

Enchantment at La TOHU --

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Today marks the beginning of performances of *L'Arche*, the new multi-disciplinary work from L'Arsenal à musique. If the excerpt presented yesterday morning is any indication, the piece is sure to enchant its audience.

L'Arsenal à musique was founded in 1978 by Lorena Corradi and Reggi Ettore, who both studied at the Milan Conservatory (Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi). Soon after graduation, they chose to focus their energies on musical education and its possibilities. With close to 30 years of experience creating musical events, l'Arsenal has a mandate to promote concert music to the public, young people and adults alike, by associating it with various other disciplines in an original manner. The company has already reached over three million children in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia.

For this production, which marries music with the circus arts, l'Arsenal à musique places more emphasis on its message than in the past. *L'Arche* poignantly evokes the tenuous relationship that man has with nature. The music underlines a fascinating poetic manifesto. Rarely have the circus arts been so eloquent, and such an integral part of a message.

Using the 3 dimensions in space, *L'Arche* presents an entire universe of imagery, where man lives adjacent to his natural environment—for better or for worse. With transparent screens that act as reflectors for some of the projections in the piece, the characters develop in a profound, mesmerizing décor, where butterflies seem to fly about freely. The quality of the images by Pier Chartrand and Bernard Duguay is doubtless a large part of the work's charm, but the ensemble also radiates a level of cohesion and unity that is rarely found in this type of work.

The presence of percussionist Merlin Ettore on the stage provides the rhythm for the strange cohabitation of man and nature, illustrated, for example, in an aerial number. We never get the sense, however, that technical prowess is the goal of the passage. Instead of wowing us with sheer physical skill, it presents a glimpse of a new language filled with colour and metaphor.

A clown wears himself out trying to make a little parrot laugh and fly away; white juggling pins thrown in the air turn into geese; the buildings encroach upon the forest; the birdsong changes suddenly into the rumblings of heavy construction equipment and smoke takes over the trees, leaving the jugglers to try to save what remains. Magnificent.

It took three years for the creative team, along with highly skilled designers and circus historian Pascal Jacob, to complete this production.

With this piece, La TOHU launches its series *Éscales cirque*, a group of performances which will introduce audiences to the circus arts in a variety of new forms. With the generosity of this first presentation, the future of the series looks promising indeed...