



Q ART THEATRE Q ART

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Brief presented by Q Art Theatre in response to The New Cultural Policy of the City of Montreal

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2. Presentation of Q Art Theatre

Q Art Theatre is a Montreal based small alternative, intercultural, experimental theatre operating in NDG without a space, performing in English. Q Art Theatre was registered in Montreal in 1995, and became a not-for-profit charitable organization shortly after that.

Mandate of Q Art Theatre

Q Art Theatre's mission is directed toward the education and enlightenment of the public, to promote an interest and awareness of theatre as a medium for social and moral issues not only for the committed theatregoer but also for the public at large. To further this mission, the mandate of Q Art Theatre is to present contemporary Canadian drama and the best of the classical and modern international drama in a variety of theatrical styles.

Q Art presents opportunity to artists with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to exercise their talent in the media of theatre and to promote our cultural mosaic that is Canada's demographic reality.

Q Art Theatre, through its inclusive and intercultural artistic practice, is ardently promoting cultural exchange in order to sensitize the different segments of the public at large to each other's humanity.

Artistic Practices of Q Art Theatre

Q Art Theatre's artistic practice has focussed on diversity and inclusiveness from its inception. Believing that only diverse programming brings in diverse audience, its leaders have been continuously striving to achieve a healthy balance artistically, thematically and otherwise.

It is this diversity that Q Art Theatre's artistic collaborators and audiences find stimulating and challenging. Its administrative and artistic leadership has a very firm grip on Montreal, Quebec's and Canada's demographic realities. They invite Canadian artists of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to explore modern and classical works from other cultures, and introduce international authors little known to Canadian audiences.

Q Art Theatre's journey has been rich and varied. As a bridge between the two theatrical traditions of Central Europe and North America, the company is a conduit of information and expertise to both Canada and Hungary. As a member of the Montreal theatre community, Q Art Theatre is both an artistic contributor and a cultural advocate, its leaders having served on the boards of the *Quebec Drama Federation*, *MAI: Montréal Arts Interculturels*, and *Regroupement pour le développement des pratiques artistiques interculturelles* and participate in committees, like the *Délégation pour la diversité culturelle dans les arts* (Conseil des arts de Montréal).

As globalization makes cultural exchange an inevitability of the twenty-first century, Q Art Theatre can now be described as quintessentially Canadian. Q Art Theatre's Hungarian roots have dug deep in its leaders' adopted soil, resulting in a new crossbreed of Canadian theatre, one that is rich, diverse and truly inclusive.

2. Montreal, Its Allophone Communities and the Arts

“Montreal is famous for the number and diversity of its cultural products. The innovation and quality of the works disseminated in most cultural sectors have greatly enhanced its profile on the highly competitive world market.”

4.2 Hospitality and reputation

Montreal is a global metropolis where traditional and new cultural communities¹ live together. Montreal is the city that reflects the most Canada's present and future demographic realities, namely, the three solitudes constantly interact with each other economically, politically, socially, and culturally. The undeniable fact of new (emigrants and refugees) and old Montrealers' (Francophones, Anglophones and Allophones) vigorous inosculation has created a vibrant cultural metropolis. That is why the inclusion of Allophone communities is the most important factor in Montreal's all-around development.

*“Art is an expression examining what cannot be measured through science.
...Every society needs art for it is the perpetual search into the human condition,
For it opens the eyes to the world, for it is intrinsic, for art is constant.”*

Bobo Vian: Art The Constant

Art is part of culture. However, culture does not equal art. The artists of Montreal (Francophones, Anglophones and Allophones) constantly hold up a mirror to its leaders and its population, therefore they are the key participants in shaping the identity of our metropolis. Consequently, supporting the artists is an obligation, and should not be attached to any political and social directives.

Cultural diversity is certainly a central instrument for Montreal to compete globally. The efforts by Allophones to integrate must correlate with a genuine openness by an inclusive and accepting society. Inherently, artistic and cultural activities offer opportunities for meetings, converging, interaction and exchange. Hence the correlation between support of the arts, guaranteed support and development of professional Allophone artists, and the integration of Allophones, which in the end will result in an organically diversified community.

Unfortunately, professional Allophone artists still lack equal opportunities as to development, funding, recognition, acknowledgement, visibility and access to performing and studio facilities. Their artistic practices are still marginalized, their individual professional achievements unrecognized, and thus, their integration into the mainstream culture of Montreal (and Québec) is systematically impeded. Nowhere this status quo is more prevalent than in the art of theatre, especially in the case of those Allophone artists who work in English.

¹ Cultural or ethnic community: every community is a cultural or ethnic community, therefore, characterize any non-Francophone and non-Anglophone community as such can represent a condescending attitude towards Allophones. For lack of a better word, the author of this document is using “Allophone” instead of: ethnic or cultural minority, ethnic or cultural community.

“... there is near ten point gap in under-representation of the groups that are not of Canadian, French or British ethnic origin. The gaps are somewhat greater when it comes to the dancing and acting occupation than to musicians and painters.”
(Jack Jedwab, Arts and Diversity in Montreal...)

The inclusion of professional Allophone artists in the artistic milieu – and not through “ethnic festivals” – therefore must be a fundamental element of Montreal’s cultural development policy. The city must clearly express its commitment to change the status quo, and must define its support for inclusive and intercultural artistic practices. This pledge however, should not in any way become a substitution of inequity but rather the elimination of systematic barriers, the unwavering promotion and transparent application of equal opportunity striving for artistic excellence.

It must be acknowledged and commended that the city of Montreal has begun the process years ago. The creation and finally the natural evolution of the Soutien à l’interculturalism program was only one step. The creation and funding of the MAI has also been praised. But these efforts must be enlarged and financial support guaranteed. A new cultural development policy is the perfect occasion to provide a global vision and compelling action plan to create real and concrete changes. We can already see the signs of responsibility in Montreal’s new cultural development policy project.

“Montreal is a true laboratory of artistic and cultural productions, with high quality and professional standards, and a high level of activity and visibility. Its original products, artistic risk-taking and new ideas give it strategic and identity lead, which should be maintained at all costs.”
3.6 Innovation, new and emerging talent; page 34

3. New Cultural Policy, the Question of Cultural Diversity and the Artists

“The ultimate goal of Montréal’s action in cultural development is to enhance the quality of life and collective wealth of its citizens and communities.”

1.3 Our goal, our ambitions, our values; page 15

The city of Montreal’s attempt at a new cultural development policy, and their efforts to identify the status quo and the goals for the future (1.3 *Our goals, our ambition, our values* and 1.4 *The present situation*) is commendable, however, since it has to do with culture and art, consultations should include only artists and the representatives of the cultural milieu. The public consultations of the Sommet de Montréal in 2002 produced studies and plans for more public consultations in the future without any concrete results and action. By now action plans, programs and funding should have been implemented in order to create a truly vibrant cultural metropolis with fair and equal funding to professional artists of Montreal. We agree with a number of recommendations in general, nonetheless, as professional artists we are mystified by the City’s pledge to fund amateur artists who already make a living in other professions (recommendation 32), as opposed to tangible strategies to support professional artists who try to make their living as artists. We find it discouraging that the document largely ignores the specific contributions and needs of professional alternative artists and also misrepresents the needs of Allophone communities and professional Allophone artists.

Culture and Those Who Produce It

Montreal has grown into a cultural metropolis as a result of the work of its highly original, innovative and culturally diverse artistic community. Some of the artists become part of the mainstream after time, some stay within the alternative milieu. Professional Allophone artists belong mostly in the latter category. It is imperative however, in order to keep these alternative and Allophone artists in Montreal, to support their work.

Major institutions, and major festivals, receive a pledge in the document (recommendations 21-22) of continuous support, even though these institutions are highly commercial cultural events. These mainstream events are very much needed in order to compete and to maintain Montreal’s reputation as a cultural metropolis globally. Mainstream institutions produce more mass appeal than the independent artistic sector, but provide Montreal artists with possibilities and ideas. Major festivals invite artists mainly from the international scene and do not commit to local talent, but they serve as an opportunity for local artists and audiences to experience worldwide contemporary artistic practices. Artistically acclaimed events like FTA are not mentioned in the document however, even though their contribution to Montreal’s very important global standing and its international relations are priceless.

Nothing concrete is pledged to **professional emerging/experimental and Allophone artistic organizations**. Although the City of Montreal wishes to maintain the city’s high standing as a creative and innovative cultural metropolis, the recommendations do not reflect this goal. Recommendation 28 is the most insubstantial pledge in the document.

“The city pledges to support initiatives that help Montréal continue to stand out for its creativity, its artistic risk taking, and the inventiveness of its cultural production.”

Recommendation 28; page 35

The new cultural development policy of Montreal does not mention small performing groups and their need for space, or their need for financial support and thus, there is no pledge to address these issues. Theatre companies producing in English are more and more forced to perform East of the Main, in Francophone venues, and thus lose audiences because of lack of contemporary, flexible and affordable spaces in close proximity to their targeted public. NDG based companies have no opportunity to perform or rehearse in or near their community. The same applies to other West of the main boroughs as well. The document accentuates strictly the need for artist studios.

“The city (...) pledges to design an action plan and the necessary tools to help it consolidate and develop artists’ studios, and studio-residences, (...) promoting, among other things, the artists’ access to ownership.”
Recommendation 23; page 32

At the public consultations – as part of the Sommet de Montréal – professional theatre and dance artists and companies raised the issue of new and affordable rehearsal and performing spaces for the alternative scene in the boroughs like NDG, Westmount, but a solution has not been brought forward. Certainly, creating the “Quartier des spectacles” (recommendation 27) does not solve the needs of artists who perform in English; neither does it serve the needs of audiences (access to arts for all) who are interested in English speaking artistic presentations.

It is imperative that the City of Montreal recognizes the need to support and to promote professional artists who create outside of the mainstream, and to insure a healthy environment through its programs for these artists to work in.

Here and elsewhere

“The City, aware that inclusion is one of Montreal’s greatest challenges, pledges to promote a more global approach to interculturalism...”
Recommendation 31; page 38

Montreal’s professional Allophone artists and the Allophone communities commend the City for its realization of the fact that inclusion is one of Montreal’s greatest challenges. It is proposed in recommendation 31, that the City will promote a more global approach to interculturalism, but recommendation 32 proves quite the opposite as it continues to regard the work of Allophone artists nothing more than folkloric or exotic spectacle. Montreal’s Allophone communities have lived through decades of segregation as a result of systematic barriers to successfully integrate into Québec’s culture. Ethnic festivals, although greatly appreciated by Montrealers, are not artistic events but rather mass entertainment and preserve a sense of ghettoization as opposed to dialogue between cultures. Supporting and promoting “ethnic festivals” instead of the work of professional Allophone artists is the status quo, we need a step forward. One cannot and should not position the St-Patrick parade on the same plate with the Festival du Monde Arabe, and definitely not with the work of Théâtre de deuxième Réalité, Black Theatre Workshop or Q Art Theatre.

“ The city pledges to develop a funding program for cultural events promoting Montréal’s ethnocultural diversity and the heritage and traditions of its ethnocultural communities.”
Recommendation 32; page 38

The City of Montreal must recognize the need to support the work of professional Allophone artists, and the artistic practices of independent artistic organizations of these artists. Unfortunately, the new cultural development policy concentrates its efforts around ethnic festivals and events instead of abolishing systematic barriers and creating equal opportunities for professional Allophone artists of Montreal.

Ignoring, dismissing and hiding (from the public) Montreal, Québec and Canada's demographic reality is the most effective tool our peers, the media, bureaucrats and politicians have been using to obstruct the integration and active participation of Allophone artists in the mainstream culture. This practice is most apparent in the art of theatre and film. It is imperative that the programs to support the "dialogue of cultures" in the arts follow a global approach in regards to the inclusion of cultural diversity, and that they will facilitate the integration of professional Allophone artists, and consequently Allophone communities, into mainstream society.

Obstacles – Funding: Conseil des arts de Montréal; Service du développement culturel;

The artists of Montreal have been funded through two arts organizations, The Conseil des Arts de Montreal and Ville de Montréal Service du développement culturel on the municipal level. A special emphasis has been placed on the new role of the boroughs in the new cultural policy, but alas, the document fails to stipulate how the boroughs will finance any of their new obligations.

The conseil des arts de Montréal has been seriously handicapped for more than a decade in its efforts to effectively carry out its mandate to service and financially support Montreal's artists, since the City of Montreal refused to augment its budget. The city's effort to raise this budget by a mere 16% will not be adequate, for it will be swallowed up by the "major cultural institutions" (that are mainly commercial) immediately and will not benefit the rest of the artistic community. The budget of the Conseil des arts de Montréal should have been doubled when the new city was created in order to somewhat make up to the decade long budget freeze. Also, the pledge of the CAM budget increase to \$10 million in 2005 (Recommendation # 18,) is a promise that was first given to the artists of Montreal soon after the last municipal elections.

Traditionally, at CAM, professional Allophone artists faced systematic barriers when applying for funding. These barriers include the following:

- *Franco- and Anglo-centric attitude in regards to aesthetics* – although much improved, the statistics are as follow: 15% of total funding in theatre was given to Anglophone companies, while only 5% was received by Allophone (intercultural) theatres in the year of 2004.
- *Committee members' ignorance of the artists, insensitivity* – jury members did not know the work of Allophone artists, and visit only trendy or mainstream Franco- and Anglophone theatre.
- *Lack of acknowledgement of the professional experience* and competence obtained outside of Canada (unless artist was highly "decorated" in his/her homeland).
- *Bureaucratic maze* – confusing information in regards to funding discourage Allophone artists

In order to change the status quo, it is important for the City and its funding bodies to eliminate the obstacles and systematic barriers without creating a reversed discrimination. And, as we have mentioned it before, in order to produce real change, it must follow a global approach, a compelling action plan and a significant increase in the budget of CAM (that should at this point stand rather at \$15 million than the pledged \$10 million). Without adequate funding to the Conseil des arts de Montréal the status quo of subsidizing major institutions while the rest of the artistic community is ignored will remain.

Service du développement culturel in reality served four segments of the artistic stratosphere: Festivals (international events), Established cultural organizations (technical & building funds), Emerging artistic organizations (promotional funds) and Allophone artists (intercultural artistic practices) co-jointly with Ministère de la Culture et des communications du Québec. To describe the positive effect these programs have had on the artistic and cultural life of Montreal is nearly impossible. And yet, at the time when the City of Montreal is pledging a mere \$1.4 million increase to the CAM budget, it is also suspending all activities (without consulting with the artists) at the Service du développement culturel. Grant application time is here, and most of emerging and Allophone artistic organizations are looking at a seven to fifteen thousand dollars hole in their production budget as a result of this suspension. Only major cultural organizations could fill up this gap with money from the private sector; alternative, small size organizations cannot provide corporations with “advertisement value” in exchange for sponsorship and donation. Nowhere in the Montréal Cultural Metropolis document is it stated what would happen to the programs that were financed through Ville de Montréal Service du développement culturel, with a total budget higher than the pledged increase to the Conseil des arts de Montréal budget in 2005. Will these programs be transferred to CAM with their respective budget (2004 total: \$2,132,477.00, and expectantly improved) on top of the pledged increase? Two of the programs of Ville de Montréal Service du développement culturel largely benefited small size, professional emerging and Allophone artistic organizations.

Aide aux jeunes organismes culturels, the only grant program on any government level to provide small artistic organizations with funds to promote their creation(s). An extremely important tool to compete in the cultural milieu for audiences these organizations cannot come up with on their own, especially if like Q Art Theatre receive no operating funds. Seven thousand dollars is a lot for a small organization and cannot be replaced from the private sector.

Soutien à l’interculturalism program is the only grant, where all applicants (in term of professional Allophone artists and their organizations) have an equal chance to obtain financial support to their artistic endeavours. It would be a shame and a step back in Montreal’s progress regarding demographic realities if this budget instead of being doubled were to disappear.

Montréal is famous for the number and diversity of its cultural products. The innovation and quality of the works disseminated in most cultural sectors have greatly enhanced its profile on the highly competitive world market.”

4.2 Hospitality and reputation; page 39

The new cultural development policy touches on collaboration and the trickling down of certain responsibilities and opportunities to **the boroughs**. Unfortunately, this new policy focuses on amateur art, “in borough ethnic festivals” and the “independent artist’s studios” only, when in

fact it could include the question of office/rehearsal/performing venue for theatre and dance companies as well. Nothing is specified in regards to these issues, and the more equitable and open access to the Maisons de la culture when discussing the new role of the boroughs. There is a definite inequity, as we mentioned before, in regards to access to space when comparing mainstream to alternative and Francophone to Anglophone and Allophone performing groups. The special luxury of mainstream cultural institutions is painfully obvious in comparison to alternative companies without any. It is all the more disturbing because the city has enough empty churches, industrial and other buildings or already existing performing venues to accommodate these “have-not” theatre and dance troupes.

Since art has no monetary value, artists and their work must be funded mainly through government related funding bodies. Montreal is already a festival city. Maintain that status quo does not require extra efforts, nor any change in attitude, only funding. However, to pledge unwavering financial support to the artists (not entertainers) of Montreal and artistic creations (not circus and festivals with mass appeal) requires a lot of willingness, courage, and understanding of the significance and raison d'être of art.

“ ...Montréal’s defining features are its avant-garde artists and cultural effervescence. They make it stand out among cities of the same size that aspire to become cultural metropolises, but whose activity is generated mostly by more traditional cultural niches and the dissemination of imported creations.”
3.6 Innovation, new and emerging talent; page 34

4. Commitments to professional artists and the inclusion of professional Allophone Artists

“The demographic composition of Montreal has undergone considerable transformation over the past few decades. ... The multiple impact that growing diversification of the Montreal population and the city’s arts and cultural expression has yet to be fully explored. Yet there is little doubt that it will have a profound bearing on cultural production and consumption.”

Jack Jedwab, Arts and Diversity in Montreal: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations...

The authors of the new cultural development policy, the City of Montreal, and inevitably the public at large must recognize the nature, the role and importance of the arts in the healthy evolution of our society. It is vital in order to set priorities, to differentiate between entertainment and art, between profitable major institutions, events and festivals with mass appeal, and art house organizations whose work is risk-taking, highly innovative, not easily accessible, often socio-politically conscious with no commercial attributes. Both needs and means are different. To promote the arts and artistic endeavours of Montreal, both moral and financial commitment to professional artists of all three solitudes must become a priority. To guarantee equal opportunity, equal access to the system and venues and visibility to professional Allophone artists is not a luxury, but a necessity in such a culturally diverse metropolis as Montreal.

5. List of Propositions

The following propositions promote the unwavering support for non-mainstream artists, their organizations and endeavours and hopes to encourage the city to endorse the inclusion and equal treatment of professional Allophone artists through its programs and funding policies.

Equal Access

- Favour the funding of professional artists through diverse programs
- Priority of funding artistic goals – as opposed to commercial objectives
- Requirement of the strive for artistic excellence – as opposed to entertainment mass appeal
- Equal access to funding for art house, political and professional Allophone artists
- Increase the representation of Allophone communities at all levels of decision regarding arts and culture.
- Prioritize financial support to professional Allophone artists and art organizations – as opposed to ethnic festivals
- Advocate inclusion in policies and programs – reject segregation of Allophone artists
- Adopt a global vision of artistic aesthetic possibilities – as opposed to the traditional assumption of the superiority of Franco- & Anglo-centric artistic approaches.

Funding Programs

- Increase the budget of Conseil des arts de Montréal to \$ 15 million in order to do away with the debilitating effects of more than a decade of budget freeze.
- Re-institute the programs administered previously by Ville de Montréal Service du développement culturel without delay – do not steal the funds to the boroughs to fund non-artistic activities.
- Prioritize programs that benefit non-mainstream organizations: Soutien à l'interculturalism, Aide aux jeunes organismes.
- Sensitize bureaucrats and jury members at all level of municipal administration and funding bodies. Expand this program to diffusers.
- Guarantee transparency and distribute correct and detailed information regarding programs at all levels of administration and funding bodies.

Diffusion, Public development, Media

- Simplify and open up access to existing performing venues, like the maisons de la culture
- Create more rehearsal and performing venues to alternative and Allophone companies
- Prepare a municipal strategy for the inclusion and development of Allophone audiences
- Make it attractive to the media and its representatives to promote artistic creations as much as commercial endeavors.

6. Benefits and Conclusion

“With its highly bilingual and multicultural population, Montreal is one of North America’s richest cities for cultural expression in multiple language and forms.”
Jack Jedwab: Arts and diversity in Montreal: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations...

Breaking down cultural activities into its fundamental particles and then setting priorities, programs, funding and long-term action plans will benefit the whole sphere of Montreal. The advantages of inclusion are essential to the healthy growth of artistic and cultural life of Montreal; it is an opportunity for innovation and dynamic partnerships already in the grasp of the members of the cultural milieu. To develop a cultural metropolis based on inclusion is a groundbreaking practice and will insure that Montreal will become a much sought destination and can easily become the envy of the World.

In this brief, we aimed to participate in the creation of an equitable and inclusive cultural development policy. The questions brought forward and proposals submitted come from the point of view of the artists of small, alternative theatre companies, advocating and following inclusive and intercultural artistic practices. As professional Allophone artists, who have faced direct and indirect discrimination through their artistic careers, we are confident that honest and open discussions will bring forth long lasting results. We are aware of how difficult it is to reform the existing system (after all, we came to Canada as refugees) and it is even more difficult to change conventional attitude, however, we are confident that genuine will and the right motivation can move things around.

The possibility of direct involvement is in the reach of the city of Montreal. It can create and develop strong partnerships to act together and promote sensitization and inclusive social, political and cultural environment.

Harmonizing the differences and specific interests of all the actors of the cultural sector is the idea of inclusion; it can help greatly in setting priorities, goals and action plan for the future. Inclusive practices not only promote but in the long run also insure an increasing number of actively participating citizens in the life of Montreal, and consequently of Québec.

Théâtre Q Art – Q Art Theatre

Gabor Zsigovics – Artistic Director, President of the Board of Directors

Bobo Vian (Mme) – Administrative and Associate Artistic Director

Bachar Chbib – Filmmaker, Vice President of the Board of Directors

Daniel Dahan – Secretary / Treasurer

Attached: Mandate and History of Q Art Theatre

Bobo Vian: Art The Constant



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MANDATE

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ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Q Art Theatre's artistic practice has focussed on diversity and inclusiveness from its inception. Believing that only diverse programming brings in diverse audience, it's leaders have been continuously striving to achieve a healthy balance artistically, thematically and otherwise. Mr. Zsigovics and Ms. Vian's have been consciously integrating their Hungarian roots, theatrical heritage and artistic practice into Canadian theatre practice. This small, alternative company has presented contemporary Canadian drama, as well as classical, modern, and contemporary international works both in Toronto and Montreal. Similarly, the company has explored and performed a variety of theatrical styles, including Post-Realism, Surrealism, Absurdist Theatre, Grotesque Theatre, Poor Theatre, Brechtien Theatre, poetry performance and story-telling.

It is this diversity that Q Art Theatre's artistic collaborators and audiences find stimulating and challenging. The company prides itself in introducing new Canadian playwrights of all origins to the public (Vidal Alcolea, Bobo Vian, Luciano Iacobelli, etc.). Its administrative and artistic leadership has a very firm grip on Montreal's, Quebec's and Canada's demographic realities. They invite Canadian artists of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to explore modern and classical works from other cultures, and introduce international authors little known to Canadian audiences.

From the year 2000, Q Art Theatre and a young company, Gravy Bath Productions of Montreal have built a strong relationship. For Q Art Theatre their youthful enthusiasm, inventiveness and readiness, for Gravy Bath Q Art's solid experience and artistic integrity seems to be the source of their numerous collaborations (*Cristopher's Story*, *Unfounded Fear Of*, *The Party*, *Cabalogy of Anthony Kokx*, *Coriolanus*, ***The Portrait of Dorian Gray***). The latter has been adapted and directed by **Mr. Gabor Zsigovics** (Artistic Director of Q Art) and has received critical acclaim in the English press (also in the French *Le Devoir*). For its two week run, the performance had unseen number of theatre-goers literally fighting for tickets. *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* received a number of nominations for the Montreal English Critics' Circle Award, including *Best Director*, and *Best Text and Adaptation* for Kokx and Zsigovics etc.).

Q Art Theatre's journey has been rich and varied. As a bridge between the two theatrical traditions of Central Europe and North America, the company is a conduit of information and expertise to both Canada and Hungary. The continuous exchange of ideas and cultivation of connection resulted in Q Art Theatre's Hungarian co-production of *Lear en fin* and an invitation of three Québec theatre artist (one of them Ms. Vian) to the *International Week of Theatre Professionals* in 2003 to Budapest. Ms. Vian also played an instrumental role in bringing Krétakör Theatre's performance of *W – Worker's Circus* to the Festival du Théâtre des Amériques in 2004.

As a member of the Montreal theatre community, Q Art theatre is both an artistic contributor and a cultural advocate, its leaders having served on the boards of the *Quebec Drama Federation*, *MAI: Montréal Arts Interculturelles*, and *Regroupement pour le développement des pratiques artistiques interculturelles* and participate in committees, like the *Délégation pour la diversité culturelle dans les arts* (Conseil des arts de Montréal).

As globalization makes cultural exchange an inevitability of the twenty-first century, Q Art Theatre can now be described as quintessentially Canadian. Q Art Theatre's Hungarian roots have dug deep in its leaders' adopted soil, resulting in a new crossbreed of Canadian theatre, one that is rich, diverse and truly inclusive.

Q Art Theatre has developed a proven community following with more and more percentage of Allophone and young audience members. A rare achievement for a small alternative theatre company.

Q Art Theatre does not follow trends, it simply fulfils its purpose by providing food for the mind and soul of its artists and audiences. Never will they cease to:

EDUCATE, ENLIGHTEN, ENTERTAIN!

Q ART THEATRE'S HISTORY

MONTREAL, QUÉBEC

2004 September, Kobo Abé's **THE BOX MAN**, written for the stage by James R. Wallen and Gabor Zsigovics, an inter-media theatre performance, directed by Gabor Zsigovics. The performance relates to our contemporaries' taking pleasure of peeking into the private lives, sufferings and humiliation of their fellow human beings while safely hidden in their box.

June, Bobo Vian and Gabor Zsigovics visited the **Magnetic North Theatre Festival** in Edmonton, AL, with the support of the *Canada Council for the Arts* and participated at round table discussions about touring, and the state of Canadian theatre.

2003 October, Bobo Vian participated at the **International Week of Theatre Professionals** a symposium organized by the Hungarian office of ITI in Budapest, Hungary. Stacey Christodoulou, Artistic Director of The Other Theatre of Montreal, Québec was the other Canadian theatre artist present.

September, **SOAP OPERA**, the North American premier of György Spiró's play in English, at the Studio Theatre of Monument National, directed by Gabor Zsigovics about the long term repercussions of the horror's of history (the Shoah).

May, The **IX. Hungarian Alternative Theatre Festival** invited Gabor Zsigovics back. While there, he helped to organize the *International Week of Theater Professionals* in Budapest.

March, **LYSISTRATA**, Q Art Theatre participated in Québec's English speaking theatre community's anti-war protest, the public reading of Aristophanes's play (Bobo Vian)

- 2002 June, **THE PARTY** by Slawomir Mrozek, remounted at the St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival to great audience response.
- April, Bobo Vian returned to the **VIII. Hungarian Alternative Theatre Festival** in Budapest with the support of The Canada Council for the Arts.
- February-May, **VÉGÜLIS LEAR (LEAR, EN FIN** an international co-production), a Q Art Theatre and Vitriol Produkció co-production in association with RS9 Theatre in Budapest, Hungary. This instalment of our “theatrical essay” creations is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s King Lear for two actors. The final version of the performance about the artist’s incessant and desperate need to create while living his art, was written and directed by Gabor Zsigovics with the collective collaboration of the actors, assistant director and the dramaturg.
- 2001 October, Q Art Theatre presented **THE PARTY** by Slawomir Mrozek, about the ‘Everyman’ perpetual naivety in politics, as part of Q Art Theatre and Gravy Bath Production’s absurdist double feature co-presentation. The performance toured at John Abbott College and the General Consulate of the Polish Republic in Montreal.
- April, Gabor Zsigovics and Bobo Vian participated as jury members and lecturers at the **VII. Hungarian Alternative Theatre Festival** in Budapest, Hungary. Report on *The State of Hungarian Theatre* and the festival is available on request.
- 2000 October, **THE TRAGEDY OF MAN**, is a collaboration of thirty professional artists and practitioners, to celebrate the new millennium and the 1000th anniversary of the Hungarian state. Continuing our tradition of non-traditional casting the production was a truly Canadian, intercultural, contemporary and cutting-edge rendition of this Hungarian classic from the XIX. Century. The Tragedy of Man is a historical lesson through tableaux of particular moments in human history, when a ‘good idea’ can turn into a ‘very bad practice’ in a blink of an eye.
- April, Gabor Zsigovics and Bobo Vian participated as lecturers and panel members at the **VI. Hungarian Alternative Theatre Festival** in Budapest, Hungary.
- February, Q Art Theatre produced Peter Hacks’ play **LOTTE**, for one actor and a puppet, at the first *Montreal High Lights Festival*. Gabor Zsigovics translated the play from German into English. Bobo Vian performed this highly controversial Brechtien piece, juggling three different realities on stage. Lotte was in fact a collective creation between the director and the actor; they created every aspect of the performance together about Charlotte von Stein, her affair with Goethe, and women’s place in society.
- 1999 June & July, with **EVENINGS OF QUÉBÉCOIS LITERATURE** Q Art Theatre continued its tradition of integrating new Québécois into their new culture by producing Michel Tremblay’s play, *L’impromptu d’Outremont* (translated into Magyar by Gabor Zsigovics) and an *Evening of Québécois Poetry* in Magyar for the Hungarian Community at Place des Arts.
- January, Q Art Theatre was invited to perform **JUST FINE** (four performances) at *Centaur Theatre*, as part of Centaur’s *Wild Side* festival. “...*the find of the festival...*” said Pat Donnelly in her review of the play. To this day, Just Fine has been one of the most successful and acclaimed events of this annual event of Centaur Theatre.
- 1998 June, Gabor Zsigovics and Bobo Vian were invited to the **14. István Horváth Jr. International Theatre Festival** in Hungary as lecturers and panel members to discuss alternative and amateur theatre versus mainstream theatre and to compare the state of theatre art in Canada and Hungary.

- 1998 **JUST FINE**, winter and spring performances in Montreal, directed by Gabor Zsigovics. The show also toured in Toronto (Ontario) and Hamilton (Ontario) early summer and in the fall. This story telling performance deals in a humourous manner with being a “new-Canadian”, and the absurd situations a refugee gets herself into.
- 1997 **ZSUZSA NOT ZSAZSA** (later re-titled: Just Fine), adapted and performed by Bobo Vian, based on the book by Susan Romvary as Q Art Theatre’s participation in Quebec’s first *Les Journées de la Culture*.
- 1996 **CATSPLAY** by István Örkény, a witty, absurd Hungarian comedy, was staged at Centaur 1, directed by Gabor Zsigovics. The play deals with the elderly people’s desperate need for love, compassion and happiness. It also examines the relationship between two sisters (one stayed in the old country, the other living in the West).
- February 19, Federal incorporation as a not for profit organisation, re-attaining charitable status.
- 1995 Q Art Theatre is re-established and registered in Montreal, by Gabor Zsigovics under the name: Théâtre Q Art - Q Art Theatre. Mr. Zsigovics has been leading the company as its Artistic Director with Bobo Vian as the Administrative and Associate Artistic Director on his side.

THE TORONTO YEARS

After the closing of the 1988-89 season, Q Art Theatre was on hiatus for six years.

- 1989 **THE DIARY OF A MADMAN**, a ‘Theatrical Essay’ performance for one actor, adapted from Gogol’s writing and directed by Gabor Zsigovics.
- 1988 Q Art Theatre’s artistic directors created Q ART ACTORS CO-OP, (“the smallest big theatre in Toronto”) where seventeen theatre artists agreed to produce plays with their investment of time and money. This co-operation resulted in the production of six plays:
THE TWELVE ANGRY MEN by Reginald Rose, directed by Gabor Zsigovics,
THE ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST by Dario Fo, directed by John Tench,
MEDEA by Euripides, directed and adapted by Scott Burke.
THE MAID(S), another ‘Theatrical Essay’ performance for one actress, adapted from Jean Genet’s play by Gabor Zsigovics, who also directed,
ALAS, POOR FRED by James Saunder, directed by Richard Malouin,
CHAMBER MUSIC by Arthur Kopit, directed by Richard Malouin.
- 1987 **VISITING RIGHTS**, a new Canadian play by James R. Wallen, a tragi-comedy of "small town" terrorism, directed by Gabor Zsigovics.
WOLFGANG’S NIGHT by Vidal Alcolea, directed by Gabor Zsigovics. The play and the performance (way before it was trendy) examined the question of suicide and assisted suicide.
MY DEAR FRIENDS a poetry performance based on the poems of Attila József, created and performed by Bobo Vian as part of the *Actor’s Lab’s Undercurrent Festival* in Toronto.
- 1986 **THE BOX MAN**, written by Gabor Zsigovics and James R. Wallen based on the novel by Kobo Abe of the same title, directed by Gabor Zsigovics as the opening production in the Actor’s Lab new theatre space. This workshop production was an acclaimed multi-media performance about our need to live our lives as voyeur, and hide ourselves in our self-created boxes.
STORIES OF MR. KEUNER, a musical cabaret based on Bertolt Brecht’s poetry and prosaic works, created and directed by Gabor Zsigovics. Allen Cole composed original music.

- 1985 **THE CRYSTAL BRIDGE** by Toronto playwright Vidal Alcolea and Luciano Iacobelli, a play examining the often-tortured psychology of refugees, directed by Gabor Zsigovics.
NAMING THE DARK, a poetry performance piece featuring the work of three budding contemporary Toronto poets, directed by Gabor Zsigovics.
- 1984 **SMIRKS**, a new Canadian play, written by James R. Wallen, directed by Gabor Zsigovics. A Zoo Story like confrontation on the Toronto Subway line.
THE CONNEXION TO MR. CHEKHOV'S THREE SISTERS, a 'Theatrical Essay', directed by Gabor Zsigovics. Mr. Zsigovics adapted Chekhov's Three Sisters into an avant-garde performance for one actress. The Connexion was Q Art Theatre's first of its 'Theatrical Essay' series mostly focussing around the artist's or more precisely, the actor's desperate need to create, to perform, and his life in a constant schizophrenic state of mind.
- 1983 Q Art Theatre was founded in Toronto by Kathleen A. Climie, Gabor Zsigovics and James R. Wallen. The latter two served as Co-Artistic Directors until 1989, (they are still collaborating on various projects) leading a group of professional writers, directors and actors who came together to developing and producing innovative theatrical presentations.

Art the Constant

Art is not an industry,
Art does not produce material goods,
Art has no monetary value.
Art is an investment in a country's cultural identity.

Art does not follow trends,
Art does not submit to policies and socio-political directives,
Art cannot be pre-programmed.
Art is an expression examining what cannot be measured through science.

Art is not a popularity contest,
Art cannot be measured by monetary success,
Artistic quality has nothing to do with personal taste.
Artistic impact can only be calculated in retrospect.

Art is risky because it always relates to the spectator.
Art is dangerous because it makes the spectator think,
Art is hazardous because it is Imagination flowing freely.

Art reflects on the artist, his epoch, and on his contemporaries,
Art connects one to one's people and to the human race.
Art can unify a people in the long term, political programs cannot.

Being an artist is not a choice, it is a calling, an existence,
Being an artist is not a hobby, it is a lifetime commitment.
Artists do not work hours, they work every minute of their wakeful life.
An artist's need to create is always stronger than the need to survive.

Artists do not create to please the critics,
Artists do not create to please their peers,
Artists do not create to please the social and political order of the day.

Artistic creations do not please the audience, they benefit the audience.
Artists connect to the spectators through their art, not their talk,
Artists build communities with their work, not with "tricks and treats."

Artists have no job security,
Artists receive no benefits,
Artists have no vacation,
Artists go on because they ARE their profession.

A country that does not respect its artists will lose self-respect.
A country that does not support its artists will waste away its identity.
A country that ignores its artists, suffers from national communal dystrophy.
A country that rejects its artists, kills social conscience and progress.
A country that repels its artists, commits collective cultural suicide.

Every society needs artists, for they can always be looked upon with pride,
For they hold up the torch so others can lead, for the artists are constant.

Every society needs art, for it is the perpetual search into the human condition,
For it opens the eyes to the world, for it is intrinsic, for art is constant.

Bobo Vian (Ms.), Performer, Theatre Artist, Q Art Theatre.

Addendum: Bio of Bobo Vian

Bobo Vian was a mere three years old when she first performed in front of an audience other than family members. She was reciting a couple of poems at her daycare as part of some kind of a celebration (there were so many) in her native Hungary. Before the historic presentation of *The Box Man*, last seen on stage as the central character in the contemporary tragedy, *Soap Opera* and Gravy Bath Productions' *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and *Coriolanus*, Ms. Vian has performed a wide range of roles such as Antigone, Medea, Mother Courage, Mrs. Mozart, Lucifer and many more in the plays of Genet, Anouilh, Brecht, Calderon, Euripides, Feydeau, Kopit, Martin Sherman, Boris Vian, Shakespeare, Anthony Kokx and others through her carrier, that began a long time ago in Hungary. She worked with great directors, like Stacey Christodoulou, Bachar Chbib, Charles Binamé, Céline Baril and Yves Simoneau, just to name a few. A multilingual performer, audiences will remember her from *Du Pic au Coeur*, *Nuremberg*, *Jackie*, *Wicked Minds* and most recently *Baby for Sale* among others. She is the administrative and associate artistic director Q Art Theatre (a post she would gladly bestow upon someone else). Ms. Vian has been teaching acting for both stage and camera and she also writes a few lines once in a blue moon. She adapted *Just Fine*, her story-telling solo performance, from the book *Zsuzsa Not Zsazsa* by Susan Romvary. Her film novella, *One More Step* received a public reading in 2003. By actively participating on committees, she continuously fights against prejudice, discrimination and for equal opportunity for all in the performing arts. She will soon be seen on the small screen in the last episode of *La Salle numéro 13* and *Watatatow*.