



Angelique's Tragic Tale of Resilience

Description

Lorena Gale's play finally gets the Canadian production it deserves

By **Byron Toben**

Question: When does one plus one equal three? Answer: When **Tableau D'Hôte Theatre** and **Black Theatre Workshop** team up to co-produce a wonderful Canadian play which wins a drama trifecta... script, acting and staging.

The Script



Montreal born **Lorena Gale**'s first play ***Angelique*** won her

several awards in the late 90s but amazingly had no Canadian productions until now... just a few in the USA at local black theatre groups. Ms. Gale went on to a successful acting, directing and writing career, largely in Western Canada. She died at only 51 in 2009.

The script tells the story of a black female slave Marie-Josophe Angelique, sold into slavery first in Portugal and then transported to New France in the 1720s. She was probably falsely accused of burning down the heart of the then tiny Montreal in 1734, tortured and executed.

As BTW artistic director **Quincy Armorer** mentions in his program notes, this tale of resilience is nothing new, re-enacted in later generations by Harriet Tubman, Viola Desmond and others. I saw strands of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* wherein money trumps ethics. Sometimes, the white colonial wives could be as vicious or more than the husbands, as in the 2014 Academy Award winning film *12 Years A Slave*.

Montreal born **Lorena Gale**'s first play ***Angelique*** won her several awards in the late 90s but amazingly had no Canadian productions until now...

The Actors

Director **Mike Payette**, (co founder with Mathieu Murphy-Perron of Tableau D'hôte and new Artistic Director of



Geordie Theatre) has managed to corral some of the best of our local actors for this powerful show.

Key to the show is Angelique herself, and who better than Cirque du Soleil alumna **Jenny Brizard** who can blend quiet subservience with screaming outrage. She has been purchased by iron works magnate Francois (**Karl Graboshas**) to attend to the household orders of his cold wife (**France Rolland**) but requires her to submit to his sexual demands as well. François's business partner, Ignace (**Chip Chuika**) encourages Francois to 'breed' Angelique to another slave Caesar (**Tristan D. Lalla**).

Caesar, more accepting of his role because no exit can work, is more appreciated by an aboriginal slave, Manon (**Darla Contois**) while Angelique gravitates toward Claude (**Olivier Lamarche**) a French indentured servant.

Key to the show is Angelique herself, and who better than Cirque du Soleil alumna Jenny Brizard who can blend quiet subservience with screaming outrage.

The Staging

The seven fine actors were joined by nine backstage talents. Space permits only mentioning Set and Costume Designer **Eo Sharp**, who is really on a roll now, fresh from the Centaur's *You Will Remember Me*. The compact set lent itself not only to grand house interiors, but also riverside washing and snow bound escape routes.

Original music by **Sixstrum Percussion Ensemble** managed to evoke scenes with the unusual combination of xylophone, marimba and drums, nary a wind, nor string instrument around.

Angelique ends on **April 2** at the Segal Centre studio.

More information and tickets at 514 739-7944 or blacktheatreworkshop.ca

Images: Andrée Lanthier

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club



Category

1. Art | Culture
2. Review
3. Theatre

Tags

1. Angelique
2. Black Theatre Workshop
3. Byron Toben
4. history



5. Lorena Gale
6. montreal
7. play
8. Segal Centre
9. slavery
10. Tableau D'Hôte Theatre
11. theatre

Date Created

March 2017