

RACHEL WRITES

On the journey, the group stops for seven mesmerizing short performances.

RURART in generous nature - A review

By Rachel Garber

All the world's a stage, said Shakespeare.

The RURART performance at La G n reuse near Sand Hill gives a special twist to that famous quote.

There, nature is indeed generous, almost overwhelmingly so. Orchard, meadow, marsh, forest, hayfield – all were the stage for the nine artists this weekend collaborating in this season's performance of the group. And for the 27 or so observers on Saturday evening. Well, audience afoot, shall we say? Because they tromped across the stage – orchard, meadow, marsh, forest and hayfield – after the dancers. It was not quite a two-kilometre trajectory, perhaps.

On the journey, the group stops for seven mesmerizing short performances. Clad in purple, a dancer materializes in an apple orchard. Is she a tree? An apple falling from the tree? A caterpillar crawling over the apple? Her agile performance intrigues by leaving room for creative interpretation. It is a dancer at one with nature.

That is Am lie L-Choquette, contemporary dancer and visual artist. She is also the artistic director of RURART that takes place each season – now beginning its second year – at her family farm, the venerable organic truck farm, La G n reuse. So this is the fifth performance.

Francine Lemay, Am lie's mother and audience guide, leads the group to a pond. There, on its shore, two dancers began a saga that endures most of the evening. She loves him.



PHOTOS BY RACHEL GARBER

She loves him. He ignores her... RURART's dramatic dancers are Nathalie Louette and Bruno Briquet from Belgium.

He ignores her. He leaves. She chases him. A kilometre or so down the path, they face each other for an extended gaze as the audience files between them. And finally, they... But no, that would be giving away the ending. Suffice it to say, interweaving among the other performances, theirs eloquently evokes the emotional drama of sexual relationships, whether human or animal.

The couple are Nathalie Louette and Bruno Briquet from Belgium.

In the swamp are strange big birds with disquieting calls. How many? Why? Where?

Other mysteries inhabit the forest. Cross a little log bridge, and there is a double bass moaning in lower registers. The bassist is Beno t Conversent from Switzerland. Isabelle



Contemporary dance in an orchard – RURART dancer Am lie L-Choquette.

Gilson in a white flowing dress dances, also in low tones. It is sound and movement, intertwined. A delight.

On to another area of the forest. Sculptures, and the sculptress herself transformed into a sculpture, as it were, dressed in white and seated on a chair in the now sombre forest. The Silence, her piece could have been

called. The land artist is Laura Delarosbil from Montreal. It is the sherbet to clear the palate for another double bass performance. But it is also a dessert in and of itself, for someone who craves the Silence from which all is created.

Then on to the grand finale, Greg "Krypto" Selinger. He and his Body Slam group won the

multidisciplinary show prize during the 2011 Montreal Fringe Festival. Now he's break-dancing beside, against and on a giant round bale of hay. To the tones of the double bass. It's a talented and high energy ending to an enchanted evening, a small area of action in a wide expanse of field.

This is an organic performance, as befits the stage it meanders across. Nature has the upper hand, here, with all its plenty and its surprises. The performances are wordless, although sounds and silences are constant companions.

The evening began with a friendly welcome, in both French and English, and ended in a congenial farewell over samosas and around a campfire. Like the audiences, some of the artists make repeat appearances; others come for just one event. Next weekend, for example, the three artists from Belgium won't be there, but a percussionist is likely to make it. Expect experimentation, expect the unexpected.

The Saturday performances are at 6:15 p.m. and the Sunday ones, at 2 p.m. They last about an hour and a half, depending on how fast you walk. A walking stick might come in handy. Come dressed for the weather. RURART goes ahead, rain or shine.

La G n reuse is at 540 Labont  Road, in Cookshire-Eaton, just 20 minutes east of Lennoxville. From Route 108, turn north at the Sand Hill Cemetery. For a preview of the farm, visit lagenereuse.com or rurart.ca. Suggested donation is \$10.

ra.writes@gmail.com

Eastern Townships School Board's summer campaign encourages its students to stay in school

Back to school for a brighter future

MAGOG

For a fourth consecutive year, the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) has taken a proactive approach in encouraging its secondary students to stay in school.

The "Back to school for a brighter future" summer campaign, developed by the ETSB, targets secondary 4 and 5 students and their parents with various strategies. Internal sta-

tistics show that close to 60 per cent of the ETSB's dropouts come from these grade levels.

Each year, before school starts, over 900 postcards are mailed to parents of students entering secondary 4 and 5 asking for their help and support in encouraging their child's transition back to school.

Parents can play an important role in their child's educational success. By working as a team, students can get the sup-

port they need to make the right decision to pursue their studies.

During this same period, close to 100 at-risk students are contacted to touch base with them and see how they are doing. This is an opportunity to connect with them on a personal level and encourage them to continue with their studies. It can also open the door for discussing options and resources available to help them succeed

at school.

In addition, a follow-up is done with any high school student enrolled who is not present for the beginning of the school year. The purpose is to encourage the student to return to school and to offer information about services available to them. The ultimate goal is to have all ETSB students get a diploma or a qualification, so that they may have a brighter future.

Since 2004-2005, the ETSB's dropout rate has dramatically improved, going from 39.4 per cent to 22.8 per cent in 2010-2011. This represents an overall decrease of 42 per cent in six years.

School perseverance is a community affair. Parents and all adults involved with youth have a role to play in educational success.

Source: Eastern Townships School Board, Sharon Priest.