

Invisible Cities Network

Support-networking for writers, self-publishers, musicians and artists since 2001

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Houdini at Saidye Bronfman Centre, February 10 - March 2, 2008

By: Christina on: Fri 29 of Feb, 2008 [04:58 UTC] (71 reads)



Houdini

Book by Ben Gonsior
Music and Lyrics by Elan Kunin
Directed by Bryna Wasserman
February 10 - March 2, 2008

"We are in an age of wonder, there is magic in the air..." From Houdini
Left: Kevin Kraft, Houdini Theo, Gab Desmond

MONTREAL January 2008- The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre, in association with The Montreal Highlights Festival and Ernst & Young, proudly presents Houdini – a world premiere musical about the life and magic of America's first great popular entertainer. For the first time in the Festival's nine-year history, a Segal Theatre production will be one of the showcased productions.

Box Office:

(514) 739-7944; <http://www.segalcentre.org>
Admission: (514) 790-1245; <http://www.admission.com>
Segal Centre for Performing Arts at the Saidye
5170 cote St. Catherine Rd.

Forget the glitter of Broadway, forget London's West End, just make your way to the Saidye Bronfman Theatre on Côte Ste-Catherine, to catch the final weekend of their grand-scale musical production, HOUDINI...



On route to the theatre to see HOUDINI, apart from the famous-name recognition, I had no idea what to expect. It turned out to be a grand dazzling carnival affair in the main lobby, followed by an extended prelude within the theatre itself.

Under Bryna Wasserman's direction, and decked out in Sarah Armstrong's gorgeous costumes, a troupe of vaudevillian entertainers roamed the crowds: the hairy man, bearded lady, diminutive master of ceremonies, fortune-teller, dancers, jugglers, singers, trapeze artists and acrobats—all offering cheery greetings, palm readings, and whatever else!

Everyone was purposefully upstaging everyone else in this ebb and flow of zany artistic effervescence

The performance itself (a speed-trip through half a century) is a carnivalesque blend of Houdini's celebrated life story and historic legend, served up as musical mystery and suspense. Reminiscent of grand-scale Broadway, it remains close up and personal enough to seem intimate, enlivened by some brassy music from a live onstage band.

A darkened stagey backdrop beside a cozy lit parlour serve to divide Houdini's life into separate compartments. This is where sensational versus mundane, domestic dramas simultaneously play themselves out: Houdini's life-long bond with his artiste wife and business partner brother, for example, as well as his deferential, even slavish affection for his comically possessive, guilt-mongering mother.

On the other hand is Houdini's emerging love affair with fame and the disciplined artistry of illusion. Early on, he responds to the public's taste for feats involving genuine danger. Conflict is ever-present, too, through his derisive public campaign against well-known Spiritualists, occultists, and so-called cheats, including even the famous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Rod Campbell). Moving in such lofty circles, no surprise that his adversaries were correspondingly powerful.

Film and stage actor, Kevin Kraft, portrays Houdini, who to the very end retains a Peter-Pan flair for never-ending youth. Rope by rung, he escapes the training-ground of vaudeville entertainment to enjoy the world-class status he eventually achieves. On route, he falls prey to the forces of ego, the ravages and high-speed thrills of delivering mass entertainment. To his credit, Kraft does the honours and performs Houdini's celebrated magic tricks on stage, ever as dramatic as they are suspenseful.

Bess (Lauren Stanford), as Houdini's wife, gives a finely understated performance, unforced and naturalistic; Theo (Gab Desmond) is noteworthy in the role of Houdini's brother. Mrs. Arthur Conan Doyle (Gabrielle Maes) is superb and all powerful during the séance scene—a theatrical attempt to convince Houdini that a genuine spiritualist 'contact' has been made with his recently deceased mother 'on the other side,' Cecilia Weiss (Valerie Boyle).

What comes across in all this is Houdini's contemporary impact as a fearless free-thinker, maverick and pioneer. Life, according to Houdini, was to be lived on his own terms; from his beginnings on poverty street to his phenomenal 'super-star' popularity to his inevitable decline and fall.

One of the world's most famous daredevils, he successfully challenged the so-called 'humanly impossible' within the mind-body-spirit continuum. As a fixed icon of modern times, the great Houdini symbolizes the universal—and inspirational—break-out impulse for liberty and freedom.

Articles

Invitation to join the Invisible Cities Network mail List

Invisible Cities celebrates its 7th anniversary PART 1: POETRY and SONG: April 2008

Basic Screenwriting Seminars, April 19, 2008

I, Claudia, at Segal Centre March 16 - April 13, 2008

'Night, Mother by Marsh Norman, Altera Vitae Productions, March 19 - 2008

Infinetheatre hosts FREE Special Event, meet Terri Ferguson, March 19, 2008

Ireland's Own Carmel O'Reilly Tonite! Theatre Ste.Catherine, March 4 - 2008

Relative Good, at Centa Theatre, FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 30, 2008

Houdini at Saidye Bronfman Centre, February 10 - March 2, 2008

Headshots, anyone?

Celebrating INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, March 8, 2008

RICHARD III in Bouffon Mainline Theatre, Feb 23, 2008

SOUNDS OF COLOUR 2008 SAT FEB. 23 AND SUN. FEB. 24

TABLEAU D'HÔTE THEATRE presents The Elusive, at Geordie, Feb 14 - 24, 2008

Peacemaker, by Geordie Productions, at D.B. Clarke Theatre, Feb 15 - 24, 2008

Invitation to a Vernissage ROUGE, Galerie Kaf Art, February to 2 March, 2008

Half-Life, playing at Centa Theatre, January 29 to February 24, 2008

Hedda Gabler at Mainline Theatre, January 29 to February 16, 2008

Message in a bottle ... Mensagem do mar, a play by Carlo Corvi

Introducing, JUST ONE MORE BOOK

Introducing, "No Limits" Byron Rempel

'Empreintes d'artistes' of Verdun, at Galerie 'Inte Pallas' until March 7, 2008

Announcing Carousel Magazine, University of Guelph

Welcome to 2008 at AS

Take a look at the 'New Improved' Montreal Series

Winchester Writers' Conference, UK, June 29, 2008

Theatre Review by Christina Manolescu © 2008 Invisible Cities Network

Houdini features some of the legendary escape artist's most famous routines. Don't miss this entertaining, musical ride through Houdini's life- from his humble vaudeville beginnings to the heights of his fame.

Director Bryna Wasserman, recognized for her staging of large-scale musicals, was eager to bring Harry Houdini's story to a bigger audience after the success of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre's *The Great Houdini* in 2000. The book for this all-new production is by Ben Gonschor, with music and lyrics by Elan Kunin. For Wasserman, the story speaks to modern audiences: "This is a throwback to the turn of the twentieth century, a time when theatre was there to involve and engage the public." She continues, "The idea of the world and technologies changing and moving forward was also prevalent at that time. People were moving away from live entertainment and seeking out the newer inventions, like movies." Playwright Ben Gonschor understands the complexities of mounting a musical of this scale: "It's one hell of a challenge but we're committed to making magic happen for you on stage. In a sense, we're "pulling a Houdini!"

For this very physical production, Wasserman is joined by a dazzling cast comprising Kevin Kraft in the title role, along with Valerie Boyle, Rod Campbell, Gab Desmond, Gabrielle Maes, Paul McQuillan, Christopher Ryan and Lauren Stanford. The ensemble features Paul Cagelet, Francois Dagenais, Claire Duncan, Rachel Gauthier, Holly Gauthier-Frankel, Alison Gelinis, Jason Noel, Brad Picken, Holly Raye, Lauren Roy and Jake Smith.

This production will present a live, six-piece band with such well-known Montreal musicians as Chet Doxas, Jim Doxas, Dave Martin, Morgan Moore and bandleader, John Roney. Albin Konopka is the music supervisor and John Gilbert is the music consultant.

The creative design team includes Yannik Larivée, set; Luc Prairie, lighting; Sara Brians, choreography; Sarah Armstrong, costumes and Rob Denton, sound. The magic consultant is Greg Kramer and Yves Nevue is the artistic/circus consultant. Lorna Wayne is the assistant director, Merissa Tordjman is the stage manager and Melanie St-Jacques completes the team as assistant stage manager.

"What does he mean, "be careful?!" I hang myself upside down in straight jackets one hundred feet in the air and he's telling me to be careful!" - Houdini

Bryna is Artistic and Executive Director of The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre. A graduate of New York University's prestigious Tisch School of Fine Arts, her extensive career includes work at the American Place Theatre, The Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Centre, the Mercer Street Theatre, the Vancouver Opera Company and the Folksbiene Playhouse. Recent credits with the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre include *God of Vengeance*, *Lies My Father Told Me*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Golden Land*, *Double Identity*, *The Dybbuk*, *On Second Avenue* (the Drama Desk Award-nominated, historic co-production with New York's Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre) and most recently *Those Were The Days*. In 2000 she was awarded the Montreal English Critics Circle Award (MECCA) of Distinction for her contribution to the development of the Montreal theatre scene.

Ben Gonschor – Playwright

Ben Gonschor is a writer, actor and musician. A native Montrealer, he has performed bass guitar with various local artists for over fifteen years and been a contributing writer to numerous local publications. A lifelong member of The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre, he most recently starred in the company's original musical production of *Lies My Father Told Me* and performed in the orchestra for *Those Were The Days*. He holds an M.F.A. in Motion Picture Producing from the prestigious Peter Stark Producing Program of the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. He currently serves as Director of Marketing and Communications & Executive Producer of Online and New Media for the Segal Centre. *Houdini* is his first play.

Elan Kunin- Music and lyrics

Elan Kunin began his professional musical career as the star and orchestrator in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* for the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre. He subsequently went on to become the lead actor, music director, composer and arranger for numerous plays including *On Second Avenue*, *Old Wicked Songs*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Double Identity*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Lies My Father Told Me* (music and lyrics) and *The Great Houdini* which won the Masque award for best semi-professional production. Elan was last seen in the Drama Desk nominated *On Second Avenue Off-Broadway* in New York and later in Los Angeles.

Kevin Kraft- Houdini

Kevin has performed extensively across the U.S. and has appeared on Broadway in *Forum* and off-Broadway in *Johnny Guitar*, *American Dreams* and *The Fartiste*. Other theatre credits include *She Loves Me* (Arena Stage), *Floyd Collins* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *As You Like It* (The Acting Company) and *The Full Monty* (West Virginia Public). TV and film credits include: *The Nanny Diaries*, *All My Children*, *Ed* and *Duston Checks In*.

Invitation to audition for short film

HOW TO BE A CLIMATE HERO, by Audrey Schul

Welcome to MarinoSounds.com

Ehab Lotayef: Guest on Arabic Radio Show TONIGHT - December 2, 2007

Microtechland computer supplies and repair

Theatre Review: A Christmas Carol, November 30 to December 16, 2007, MS

Urban Tales at the Centre Theatre, December 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 2007

An Enemy of the People Segal Centre, playing till December 9, 2007

Dec. 13, 2007. An Evening with Jack Locke: "So, What about that Green Party?"

ICN Xmas Get-together Friday, November 30, 2007

Bookidol.ca ... a novel

Santropol Roulant, Xmas 2007

Invitation to an online launch, from Raquel Riv

Book Launch, Peter Schintz introduces: *Staying Young for Life*, Nov. 17, 2007

Concerto Della Donna CHORAL CONCERT, Wednesday, Nov 21, Friday, Nov. 23, 2007

CWS presents: Open discussion on the legalities of writing, Thurs. Nov. 22, 2007

TRENDS: Print on demand A tale of self-publishing the web, by Paul Lima

Theatre Review, DATING JESUS, Theatre Ste-Catherine, November 6-18, 2007

Dating Jesus, at Theatre Ste-Catherine, Nov 6-18, 2007

Theatre Review: Gas, showing at Bain St-Michel till November 18, 2007

GAS, A World Première at the Bain, October 25 to November 18, 2007

ICN SELF-PUBLISHING WORKSHOPS 2008: Saturdays, offered monthly

Concerts in Old Montreal

Invitation from the PSC Community Theatre, November 9 - 18, 2007

2007 MECCA AWARDS THEATRE

BAGLADY NOVEL, PHOTOSHOW and BAGLADY VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

Theatre Review: CROSSROADS, Centaur Theatre, Oct. 24 -November 11, 2007

Crossroads, Centaur Theatre, October 24 to November 11, 2007

Theatre Review: The Di

of Anne Frank, Segal Centre, Oct.18 – Nov. 4, 2007

The Diary of Anne Frank at Segal Centre, October 18 - November 4, 2007

EXPOZINE 2007, MONTREAL'S SIXTH ANNUAL SMALL PRESS, COMIC AND ZINE FAIR!

Introducing VIVAVOCE Montreal

The Juggling Act of Life with Hans Bongers

A Fine Ending, a novel by Louis Rastelli

Theatre Review: Jehanne and the Witches, Geordie Theatre, October 17 - 21, 2007

Jehanne of the Witches, playing at Geordie Theatre, October 17-21, 2007

Montreal Serai Magazine, Fall Issue 2007

Exhibition by Carolina Echeverria, Sunday October 28th, 2007

Theatre Review: Unity (1918) at Monument-National, till October 7, 2007

UNITY (1918) Monument-National, September 27 - October 7, 2007

Random Acts of Poetry (RAP) October 1-7, 2007

Writers living on the Plateau de Montreal

A new Novel FOREVER AGAIN by Trevor Lockwood

Unraveling Herstory, Cazalet Theatre, September 27, 28, 30, 2007

8-week workshop in writing led by Ann Diamond, through October 2007

In memory of our friend and colleague, Cheryl A. Neill

Theatre Review: Saving Celine, Mainline Theatre, Aug. 29 - Sept 15, 2007

Saving Celine, a new comedy thriller at Mainline Theatre begins August 29, 2007

COME PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST PYRAMID OF SHOCK Saturday, September 8, 2007

Our Fall Open House, Montreal School of Performing Arts, September 8, 2007

Call for submissions, short videos from VIDEO PARADE

Screenwriting Seminars and Workshops, beginning September 8, led by Elizabeth Johnson

Dissidence, CD benefit launch, Friday, September 7, 2007

Next ICN Meeting, Van Houtte Cafe, Thursday, August, 2007

Sixth Annual Art Exhibition and Sale, Mount Royal Cemetery, August 25, 2007

Awakening after Life, by

Rene Jorgensen, Net Ra
July 26, 2007

The Emotions in Life, a
book of poems by Peter
Köhl

Cantara, a new literary
journal

Canadian Authors'
Association Annual Write
Conference 2007

THE LOST I, a novel by
Choghig Hanssian

Montreal Serai Magazin
Spring Issue 2007

The Montreal School of
Performing Arts/ Express
Theatre performance

Haiku from Carve Press

Welcome to CeraMystic
2007! From June 23 to
2, 2007

Frequently Asked Quest
about Invisible Cities
Network

2007 Montreal Celtic
Sessions Festival, June
to 23, 2007

Summer Solstice Soiree
June 21, 2007

Inydish at markets at th
fringe, June 7 - 17, 2007

THE CULTURE OF OUR
CITIES, Thomas More
Institute, May 8, 15, 22
2007

Four Day Spring Retrea
May 31-June 3, 2007

Tales From The Empres
A Benefit Evening of
Stories, Tuesday June 5
2007

Drama Classes starting
May, 2007

BAGLADY will be displa
at the PMA stand, Book
Expo America, June 1 -
2007

Rococo Barcamp, the
Unconference, Friday, M
18 to Sunday, May 20,
2007

Theatre Review: Amade
by Peter Shaffer, playin
May 20, 2007

Union United Church 10
Anniversary, Sunday, A
15, 2007

Blind Dates, a musical,
Friday April 13th and
Saturday April 14th, 2007

Montreal's 8th Anarchis
Bookfair, Saturday, May
2007

Poetry Reading at Chris
Church Cathedral, Holy
Saturday, April 7, 2007

Benefit Performance by
Persephone Productions
Wed. April 18 to 22, 2007

Poetry Plus, April 10, 2007

Theatre Review: I Am M
Own Wife, Saidye Bronf
Centre, March 11 – 25,
2007

Images de Femmes
exhibition, March 10 to
2007

Urban Cabaret/Cabaret
Urbain, Thursday March

2007

Book Signing, Saturday
May 5, 2007 Yes, Sister
Memoir of a Young Nurse

David, the play, remount
April 25 to 28, 2007,
Theatre Ste-Catherine

Call for submissions,
Journalists for Human
Rights. DEADLINE, April
2007.

9th Blue Metropolis Lite
Festival, April 25 to 29,
2007

Around the World in 80
minutes, A story-telling
journey, Tuesday, March
27, 2007

A POETRY AND PROSE
READING, Visual Arts
Centre, May 17, 2007

Crime Writers Interactiv
Showcase, April 27, 200
with Words Written Writ

Noche de poesía,
TRILINGUAL POETRY,
Programme du Mercred
mai, 2007

LEBANON: Open Skies
Struggle, FRIDAY, APRIL
27th, 2007

Invitation to participate
forthcoming book on
Adoption

FREE Théâtre en espagn
Casa Cafi, 4741, rue
Verdun, vendredi 30 ma
2007

Playback Theatre, Sund
April 1, 2007

The Montreal Zen Poetr
Festival, March 16th to
18th, 2007

MAM FINE CRAFTS
FESTIVAL, March 8-17,
2007

Book Signing, Ann
Diamond, March 17, 200

FRIDAY, March 16, 200
Concordia University

CKUT 90.3 FM: THE
FLIPPING BIRDS. every
Monday at 11:30 A.M.

ANNUAL EXPOSITION:
BALTIC PHILATELIC CLU
OF MONTREAL, March 3
April 1, 2007

For International Wome
Day, Sunday, March 11
2007

Theatre Review,
Bedraggled, Monument
National, till Saturday,
24, 2007

Irene Even at Toronto
Chapters Book Signing:
Life of the Twentieth
Century

The Yellow Door: POET
AND PROSE READING,
Thurs, February 22, 200

UK Publishing Company
BRAISWICK, founded by
Trevor Lockwood

1st Vocalectro Series,
Sunday Feb.18, 2007

Invitation to ELAN's cin
sept, Valentine's, Tuesd
13 February, 2007

"Writing and Publishing
Memoir/Novel" Sat. Feb

2007, at Masonic Temple

THE LAST BUS TO PARADISE, February 10, 2007

Scottish balladeer, Eddi Reid, on YOUTUBE

Tea & Talks with Author/Writer Marcy Goldman, Wed. February 7th, 2007

Mots en mouvement / Words on the Move, Wednesday, 7 February 2007

Making Life Easier for Artists with new Art Services Kit (ASK)

Montreal Serai Magazine Winter Issue 2007

Gryphon Tea Shop on Monkland, NDG

Writing Workshops, Screenwriting Seminars Winter 2007

Self-Publishing Service

Ballroom Level 2, New Year 2007

Soul acoustic show, Saturday, December 9th, 2006

Substance Books - Holiday Book Giveaway

A State of Nature, presented by Dr. Anthony Freeman, November 23-26, 2006

THE LENNONIST PARTY: New Exhibition by Carol Echeverria, Sun. Nov 12, 2006

