touchants avec mes élèves. Plusieurs confidences personnelles en lien avec la **VULNÉRABILITÉ**. Que ce soit de parler du lien avec leurs parents, leur orientation sexuelle, etc. Ce fut de beaux cours remplis d'émotion et d'amour.
- Ce spectacle est d'une très grande qualité. Les interprètes sont généreux et plus que qualifiés. La pièce est à mon sens très bien construite, nous permettant de ressentir une multitude d'émotions. La thématique était très intéressante pour les adolescents. Je trouvais que ça me permettait d'ouvrir sur de bonnes discussions avec eux.
- Les ateliers étaient vraiment adaptés aux jeunes.
- La préparation et les retours ont été intéressants avec les jeunes. Il y avait vraiment de bonnes questions. Les jeunes ont été surpris, choqués parfois, touchés. Ma clientèle n'a pas beaucoup vu de la danse contemporaine, elle est souvent réticente au changement et à ce qu'ils ne connaissent pas. Je crois que la pièce leur a laissé une trace.
- Le cahier pédagogique était vraiment magnifique. Le contenant comme le contenu. Il nous donnait vraiment une bonne idée de la thématique, proposait des activités facilement transférables et adaptées aux jeunes. J'ai trouvé qu'il allait au-delà de la pièce comme telle et allait profondément dans la thématique de la vulnérabilité et de la bisexualité. Vraiment du beau travail.





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# In Worlds Set Free

By Benjamin Pomerance

Photos provided by Hill and Hollow Music

ON THE DAY that the Cirque du Soleil casting team left a message on her answering machine, Méliandre Tremblay-Bourassa was ready to fly. “A few weeks before, I was telling my mother that I wanted to live abroad and make a living as a dancer,” she remembers. “And my mother tapped my shoulder like, ‘Keep dreaming, girl.’” She pauses. “But it seemed like the right time to explore. I wasn’t married. I didn’t have a child. I didn’t even have a cat or a plant.”

So, she practically leapt through the roof when the invitation arrived from the largest contemporary circus producer in the world. “Right place, right moment, right color of hair,” she laughs when asked what led the global entertainment titans to reach out specifically to her. “I was lucky. They wanted a female step-dancer who also had ballet training. There aren’t many people with that background. They wanted to know if I could send them a

demo tape. And I just happened to have finished making a demo tape the previous week. It seemed perfect.”

She hadn’t bargained on the baby, the husband or the fact that living in China would provoke a seismic shock to the system of someone who up to that point hadn’t spent much time outside of Canada. She understood only that this was the opportunity of a lifetime. Before she knew what was happening, she had signed on the dotted line, joined the Cirque du Soleil production of ZAIA and pledged her life to eight grueling shows a week.

And before she knew what was happening, she had met a man, a musician who could take seemingly any instrument and make it sing, and fallen in love. Then she was pregnant. Then she was boarding a plane for China with a husband and a newborn baby, holding a ticket to so many new lives that were erupting at once. “It suddenly became very overwhelming,”

she remembers. “It was sort of like, ‘How did I get here?’”

It was the perfect question to ask, for anyone following her story to this point would have asked it a thousand times already. Truth be told, the woman who will dance in Saranac on Jan. 10 at the launch party of the new album from Quebecois musicians Alexis Chartrand and Nicolas Babineau never was the star of her ballet class. “I was so bad,” she proclaims. “I had no coordination. I started ballet when I was 6 years old, but I really wasn’t very good.”

Still, she had a guiding star to follow. Shortly after beginning ballet lessons, she saw the lavish production of *The Nutcracker* presented by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. “Sitting in the audience, I wanted to be a part of it,” she remembers. “I imagined myself on that stage,” not just in any part, either, but in the role of Clara, the ballet’s central character.

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But there was also something else, something considerably less tangible. In every ballet class, she would stand in the position on the barre that was nearest to the piano. She wanted to be close enough to the source of the music to feel the vibrations, to touch the sound with every fiber of her consciousness. To her, the music wasn't just an accompaniment to her dancing; it was the reason for dancing, the spring from which every gesture flowed.

"Sometimes, dancers act like the music is secondary," she explains. "That isn't me. The connection to the music is very important to me. It's what inspires me, what pushes me to move in a certain way, to feel a certain way."

At the age of 8, she added another layer to this bundle of fascination. The studio where she took lessons began providing a class in "creative dance," allowing the kids the liberty of imbuing their dancing with a specific character's motivations. "I loved that," she recalls, "a chance

to become someone or something other than who you really were and convince the audience of that change. I was young, but I was already very theatrical."

And the time came when her classical ballet skills almost caught up to her natural theatrical instincts — close enough, anyway, for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens to cast her in the role of Clara. She was 12 years old. She was going to Montreal to dance the starring role in a professional ballet on the giant stage at Place des Arts. She felt like she had seen the world. If only she knew that she hadn't even started yet.

Because her ballet studio, the same place where she had trained so carefully for so long, was also the gateway to the forbidden fruit. Once a week, the studio offered a folklore class, introducing the students to traditional dance forms from various countries. If there was a single place where Tremblay-Bourassa's starry-eyed gaze to a land beyond her own originated, it was in these weekly training sessions. "It was a way of traveling," she recalls. "It was a very dynamic form of movement. I liked the feeling of community that it created," including the community that took her onto a dance floor where ballerinas rarely seemed to tread.

That folklore class showed her that her home province had cultivated a form of dancing that was uniquely their own, and she thirsted to discover it further. So, she made the leap that one can equate to a classical violinist linking up with a bluegrass band — finding a nearby Quebecois step-dance troupe and joining them, turning every Friday night into an act of liberation.

"I could wear the T-shirt that I wanted rather than the ballet uniform," she states. "I didn't have to wear my hair in a bun. I took off my pointe shoes and stomped my feet on the floor. I didn't have to spend all of my time trying to have the same pose as the girl in front of me. I didn't have to look exactly like everyone else. I could just be me."

Yet something fundamental followed her from the ballet studio into the community dance hall on those exhilarating Friday evenings. "The music," she declares. "It was still all about the music for me. I loved the music of the traditional dances." She stops, almost losing her breath at the thought of it. "As soon as I hear the music



start, I have this feeling like electricity is running through my body."

Still, even after crossing this Rubicon over to step-dancing, she found ways and reasons to keep going back to ballet. By the time she graduated from high school in 2003, she had amassed an impressive portfolio of abilities from both sides of the dance aisle, a combination that stood out from the narrower tracks followed by her peers. "I would say to my friends, 'Why don't we go start a troupe where we do both ballet and step-dance?'" she remembers. "And they would look at me like I was crazy and say, 'Because nobody wants to see that.'"

But Cirque du Soleil wanted to see that. And when their casting team dove into that pool, it didn't take them long to determine that Tremblay-Bourassa was their choice. Off she went, seeing a stage far bigger than Place des Arts and a

world far bigger than Montreal — doing so with a new husband and a new baby boy in tow.

She quickly learned what awaited her in the city of Macau — a daily sprint wrapped up inside a weekly marathon. "Sure, you can do something good," she says. "But can you do that thing over and over for eight shows a week?" It helped, she points out, that she was running this gauntlet with one of the highest-budget productions on the planet. "They give you a training room," she says. "They have a physical fitness staff to help you. They give you the tools."

What they couldn't give her, though, was sleep. "When I would come home from an evening performance," she recalls, "I would be so excited and so full of energy that I couldn't get to bed until about 1 a.m." Around that time, the baby would wake up and begin to cry. She would awaken and try to comfort him. The rest of the night would proceed in a similarly interrupted pattern until morning arrived and the exhausted mother had to leave for rehearsal.

Headaches and stabbing neck pains were the consequence of this fitful lifestyle. Feelings of guilt visited her every time she departed for the theater and had to leave her husband and baby behind. And there was a feeling of displacement that she hadn't bargained on. "The entire time that I was in China, I didn't have time to come back to Quebec at all," she says. "That was very hard. I always felt like I was upside-down from the normal rhythms of my family."

Nevertheless, she kept on dancing — danced through the headaches and the neck pain; danced through the homesickness; danced through the bleary-eyed fatigue; and danced through everything because when that electric current sizzled through her every time she heard the music that represented her cue — her signal to go out in front of another sold-out crowd and dance with pure emotional freedom, sharing a fundamental slice of home in this faraway place. Everything seemed to be cured, at least for a little while, anyway.

But then someone had the bright idea of changing the show. "More acrobatics, less dancing," Tremblay-Bourassa remembers. "So, it was time for me to leave. It was 2011.

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I had been in the cast for two years and eight months, and it was incredible. But I was ready to come home. I needed to root back in Quebec with my community.”

She found her first partner close to home. “I started working with my husband on choreographic projects with traditional arts,” she says. “And we continued on from there.” They created Les Bordéliques Danse et Musique, providing theatrical — even clownish — performances with traditional music and folk-dance steps. No one seemed to be doing anything like it anywhere in Canada, leaving them to gamble that this was a void worthy of being filled.

And the husband-and-wife team was right. It didn’t take too long for their new artistic conception to gain popularity. Invitations arrived for Tremblay-Bourassa to dance and choreograph for widely attended programs — La Grande Rencontre, the Biennale de Gigue Contemporaine, Festival Orientalys and the internationally beloved Just For Laughs Comedy Festival in Montreal. She danced solo with the Celtic band Wallop the Spot. She joined forces with leading traditional musicians for performances throughout the province.

Among the artists who entered her collaborative streams of consciousness are Chartrand and Babineau, the musicians with whom Tremblay-Bourassa will perform at the Saranac Fire Hall on Jan. 10. Chartrand, in particular, joins her often with his quicksilver fiddle

playing, and listeners can hear Tremblay-Bourassa’s footwork on the CD that Babineau and Chartrand recorded together in Saranac. “They have a deep respect for the history of this art form,” Tremblay-Bourassa states. “Their playing inspires me. It brings me a lot of joy.”

Certain aspects of life, though, have not brought her joy. The man whom she married shortly before that move to China is now her ex-husband, although Les Bordéliques Danse et Musique continues, with Montreal-based artist Anit Ghosh now taking on the musical role that Tremblay-Bourassa’s husband previously held. Opportunities have bypassed her, she feels, because she does not live in Montreal or Quebec City, the province’s cultural centers. The recent trials and travails have taken their toll.

“The past years have been very difficult for me,” she says. “I became bitter. And then I felt like I could not create anymore because I was bitter. I was unable to move on.”

Finally, she turned to the medium that she knew best to break the curse. This year, she developed her first film, scheduled for release in March 2020, shot in five locations and intermingling step-dancing with poetry that she wrote. Every scene features grapefruit in some form, the sharp-tasting citrus emblematic of the feelings that she is trying to excise. “Bitterness is a subtle emotion that can come in many forms,” she explains. “But I think this project helped. I feel like I am

ready to move forward now.”

And once again, this art form that is uniquely her own — this blend of traditional step-dance with ballet roots — raised her from her troubles, literally and metaphorically. “In ballet, you try to be as tall and light as you can,” she says. “I bring that idea to step-dance. The music lifts me. It’s like everything else around me disappears, and I can just move freely.”

She pauses. “I had a journalist say to me once, ‘You are such a young lady. Why are you interested in traditional step-dancing?’ To me, this is a ridiculous question. It doesn’t matter how old the art is. It’s fun. It’s uplifting. It’s freedom” — freedom from headaches and sleepless nights; freedom from the pain of homesickness and the sting of a marriage’s end; freedom from the skeptics saying that you can’t possibly do both ballet and step-dance; freedom from conventions and expectations; and freedom in all of her worlds.

*Mélessandre Tremblay-Bourassa will perform with Alexis Chartrand and Nicolas Babineau at the launch party of their new CD — recorded in Saranac during two residencies with Hill and Hollow Music — on Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. in the Saranac Fire Hall. For more information, call 518-293-7613, email hillholl@hughes.net or visit hillandhollowmusic.org.*