



THE ASSEMBLY

A documentary theatre project about political polarization.

Political polarization has reached a boiling point and is putting increasing pressure on the practice of democracy all over the world. Produced by Porte Parole, playwright Annabel Soutar (*Seeds*, *Fredy*, *The Watershed*, *Sexy béton*) teams up with actors Alex Ivanovici and Brett Watson to co-create a thrilling theatrical response to the rise of extremism and tribalism in political discourse today.

The play's concept

The title of the project — *The Assembly* — refers to the act of gathering people into a single space to confront their ideological differences. To create an Assembly, the play's creative team invites four people of different cultural, political and social backgrounds to attend a curated supper during which they discuss issues that most divide them. This curated encounter is recorded, the verbatim transcript is edited (along with transcripts of follow up interviews conducted with each participant 2 weeks after the encounter) into a script, and performed by professional actors.

Audience participation

During performances of *The Assembly*, audience members are invited onstage to participate in a long table discussion. This spontaneous discussion, inspired by the content that has been performed before, acts as a second assembly that is the true 'raison d'être' of the project. This long table discussion has been conceived of as an integral part of the production as opposed to a conventional audience talkback. It allows the audience to seek and sometimes find resolution or to add points of view that they feel were missing in *The Assembly's* first act.

Options for presenters

Produced by Porte Parole Productions, Canada's leading documentary theatre company, *The Assembly* is part of a long-term project that will spawn a series of plays. Presenters have the option of remounting past episodes or they can commission Porte Parole to create new content that directly addresses social and political issues in their community.

CONTACT
LA MAGNANERIE
magnanerie-spectacle.com
Victor Leclère
 +33(0) 1 43 36 37 12
 victor@magnanerie-spectacle.com

Visit porteparole.org to learn more about the project and to view the trailers.



Creating new assemblies with presenters

If presenters choose to commission a custom Assembly for their community, *The Assembly's* creative team will work closely with them to identify ideal Assembly participants who will generate new material that is deemed relevant by the presenter.

This research and writing process requires a minimum of 3-4 months before presentation and includes the following steps:

- A first visit by Ivanovici, Soutar and Watson to the presenter's region to do preliminary research **(3 people for 4-6 days)**
- A period of recruiting to identify and approach 4 participants **(1 month)**
- A second visit to the region to hold 2 separate Assembly sessions (in case one does not generate high enough quality material) **(2 people for 4 days)**
- Interviews done by Skype 2 weeks following the Assembly session with each participant **(2 weeks)**
- A period of script development: creative team edits transcripts into script of the play **(8 weeks)**

Rehearsal and production would ideally occur within 6-8 months of when the material was generated.

Presenters have the option to create:

- **Scenario 1:** An Assembly (English version) or an Assemblée (French version).
- **Scenario 2:** An Assembly in a language other than English or French, with the option to translate the play into English for Porte Parole's future use. *The Assembly's* creative team will work closely with the presenter's choice of playwrights and moderators, to ensure that the Assembly concept is well-executed.

Remounting existing Assemblies

To date, the following episodes have been created:

- *The Assembly - Montreal* (Toronto's Crow's Theatre Oct. 25-Nov. 3 2019, Montreal's ESPACE GO Nov. 10-17 2019, Canada's National Arts Centre in February 2020) addresses the issues of immigration and free speech. Running time 1 hour 30 minutes including audience long table discussion of 20 minutes.
- *L'Assemblée - Montréal* - French content (Montreal's Théâtre ESPACE GO Nov. 13-Dec. 2 2019) focuses on the themes of Quebec national identity, reasonable accommodation and feminism. Running time 1 hour 45 minutes including audience long table discussion of 20 minutes.
- In development - *The Assembly - University of Maryland*: A third edition is being created at the Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Maryland which addresses the themes of liberalism and identity politics on university campuses. Projected presentation date: fall 2019.

Currently, Porte Parole has two Assemblies on its touring roster that it can offer to presenters:

The Assembly - Montreal

Ready for touring in 2020-21

Praise from the critics

This documentary play — intense, sad, often funny, and definitely uncomfortable, doesn't end with one clear kumbaya moment.[...] But it also does something necessary — it puts the responsibility and focus on ordinary people to explain and defend their views and to interact with those who don't share them.

- *The Toronto Star*, TORONTO 2018

The Assembly is charged, resonant and unnervingly entertaining. Its MO is to dramatize democracy in crisis, but its goal is to rekindle our faith in people's capacity for change.

- *NOW Magazine*, TORONTO 2018

L'Assemblée - Montréal (in French)

Ready for touring in 2020-21

Praise from the critics

Scotchée à mon siège, captivée par la partie très polarisée de ping-pong politique et émotif que se livraient les quatre actrices incarnant chacune un archétype et le discours qui l'accompagne, je ne me suis pas ennuyée une seule minute.

- *La Presse*, MONTREAL 2018

« L'Assemblée nous tient en haleine du début à la fin tel un suspense politique bien ficelé. »

- *JEU*, revue de théâtre, 2018

The Assembly's design credits

DIRECTOR - Chris Abraham

LIGHTING DESIGNER - Luc Prairie

SOUND DESIGNER - Antoine Bédard

SET DESIGN - Simon Guilbault

The Assembly's creative team

Since 2016, Alex Ivanovici, Annabel Soutar and Brett Watson have been working together on creating the concept for *The Assembly*.



ALEX IVANOVICI
PLAYWRIGHT & ACTOR

Alex Ivanovici, co-founder of Porte Parole Productions, has worked as a bilingual actor, theatre director, and teacher in Montreal since his graduation from the Dome Theatre School in 1992. Alex has directed 3 productions, acted in 8 (including Porte Parole's *Seeds* and *The Watershed*), helped conceive of a few, co-written 2 and created one interactive installation with Porte Parole. For 20 years, Alex has been developing the concept of the Artful Citizen with Annabel Soutar — the use of art to encourage citizenship.



ANNABEL SOUTAR
DRAMATURG

Annabel Soutar is a Montreal-based playwright and theatre producer. In 2000, she co-founded Porte Parole Productions with actor Alex Ivanovici and she has since acted as its Artistic Director. Annabel has written and collaborated on the creation of over a dozen documentary plays including *L'Assemblée*, *The Assembly*, *Fredy*, *J'aime Hydro*, *The Watershed*, *Seeds*, *Sexy Béton*, *Import/Export*, *2000 Questions*, *Santé!* and *Novembre*. In 2015, The Globe & Mail named Annabel to its list of Artists of the Year.



BRETT WATSON
PLAYWRIGHT & ACTOR

A professional actor for over twenty years, Brett Watson has extensive credits in theatre, film, TV and voice. Stage credits include: *The Dream Project* (Yonder Window/ NYC/ Mexico), *The Bacchae* (Scapegoat Carnivale / Meta nomination), Elizabeth Rex (Tableau d'hôte), *Battered and Zarathustra said some things, no?* (Infinithatre / MECCA nomination), *Triplex Nervosa*, *Paradise by the river*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Cheech* (Centaur theatre), *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Amadeus* (Segal Centre), *Sexy Béton* (Porte Parole), and *So Many Doors* (Sour Brides / national tour).

Theatre as a hub for dialogue

Porte Parole creates and produces compelling documentary plays that inspire diverse audiences to think critically together about current social, political and environmental issues.

Based in Montreal, Porte Parole was founded in 2000 by playwright Annabel Soutar and actor Alex Ivanovici. Since then, Porte Parole has created fourteen documentary plays about acute conflicts, including GMOs, fresh water, racial profiling, immigration and energy politics.

Porte Parole's plays have been praised for finding creative ways to animate complex documentary material so that it becomes engaging, entertaining and highly theatrical.

porteparole.org

Porte Parole plays on tour in 2019-21:

SEEDS by Annabel Soutar (in English)

GRAINS (in French) / SEMILLAS (in Spanish)

Seeds is a dramatic re-enactment of the four-year legal battle between Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser and Monsanto Inc. While debates about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are multiplying everywhere, life-changing experiments are being conducted in the food we eat... *Seeds* leads us through a suspenseful labyrinth of legal conflicts around patent rights, scientific showdowns about GM food, and property clashes between farmers and the biotechnology industry. The answer to Schmeiser's "Who owns Life?" question will determine the future of our food system.

Since its creation in 2012, *Seeds* has toured three times across Canada and has been seen by more than 39,000 people.

J'AIME HYDRO by Christine Beaulieu

J'aime Hydro is a French documentary play that asks important questions about the sustainability of Hydro-Québec's practices and future plans. The play follows Christine Beaulieu's investigation into the ecological, social, political and financial implications of Hydro-Québec's energy infrastructure projects.

More than 22,000 people have seen *J'aime Hydro* throughout Quebec (2017-18), with almost all of its performances sold-out.

J'aime Hydro has been praised by the media, and was awarded the "Best show of the year 2017" by the Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre and Christine Beaulieu won the Prix Michel-Tremblay for *J'aime Hydro* - Best Dramatic Text.

