



## **Denis Marleau** **Artistic Director, French Theatre**

Denis Marleau joined the National Arts Centre in December, 2000. As co-founder of the creative company Théâtre UBU, he has directed almost thirty productions for the stage, “whose common denominator is a fierce dedication to the spirit of their author,” according to Raymonde Temkine, writing in the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du théâtre*, published by Larousse-Bordas.

His first performance-collages, in the '80s, were mostly presented in galleries and museums, both here and abroad – in Montreal at the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Fine Arts; in Paris at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and the Centre Georges-Pompidou – and invoked the historic and artistic avant-garde of the 20th-century (*Cœur à Gaz & autres textes DADA, Picasso Théâtre, Luna-Park 1913, Merz Opéra, and Merz Variétés*). Deeply committed to theatre that constantly questions the very fabric of its performance, language and philosophy, he approaches the stage as “a stranger in a strange land,” in productions like *Oulipo Show, Ubu cycle* and *Les Ubs*. The latter two productions, from the theatrical texts and other writings of Alfred Jarry, clearly show the links between Jarry and Marleau, in their shared intent to create theatre that goes beyond the usual norms and conventions of modern theatre.

During the '90s, he drew much of his dramatic material from the German tradition, beginning with Büchner's *Woyzeck* at the Théâtre National de la Communauté Française de Belgique, and following up with Wedekind's *Lulu* at the TNM. In 1995, his adaptation of *Maîtres anciens* by Thomas Bernhard, which won four “Masque” awards from the Académie Québécoise du Théâtre, cemented Marleau's reputation in Europe with its major European tour. Two years later, he was invited to open the Festival d'Avignon with a production of Lessing's *Nathan le sage*, presented in the Cour d'Honneur of the Papal Palace. And in 1999, in Weimar –that year's “cultural capital of Europe” – he presented *Urfaust, tragédie subjective* by Goethe and Pessoa.

Marleau's unflagging interest in all forms of contemporary expression constantly leads him to develop surprising collaborations, unexpected overlappings with the other arts: music, dance, and the visual arts. He put on several plays by Beckett, among them the “dramaticules” and *Pas moi*, brought together under the title *Cantate grise*, as well as *La Dernière*

**bande.** He worked with the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne on *La Trahison orale*, one of Mauricio Kagel's celebrated "plays with music." At the Festival of the Americas, he directed *Roberto Zucco* by Bernard-Marie Koltès, which inaugurated his definitive collaboration on stage design with sculptor Michel Goulet. His explorations in video "at the service of the character" resulted in one of the most striking productions of his career: *Les trois derniers jours de Fernando Pessoa* by Fernando Tabucchi, which played in France, Italy, Germany and Portugal. Last year he began a Maeterlinck cycle, which opened in January with *Intérieur*, at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert, and continues, until winter 2002, with *Les Aveugles*, an installation-performance presented as part of a program of creative residency at Montreal's Museum of Modern Art. For several years, Quebec writing for the stage has been a new development in the theatrical journey of Denis Marleau, who has twice successfully put on the works of Normand Chaurette at the Avignon Festival: *Le Passage de l'Indiana* and *Le Petit Köchel*. He staged *Catoblépas*, the first play by novelist Gaétan Soucy, as a co-production with the French Theatre in the Studio of the NAC.

Denis Marleau has given a number of workshops in this country, among others at the Université de Moncton, as well as in France, Italy and Belgium. He has also collaborated on numerous publications on art and theatre, including *JEU*, *Puck* and the *Magazine du Centre Georges-Pompidou*.