

MEDIA KIT FOR *THE LIST*

2008 FRENCH LANGUAGE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARD-WINNING PLAY

the List



Oct 11–Nov 6, 2010
Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs

I keep a tight list.
Very detailed.
I stick to it.
Even more since she died.
But I'm having trouble.

written by Jennifer Tremblay
translated by Shelley Tepperman
directed by Kelly Thornton
starring Allegra Fulton

Nightwood Theatre in co-production with Canadian Stage

Production Sponsor:

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NIGHTWOOD THEATRE LAUNCHES THEIR 2010/11 SEASON with the TORONTO PREMIERE of *THE LIST* STARRING ALLEGRA FULTON

“Deeply moving...goes straight to the heart” – La Presse

“Filled with nuance...Tremblay demonstrates great mastery”- Le Devoir

The List

Written by Jennifer Tremblay

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Directed by Kelly Thornton

Starring Allegra Fulton

Set, Projection and Costume Design by Denyse Karn, **Lighting Design** by Kimberly Purtell

Sound Design by Eric Meadows

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Toronto, ON... Nightwood Theatre opens its 31st season with the 2008 French Language Governor General’s award-winning play, *The List*. This Toronto premiere by Quebecois dramatist Jennifer Tremblay, translated by Shelley Tepperman, tells the story of a woman who, through her neglect of a friend’s request, inadvertently becomes responsible for her death. *The List* stars **Allegra Fulton** best known for her solo tour-de-force *Frida K.* which garnered her international acclaim, winning awards in New York City, Toronto, Mexico City and across Canada.

Astounding and simple, the Governor General’s Award jury called *The List*: “*Absolutely inspired...a syncopated tale of everyday to-do lists in which the essential and the ordinary are inextricably entwined. Jennifer Tremblay achieves the universal with economy and lucidity*”. *The List* resonates and reverberates. The woman and her husband have moved from the city to the country with their three small children. She is isolated from her community and struggling in her marriage when she reluctantly makes a friendship with a neighbour named Caroline. Caroline requests a favour, which the woman adds to her to-do list. But in her busy life she misjudges its importance which ultimately leads to tragedy. **Kelly Thornton**, Nightwood Artistic Director and director of *The List*, remarks, “It is this ranking from insignificant to imperative that fascinates me and speaks volumes to how we overlook our most vital human relationships, while navigating through our busy lives.”

The List stars seasoned theatre, film and television veteran, **Allegra Fulton Thornton** has assembled an impressive creative team for this Toronto premiere including set, projection and costume designer **Denyse Karn**, lighting designer **Kimberly Purtell**, sound designer **Eric Meadows** and stage manager **Tanya Greve**.

JENNIFER TREMBLAY, Playwright

Jennifer Tremblay was born in 1973 in Forestville on the North Shore of the St-Lawrence River. In 1990, she published *Histoires de Foudre*, a collection of poems. In 1995, she graduated in Creative Literature from the University of Québec in Montréal and went on to publish short stories and articles for various magazines. She began her masters in literary research and devoted herself entirely to the works of Dany Laferrière. A long conversation with the author convinced her to leave her studies and focus on her own writing projects. She wrote close to 100 episodes of the children's television show *Les Chatouilles* (Radio-Canada) and a few episodes of *Bouledogue Bazard*. In 2004, she founded Les Éditions de la Bagnole. She published her first novel *Tout ce qui brille* and several children's books such as *Un secret pour Matisse* (A Secret for Matisse), *Deux biscuits pour Sacha* (Two Cookies for Sacha), *Sacha et son sushi* (Sacha and his Sushi), *Miro et les canetons du lac Vert* (Miro and the Green Lake Ducklings), *Madame Zia* and *Matisse et les vaches lunaires*, (Matisse and the Moon Cows). In 2008, she was awarded the Governor General's prize, the most important literary prize in Canada, for her play *La Liste* (The List) published by Les Éditions de la Bagnole.

SHELLEY TEPPERMAN, Translator

Shelley Tepperman is a translator and dramaturg with a long history in Canadian theatre specializing in script development, project development and translation for the stage. Her thirty translations—two of which were nominated for the Governor General's award—have been produced at CBC radio and on stages throughout North America. One of her specialties is intercultural dramaturgy and helping cultural works travel to new contexts. Ms. Tepperman translates from several languages and much of her work in theatre has involved helping audiences discover other cultural landscapes. From 1994 -1998 Shelley worked for CBC Radio Arts and Entertainment developing, adapting, directing and producing radio dramas for national broadcast. Ms. Tepperman also works in documentary film and television as a writer, story editor and director in several languages.

KELLY THORNTON, Director/Artistic Director

Kelly Thornton has been at the helm of Nightwood since 2001. She has been directing for the stage for over 20 years and was the recipient of the Pauline McGibbon Award for Directing in 2003 and was nominated for the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, as well as several Dora Mavor Moore Awards. At Nightwood, her direction, namely of *That Face, Wild Dog* (both in association with Canadian Stage), *Bear with Me*, *The Danish Play*, *China Doll* and *Mathilde* has received wide acclaim and several have toured nationally and internationally. She is also a skilled dramaturg, and has worked as an associate in play development at Canadian Stage and Factory Theatres and ran the Rhubarb Festival at Buddies in Bad Times for two seasons. She has directed at Canadian Stage (*A Comedy of Errors*), Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (*Peep Show*), Yukon Arts Centre/Sour Brides/Magnetic North (*So Many Doors*), Theatre Passe Muraille / Planet 88 (*This Hotel*) among others. Recently, she was named Associate Director of the Directing Program at the National Theatre School of Canada. In 2008, Kelly was recognized for her commitment to training and mentorship of young women in the performing arts by being named a YWCA Woman of Distinction (Arts & Letters).

ALLEGRA FULTON, Actor

Allegra Fulton is a multi-award winning actress whose career spans film, television and theatre. In the past 12 months she has lived in the world of Henry James starring as Mrs. Moreen in *Geometry in Venice* at Montreal's Segal Centre/Crow's Theatre, received critical acclaim for her role as Kate in the *Taming of the Shrew* at A Noise Within in Los Angeles, appeared in Wajdi Mouawad's searing play *Scorched* at the Tarragon Theatre and won the best actress award at the Cabbagetown International Film Festival for her role in *Loonie*. As well as an extensive body of work on screen, she has been seen in leading roles at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and Soulpepper Theatre Company as well as

countless theatres across Canada and the US. Her solo tour-de-force *Frida K.* by Gloria Montero earned Ms. Fulton international acclaim garnering awards in New York City, Toronto, Mexico City and across Canada. For more information, go to: www.allegrafulton.com

The List

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The List Details

DATES:	October 11 to November 6, 2010
MEDIA/VIP:	Thursday October 14, 2010
SHOW TIMES:	Monday to Saturday at 8:00 p.m., Wednesday 1:30 pm Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.
LOCATION:	Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs, 26 Berkeley Street
SINGLE TICKETS:	Prices range from \$22-\$49 (Limited pay-what-you-can on Mondays) Tickets are available by calling (416) 368.3110 or www.nightwoodtheatre.net
INFORMATION:	www.nightwoodtheatre.net or canadianstage.com

ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE

Nightwood Theatre – Artistic Director **Kelly Thornton**, Producer **Denyse Karn** and Chair **Karon Bales**

As Canada’s national women’s theatre since 1979, Nightwood has launched the careers of countless leading theatre artists in the country. We have won Canada’s highest literary and performing arts awards and more than ever our success proves the need for theatre that gives voice to women and celebrates the diversity of Canadian society. We remain actively engaged in mentoring young women and promoting women’s place on the local, national and international stage.

The List is part of the Berkeley Street Project initiative where Canadian Stage, Nightwood Theatre and Studio 180 Theatre are partnering to transform the Canadian Stage’s Berkeley Street Theatre into a dynamic home for contemporary performing arts.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The List is a rare play, unlike any other I've ever dealt with. Jennifer Tremblay's syncopated text possesses a list-like quality in the telling of the tale, so spare that upon first read it feels almost illusive. But the words, the imagery, the razor sharp analysis it presents of our modern life, haunts me and continues to resonate with me on a very deep personal level.

The scenario it describes: a woman misjudging the importance of a favour asked, reveals avoidance, procrastination, congestion and an overwhelmed life that allows us to belittle the needs of others, to disconnect from our humanity and to isolate ourselves until we are completely set adrift from one another. Tremblay has taken this to the point of crisis to demonstrate the point but the power lies in its metaphor for the modern life: the epidemic proportions of our failing compassion for one another.

The List won the French language Governor General's Award in 2008 and in translation by Shelley Tepperman it has remained intact in terms of its cultural aesthetic. Less concerned with the dominating realism of English language theatre Tremblay describes the work as theatre of the unconscious and this allows us, even in translation, to approach the work from a place where symbolism and surrealism conduct the theatrical expression.

In our stage conceptualization we have run the gamut of virtually nothing on the stage but the woman and the tree in the field, to a fully realized kitchen from which we spy into her world as voyeurs. This tangible environment is where we finally arrived, where the benign appearance of the kitchen, the normalcy it represents can become unhinged in the unconscious; objects turn on their heads as in a dream. The play deals with memory – she travels into her memory to seek answers for the culpability of her friend's tragic end but in memory our minds play tricks, our minds serve up images sometimes floating to the fore as clues and it is here that we will begin our approach towards performance of the text.

- Kelly Thornton, *Director of The List*

Q & A with Jennifer Tremblay (JT)

Q: *The List (La Liste)* has a unique form written in short sentences and sentence fragments, almost like a list one might make for chores. How important was form in your development of *La Liste*?

JT: Form is hugely important to me. When I have a particular emotion I want to convey I think first of the correct form to convey that. Emotion determines the form. The form shapes how I want to express it. They're very intimately connected. I really did a huge exploration of form; I had many early attempts at writing the play in different styles and forms and I wasn't able to convey the emotion I wanted—an emotion which is heartrending and really tears you apart. When I found this form I realized this is how I can manage to achieve it. I went through quite an exploratory process.

Q: The writing is so sparse and finely tuned. How many drafts did it take you to reach the final version?

JT: I started with a play called *Dark Chocolate* and another play called *The Dead Sea* which were early explorations of this material. And then when I started writing *The List* I went through thirteen drafts until I got to the final version. I worked to take out all the embellishments, everything unnecessary in telling the story. I went through these other two plays until I could just zero in on the essentials and pare it down. It was a process of removing anything extraneous.

Q: What would you like an audience to take away from the experience of seeing your play?

JT: We live in such an individualistic society that I'd like people to become more aware of their environment and the importance of human contact. You have your computer and your iphone and such but I hope that we can learn a greater need for human connection and human interaction. I'd like people to be more generous in how they think about others that they're not personally acquainted with. Think in a more altruistic way about those around them in their community.

Excerpted from an interview by Alexandre Cadieux with Jennifer Tremblay in *Le Devoir.com*, Jan. 9, 2010

*"Of course, my text speaks of loneliness," says Tremblay. "It is a very modern problem; we isolate ourselves by pretending we take time for ourselves and we forget how much we need each other." She regrets that individuals in contemporary society, especially among younger generations, have forgotten the virtues of generosity that expects nothing in return, this open unselfishness that makes one stop naval gazing and lend a hand to someone. My character is not a bad mother for all that," Tremblay says. "In *La Liste*, the character's children do not demand attention. It seems to be fashionable right now in some works of fiction to be contemptuous of children, presenting them humorously as little constraining monsters. This is perhaps a reaction to the often depicted guilt-ridden parents of past years. It discourages me. "*

Tremblay refers to moments of tenderness that are sprinkled through the narrative. *"The mother takes care of her children with love, but with structure and rules; yet this dedication is costly to her. She is not harsh or abusive, but she is exhausted. That is the reality, these are feelings and states common to all mothers and I hope that those who come see the show can relate to the character of the narrator. "*

Full interview available at:

<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/theatre/280739/theatre-une-voix-singuliere>

Shelley Tepperman talks about what makes an effective translator and what challenges she met in the translation of *La Liste/The List*.

As a translator you have to know your target culture well. When you're translating a play as opposed to other forms of literature, the words of a play are the surface signs. The real play is beneath and between the words. A play is just as much what is unspoken and in the body language of the actors interpreting what is unsaid. A play is completed through the staging. The director provides the final layer of writing and completes the process. When I look at a script I don't have to understand everything off the bat about the source culture but I need to know enough to understand how the play works. In this case I was very fortunate and saw the French production several times. Although you understand a lot from reading a play, I like to watch at least a DVD of a production. When a play is coming from a different culture there are lots of things that are not obvious. Like, why did he say that and what's really going on here? So there's a whole lot of sociological and anthropological investigation to be done if you don't automatically understand it. I like working with living playwrights so they can answer some of these questions. So the first step is understanding how the play works and why the play has so much impact for a Québécois audience. For instance, in this play, we realized that the Séraphin story has a unique impact. It's not just a film they went to see. In Québec everyone grows up knowing that story. Whether they've seen the film or not, the story is one of those legends one hears from childhood, so it's very familiar. For the English translation we actually had to recap the film to give the audience enough to go on because it's not something that's part of an Anglophone culture, a reference that everybody taps into. Jennifer chose that film for very clear reasons that became more and more evident through the rehearsal process.

After that, there are two things I say about a translation. I talk about rewriting in the author's footsteps and I talk about the target language as being almost like a new medium for an artist to work in. The English language doesn't behave the same way the French language does. Each has its own unique strengths and qualities, but they are different. When I understand what Jennifer was doing, I sometimes simply reproduce that effect. But then I think that English has this great expression I can use or I can do this with the language and add a little thing here. Each language has its own beauty, so let's compensate for the few losses with a few gains. So this way you still have the play that operates as Jennifer intended. With a play, you're never just translating the words, you're translating preconceptions and assumptions that are part of a shared cultural discourse. There are things that are just hinted at in the choice of a word or intonation that you have to capture. Even a week ago I found something I had completely missed. I just translated the words and I didn't know what was going on in the line. Jennifer had very economically written "Merci, vraiment" when the Woman is offered birthday cake after Caroline has died. I translated it as "Thanks, really." But in fact, she is declining the offer because she is appalled. I had forgotten that in French you often say "merci" when you don't want something. There are so many things you can miss if you're just translating the words.

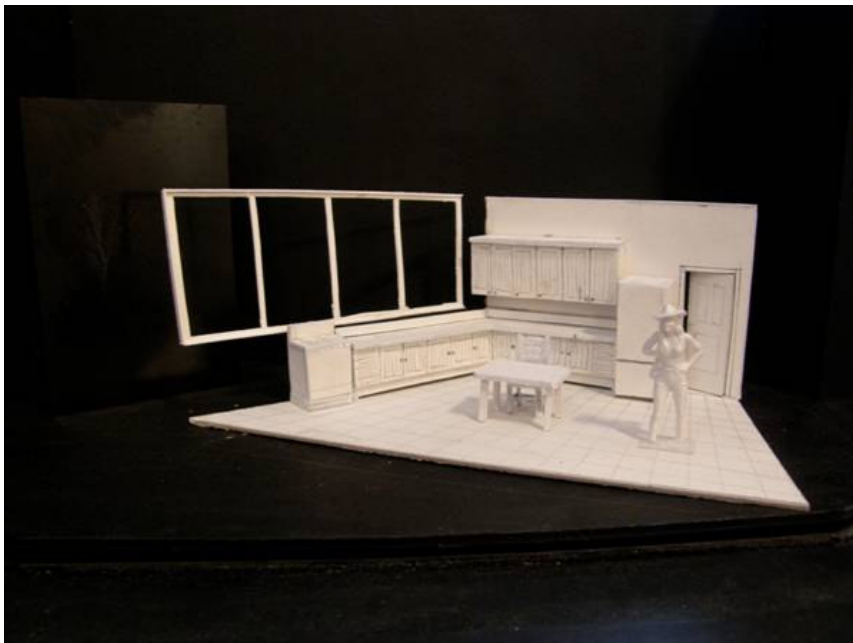
After all that, a translator is a writer. You must be a good writer, because you have to rewrite in the author's footsteps. You have to have a command of language that is strong and very extensive. You have to be able to write in many different voices. You're constantly moving things around and playing with the language to achieve whatever the effect in the original language is. You also have to have an innate sense of comic timing, even if it's not a comedy, which really means you have to have a good ear for dialogue and conversation.

*The main challenge in working on *La Liste* was reproducing the economical language by precisely paring down. English lends itself to a certain amount of economy but there are instances where French can explain something so succinctly. I then had to work at getting it across in the same pithy way in English. Because *La Liste* is so economical and not spelled out and because so much is going on within this character's mind rather than filled out with dialogue as in a conventional play it was sometimes hard to accurately follow the thought line. Jennifer also*

Shelley Tepperman cont'd...

has a very unique relationship to time: we flow from the past to the future to the present and there aren't clear markers. Verb tenses work a little bit differently in French than in English, so knowing where we were and what verb tense captured it was something that had to be refined over the different drafts.

DENYSE KARN on SET DESIGN



*Maquette of
Nightwood Theatre's production of
The List*

Designed by Denyse Karn

The design for *The List* has been an interesting adventure into the world that Jennifer Tremblay has created. She describes it as theatre of the unconscious. In looking to interpret this concept, I researched surrealist art, specifically Magritte and his use of image. The result was to create an environment that is able to represent the tangible and the intangible at the same moment. As in a dream, we feel like it is really happening even when we know it is impossible.

The set is a forced perspective naturalist kitchen in a black void. Through the use of projections, lighting and sound we transform the space, allowing the woman to experience heightened moments from the story she is telling and also allow us to represent her emotional landscape. The stove is operational, the sink has running water and the cupboards all open. All these elements will have aspects of transformation and juxtaposition. A flat outside the window has a cut out of a tree alone in the field mirroring her isolation within her house. As in a Magritte painting, the land of the surreal is always present, a tool to dissect the psychological questions at work in the piece.

- Denyse Karn, *Set, Costume, and Projection Designer of The List*

Film:

The movie mentioned in *The List* is *Séraphin – Un Homme et Son Péché* or *Séraphin: Heart of Stone*. 2002, dir. Charles Binamé, starring Pierre Lebeau, Karine Vanasse, Roy Dupuis. This is the movie the Woman and her friend Caroline attend. The script is based on a novel by [Claude-Henri Grignon](#). The film won a number of [Jutra Awards](#) and the [Genie Golden Reel Award](#) in 2003. It is quintessentially Québécois --- the suffering, the church, the miserly overlord and young lovers. It is set in a small Quebec community at the end of the 19th century. Due to her father's financial hardships, Donalda is forced to marry the village miser (also the mayor), Séraphin Poudrier, and to leave behind the young man, Alexis, that she truly loves. Donalda lives a life of misery and poverty with her elderly husband until she sickens and dies.

View the trailer at <http://www.imdb.com/video/screenplay/vi3331391769/>

What critics are saying about *THE LIST*

“Deeply moving...goes straight to the heart” – La Presse

“Filled with nuance...Tremblay demonstrates great mastery”- Le Devoir

Alexandre Vignault interviews Jennifer Tremblay for cyberpresse.ca, Jan. 9, 2010:

Jennifer Tremblay does not beat around the bush: in her play *La Liste* she wanted to not just touch the members of the audience but to overwhelm them. After much searching she feels that the most effective way in achieving this goal was to resort to using short, dry and direct sentences, a style inspired by email. She felt that to highlight the tragedy she had to remove all the frills and go with the basics. *La Liste* takes the form of a monologue relating the relationship of two women, the narrator on stage and Caroline, a woman already dead. They are two distant neighbours, because they live in the country, and two mothers as different as mothers can be. Caroline lives in a mess with a flock of children. The narrator seems to be compulsively orderly and spends her time writing lists of things to do. This obsession with lists betrays a desire for perfection in the narrator, Tremblay believes. “It’s a disease of the century, the era of Martha Stewart; but it’s also a way for her to survive. This is a person who likes order. Children are full of life, the opposite of order and organization. She is just trying not to lose control of her life. It is her way of being a good mother.” Being a mother in the twenty-first century is not a sinecure. The narrator suffers from loneliness, regrets that it is so difficult to see friends and has no one to lean on or talk to. “A mother who stays at home in 2010 is extremely isolated. The community of women no longer exists,” says the playwright. “People are always swamped. The terrible end of Caroline is not uncommon in today’s hectic lifestyle. A little oversight which becomes a tragedy.”

Governor General’s Jury comment on selection of Jennifer Tremblay’s *La Liste*:

“Absolutely inspired. The author proposes a simple, syncopated tale of everyday to-do lists in which the essential and the ordinary are inextricably entwined. Jennifer Tremblay achieves the universal with economy and lucidity.”

Claudia Larochelle writing in *Rue Frontenac*, an online journal, Jan. 18, 2010:

“Once in a while, you feel the dagger brush against the area of your heart where your own guilt is lying, teasing you, haunting. Ouch. Few are those who don’t have a sin, an omission or a fraud on the conscience. *La Liste* frees us a bit.”

Photography

Please find high resolution, downloadable images for THE LIST at:
<http://www.nightwoodtheatre.net/index.php/media/category/2010-2011>

Media for THE LIST

THE TORONTO STAR

<http://www.thestar.com/article/872202--allegra-fulton-pondering-how-it-all-began>

NOW Magazine

<http://www.nowtoronto.com/stage/story.cfm?content=177201>