

# THÉÂTRE PROSPERO

SAISON 2021-2022

PRESS RELEASE

A La Veillée production  
in coproduction with  
Théâtre français de Toronto

## SOLSTICE D'HIVER

A CAUSTIC DRAMATIC COMEDY  
BY ROLAND SCHIMMELPFENNIG

DIRECTED BY JOËL BEDDOWS  
JANUARY 11 TO 29, 2022

WITH CATHERINE DE LÉAN, BENOÎT MAUFFETTE  
LOUISE NAUBERT, GREGORY HLADY AND MARCELO ARROYO



Catherine De Léan © Maxyme G. Delisle / Consulat

**Montréal, December 16, 2021** — Théâtre Prospero rings in 2022 by presenting *Solstice d'hiver* by Germany's **Roland Schimmelpfennig**, one of Europe's most performed and best known contemporary playwrights. After four years of artistic dialogue, director **Joël Beddows** well known throughout Canada's francophone communities, and **Carmen Jolin**, La Veillée's co-General Manager, wanted to bring to life their project of building bridges between Canada's two cultural capitals with this contemporary masterpiece. After its run in Montréal from **January 11 through 29**, *Solstice d'hiver* will be presented by the Théâtre français de Toronto (TfT) at Toronto's Berkeley Street Theatre from **February 4 to 12**.

### THE PLAY

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It's Christmas Eve. A bourgeois apartment. Inside, Bettina is annoyed: her mother has invited a stranger she met on the train. An odd music aficionado with impeccable manners from a bygone era who proves to be both fascinating and astonishing, yet arouses suspicions, visions and panic.

Published in 2007, before the emergence of today's known right-wing leaders, *Solstice d'hiver* lays bare the imminent dangers of the rise of extremism. This caustic comedy is a biting critique of a Western World preoccupied more with its comforts than with ensuring its survival. The obliviousness of its characters reflects a society that has allowed itself to be seduced by a numbing status quo.

The work captivates by its form and its content. The writing borrows from film with its recurring leaps in time. It is precisely this dizzying narrative structure, as well as the themes it carries, that inspired Joël Beddows to stage this script, which lies at the intersection of theatre, essay, novel and cinema. "This project

allows me to channel my own rage against present political apathy or the absence of nuanced political thought," he explains.

**The performances, including two in Montréal with English surtitles (January 22 and 25),** reflect the wish of both the Groupe de la Veillée and Tft to develop and stimulate exchanges as well as promote talent onto the national stage. The team of performers and designers brings together artists from both cities.



Joël Beddows © JF Le Chasseur

## JOËL BEDDOWS – DIRECTOR

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As a director and dramaturg, Joël Beddows has been crafting artistic experiences that blend symbolism, poetry and social commentary for over two decades. Whether working on new creations, the repertory or theatre for young audiences (TYA), he calls into question the points of reference and clichés of contemporary existence, real and aesthetic alike. Over the course of his tenure as artistic director of Théâtre la Catapulte (1998–2010), he established himself as a unique voice in theatrical creation. In 2007, he began directing for French and English-language theatre companies throughout Canada and abroad. As artistic director of the Théâtre français de Toronto from 2016 to 2021, he devoted himself to exploring the works of Molière, Corneille and Marivaux while broadening the company's programming to include international touring as well as contemporary works written by women and BIPOC playwrights. Beddows is also a founding member of Transfrontaliers, an organization promoting international exchanges among French-language theatres, bridging the North-South divide. In 2018, he directed Michel Ouellette's *Le Dire de Di* presented at Théâtre Prospero. He is a professor in the new acting conservatory program at the University of Ottawa's Department of Theatre, for which he was one of the primary architects, and served as department chairperson from 2011 to 2016.



Roland Schimmelpfennig © Courtesy Quendra

## ROLAND SCHIMMELPFENNIG – PLAYWRIGHT

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Born in 1967 in Göttingen, Germany, Roland Schimmelpfennig first worked as a journalist in Istanbul before studying stage directing at the Otto Falckenberg School in Munich in 1990. Upon completing his studies, he was engaged as assistant director and subsequently as artistic director at the Munich Kammerspiele. His early plays garnered numerous awards for drama, among them the Else Lasker-Schüler Dramatist Prize for *Fish for Fish* (Fisch um Fisch) in 1997, the Nestroy Theatre Prize for Best Young Talent for *Push Up* in 2002 and for Best Play for *Visiting the Father* (Besuch bei dem Vater) in 2009. *The Golden Dragon* (Der goldene Drache) was named Play of the Year in 2010 by *Theater Heute* magazine. Schimmelpfennig has worked as a dramaturge and artistic consultant at Berlin's Schaubühne under director Thomas Ostermeier. He is one of the most performed contemporary playwrights in Europe and one of the most prolific. His works for theatre and radio have been presented to great success in more than 40 countries around the world, from Vienna's Burgtheater to Tokyo's National Theatre.

Théâtre Prospero has presented other works by Schimmelpfennig, including *La femme d'avant*, directed by Theodor Cristian Popescu in 2008, *Le dragon d'or*, directed by Mireille Camier in 2014, and *Temps universel +1*, a dramatic reading by Christian Lapointe in 2016.



Catherine De Léan, Benoît Mauffette, Louise Naubert, Gregory Hlady and Marcelo Arroyo

## THE SOLSTICE D'HIVER TEAM

**Translation** Camille Luscher et Claire Stavaux | **Direction** Joël Beddows | **Dramaturgy** Joël Beddows et William Durbau | **With** Catherine De Léan, Benoît Mauffette, Louise Naubert, Gregory Hlady and Marcelo Arroyo | **Set Design and Props** Cédric Delorme-Bouchard | **Lights** Chantal Labonté | **Costumes** Béatriz Arevalo | **Sound Design** Nicolas Di Gaetano | **Projections** Guillaume Saindon | **Assistant to the Director** Alexandra Ghezzi.

### IN MONTRÉAL / JANUARY 11 TO 29, 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 p.m.

Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 p.m.

Saturdays at 4 p.m.

#### With English surtitles

January 22 at 4 p.m.

January 25 at 7 p.m.

### IN TORONTO / FEBRUARY 4 TO 12, 2022

#### With English surtitles

Visit the TfT website: <https://theatrefrancais.com/fr/spectacles/solstice-dhiver/>

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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#### RESERVATIONS AND TICKETS

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