

## "In Their Place"

A three month season of work by women playwrights

Constructive Interference Theatre Company in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre presents  
**The European Premiere**

# The December Man/L'homme de Décembre

by

Colleen Murphy

Directed by Lavinia Hollands.

Designed by Olivia Altaras. Lighting by Chris Withers. Costume Design by Geri Spencer. Sound by George Dennis.

Cast: Michael Benz. Linda Broughton. Matthew Hendrickson.

The European premiere of the winner of Canada's most prestigious literary award – the Governor General's Literary Award for English Language Drama – Colleen Murphy's ***The December Man/L'homme de Décembre*** opens at the Finborough Theatre for a limited run of six Sunday and Monday performances from Sunday, 6 March 2011 (**Press Night: Monday, 7 March 2011**) as part of "In Their Place", a three month season of work by women playwrights. The three Sunday/Monday slots in the season are entirely devoted to introducing the UK to the work of one writer – multi-award-winning Canadian playwright, and our latest Playwright-in-Residence, Colleen Murphy – with a European premiere, a UK premiere and a world premiere of her work. This mini-season within a season marks Colleen's UK debut.

On 6 December 1989, a young man, 25-year-old Marc Lépine entered a college classroom at the The École Polytechnique, Montréal, Canada, carrying a gun. He separated the male and female students and claiming that he was "fighting feminism", shot all nine women in the room, killing six. He then moved through corridors, the cafeteria, and another classroom, specifically targeting women to shoot. Overall, he killed fourteen women and injured ten other women and four men in just under twenty minutes before turning the gun on himself...

Jean, a promising young student, survives the attack, but is crippled by guilt. Struggling to survive the aftermath, Benoît and Kathleen do everything they can to help their beloved son cope with guilt and rage...but Jean's young life becomes unglued. Using humour and the humdrum of everyday life, the play intuitively moves backwards in time to the fateful day when Jean, the only ray of hope in this working class family, escaped the massacre...or thought he did. This searing drama on courage, heroism and despair explores the long private shadows that public violence casts.

Playwright **Colleen Murphy** was born in Quebec and grew up in Northern Ontario. *The December Man (L'homme de décembre)*, won the 2007 Governor General's Literary Award for Drama, the CAA/Carol Bolt Award for Drama and the 2006 Enbridge playRites Award. The play premiered in February 2007 at Alberta Theatre Projects as part of their Festival of New Canadian Plays. It has also been seen at The Citadel, Edmonton, and at The Canadian Stage Company, Toronto, and translated into French and German. Her other plays include *Beating Heart Cadaver* (nominated for a 1999 Governor General's Literary Award), *The Piper*, *Down in Adoration Falling* and *All Other Destinations are Cancelled*. In 2008, Murphy was shortlisted for the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre. She is currently working on *Deliver Me* (National Arts Centre), *Armstrong's War* (Banff Centre) and *The Birthday Boy* (Shaw Festival). She has twice won awards in the CBC Literary Competition. Colleen's distinct, award-winning films have played in festivals around the world and include *Out in the Cold*, *Girl with Dog*, *War Holes*, *Desire*, *Shoemaker*, *The Feeler* and *Putty Worm*. Two of her plays have been seen as staged readings at the Finborough Theatre – *The December Man (L'homme de décembre)* in the first *Vibrant – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights* in 2009, and *Beating Heart Cadaver* in 2010's *Vibrant – An Anniversary Festival of Finborough Playwrights*.

Canadian director **Lavinia Hollands**, co-founder of Constructive Interference Theatre Company, directed its first production, a premiere of *Euler's Circles* at the Brockley Jack Theatre in 2010. Her previous productions include writing and directing *Adjusting Water Features* (Rosemary Branch), *The Woolgatherer* (Vancouver) and rehearsed readings at Theatre503, The New Diorama Theatre and Tristan Bates Theatre. Assistant Direction includes *Moon Fool* at Trestle Arts Base, First Assistant Director for film maker Angelo Valentino and assisting under director, Tom Bentley-Fisher in San Francisco.

The cast includes Michael Benz, Linda Broughton and Matthew Hendrickson. **Michael Benz's** many credits include *What We Are Up Against* (Old Red Lion), *Hay Fever* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *You May Go Now – A Marriage Play*

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# Press Information

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(Finborough Theatre), As You Like It (Shakespeare's Globe) and the UK tour of Romeo and Juliet (Royal Shakespeare Company); **Linda Broughton's** credits include A Day in the Death of Joe Egg (Nottingham Playhouse), 2nd May 1997 (Bush Theatre), Ivanov and The Chalk Garden (both at the Donmar Warehouse), and TV credits including Doctors, Silent Witness and Casualty; and **Matthew Hendrickson** whose recent credits include The Full Monty (English Theatre Frankfurt), Speed The Plow (Winchester Theatre Royal), Out of Order (Vienna's English Theatre) Salsa Saved The Girls (Old Red Lion) and The Freedom of The City (Finborough Theatre).

## **The Press on *The December Man/L'homme de décembre***

"*The December Man/L'homme de décembre* is a tragedy in which the humanity of the characters gives the play a surprising buoyancy. Heartbreaking yet never sentimental, spare yet complex, with a flawless structure, this is a brave and important play." Jury Citation for the Governor General's Award

"Colleen Murphy's superb study of how the ripple effect of an awful event can destroy families far beyond the inner circle of victims...heartbreaking" Peter Birnie, *Vancouver Sun*

"It is perhaps fitting that Murphy has chosen to tell her story of lives turned upside down by throwing her tale into reverse, beginning it with a tragic ending and ending it with the tragedy's beginning – at the very moment happiness ended. ...From there, Murphy takes us back in increments of time, with each stop along the way providing us an opportunity to scrape away more scar tissue and examine the exact nature of the wounds that have been slowly eating away their souls. ... this extraordinary work." John Colbourne, *The Toronto Sun*

"Colleen Murphy's *The December Man* is a play prompted by the 1989 Montreal Massacre. It invents a story peripheral to the main event and tells it backwards. That may sound doubly, if not triply, perverse. In fact the choices turn out to be inspired and the execution, by both the author and her interpreters, virtually flawless....There could be many other ways of dramatizing that one horrific December day, but it's hard to believe that there could be one more effective."

Robert Cushman, *The National Post*

## **PRESS NIGHT: MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2011 AT 7.30PM**

**PHOTOCALL: BY ARRANGEMENT. PLEASE EMAIL [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk)**

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**Sundays and Mondays, 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21 March 2011**

Evenings at 7.30pm. Tickets £13, £9 concessions.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

**Neil McPherson** on e-mail [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) or **07977 173135**

Press releases and images are available to download from

**<http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/pressresources.htm>**

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