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PRESENTATION KIT

P@ndora
by Sarah Berthiaume

Produced by Youtheatre
youtheatre.ca



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




Montréal



YOUTHATRE

Founded in 1968, Youtheatre is the first professional theatre company dedicated to young audiences in Quebec. With Michel Lefebvre as its Artistic Director since 1992, the company aims to engage its audience through compelling theatre which provokes, questions, challenges and entertains. Its major area of focus is the creation, development and production of new works for young people by the finest Canadian playwrights. More recently, *The Pencil Project* and *Dreaming Now* reflect Michel Lefebvre's current preoccupation with the integration of new media in his work with the hope of making theatre for young audiences relevant and contemporary.

Youtheatre Facts

-  Contemporary theatre for young audiences taking into account their reality;
-  Up to 12,000 kids and teenagers attend a performance every season;
-  Near 30 Canadian premieres;
-  Bilingual company since 1999-2000 season;
-  Productions performed in the most prestigious venues in Canada and UK.

In 2018-19, Youtheatre will celebrate its 50th anniversary, a first for a Theatre for Young Audiences company in Quebec. For the occasion, Youtheatre will premiere two productions to its local audiences as well as the French production of *P@ndora*. Take part on the festivities by recognizing Youtheatre's contribution to the Canadian TYA community.

The Canada Council has recognised Youtheatre as a leader among Canadian theatre companies producing work for young audiences, citing the company's "achievements in maintaining high production standards" as well as, "the depth of its commitment to developing new work and original voices".

Youtheatre operates under the jurisdiction of both the (CAEA) Canadian Actors' Equity Association and (UDA) Union des artistes through its membership of (PACT) Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and (TUEJ) Théâtres Unis Enfance Jeunesse. Youtheatre also participates into its community by being member of (QDF) Quebec Drama Federation, (CQT) Conseil québécois du théâtre and ASSITEJ Canada.



P@NDORA

Produced Youtheatre

Written by Sarah Berthiaume, Translated by Nadine Desrochers

Directed by	Michel Lefebvre
Lighting Design by	Martin Sirois
Sound by	Guillaume Lévesque
Featuring	Bria McLaughlin & Dan Mousseau
Public	14 years +
Duration	50 minutes
Educational Tool	Study Guide available online at youtheatre.ca
Themes	Cyberpornography, self-esteem, virtual vs. real life.

Synopsis

Curious about sex, 16 year-old Pandora uses her iPhone to privately gather information. To her surprise, an innocent search turns into a disturbing journey through the surreal realm of cyber-porn. Conflicted by what she sees, Pandora realizes the dangers of defining oneself through the prism of the Internet, and the importance of remaining plugged into the real world.

Public Choice 2015 - The Theatre Reader (Toronto)

METAs 2016 Nominee - Outstanding PACT Production & Outstanding Lighting Design (Martin Sirois)

Archival Video

<https://youtu.be/Ed42IlxvdRI>

TOURING HISTORY

2011-2012 Season

Théâtre Calixa-Lavallée	10 performances	Montreal (QC)	March 2012
School Tour	20 performances	Quebec	March 2012

2015-2016 Season

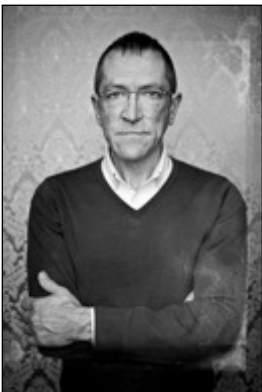
Young People's Theatre	15 performances	Toronto (ON)	December 2015
Segal Centre for Performing Arts	8 performances	Montreal (QC)	February 2015
School Tour	15 performances	Quebec	February 2015

CREATIVE TEAM



© Jérémie Battaglia

Formally trained as an actress at Option theatre Lionel Groulx, Sarah Berthiaume is also a playwright and a screenwriter. She's the author of *The Flood* thereafter, *Dead Cities*, *Nous habiterons Detroit* and *Selfie*. In 2013 her play *Yukonstyle*, opened simultaneously at Montreal's Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui and at Paris' Théâtre de la Colline, before other productions followed in Brussels, Innsbruck, Heidelberg and Toronto. The piece garnered much praise and was awarded the Sony Labou Tansi Student Prize. She's presently working on the script for the feature length screen adaptation. She's also part of the *Ishow* a performance art, cross genre theater piece about social media. The piece was named Best Show of the 2012-13 season by the Montreal Critic's Association.



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Director Michel Lefebvre has been working professionally in theatre for over 35 years and has been Executive Director of Youtheatre since 1992. As a Director, Mr. Lefebvre's work has been seen throughout Canada, but it was 25 years ago at Theatre Passe Muraille, a theatre devoted exclusively to new Canadian work, that Mr. Lefebvre found his spiritual home. This preoccupation with Canadian work has been evident during his tenure at Youtheatre, where he has commissioned some of the most important Canadian writers to create works for young audiences. Many of these works have subsequently been seen across Canada and in the United Kingdom. In 2009, Michel returned to the stage in **Simon & The Egg**, a multi-media production also devised by him and a creative team of nine artists. More recently, **The Pencil Project** and **Dreaming Now** reflect his current preoccupation with the integration of new media in his work with the hope of making theatre for young audiences relevant and contemporary.



Martin Sirois is a light artist who works primarily in theatre. His signature geometric lighting designs were recently seen in creation with Christian Lapointe, Eric Jean, Wajdi Mouawad, Hanna Abd El Nour and Alexandre Marine. Even before the performers take the stage, the lighting is filled with symbolism and serves to breathe life into the space. Focusing on the architectural features of light, Sirois shapes the darkness and then the setting with angles and colours. Cut with surgical precision, the darkness creates a space above the body and sets the stage. In short, it gives the scene a decorative and scenic value, instilling psychological and emotional intent into the light even before attempting to show an object or a character. This technique brings the viewer into a place where they are ready to listen, so that they may feel and discover the piece. Sirois graduated from the production program at the National Theatre School of Canada in 2005.



© Riki Tinoza

Since graduating from UQAM's École des médias in 2011, Guillaume Lévesque has acquired an interdisciplinary expertise that oscillates between sound, image, interactivity and performance. In 2010, he collaborated with Hexagram UQAM and with Lorraine Pintal on the remount of **Madame Louis 14**. Guillaume worked closely with Youtheatre as both a performer (**The Pencil Project**, 2009-2012) and as a sound designer (**P@ndora**, 2012), he also devised with Michel Lefebvre **Dreaming Now** (2013). He currently works as a creative coder for Moment Factory, a multimedia entertainment studio specializing in immersive environments. Guillaume is a digital artist who develops computer applications that explore interactive and generative processes for live performances.

PRESS REVIEWS 2012-2016



Review: « Held prisoner by online pornography and issues of self-image, Pandora looks for an escape route » by Kathryn Greenway, The Gazette, March 13, 2012.



Review: « A Pandora's Box that should be opened and explored », by Milica Markovic, The Theatre Reader, December 3, 2015.



Review: « P@NDORA – A teen's sexual desires both draw and repulse her in a show aimed at older teens » by Jan Kaplan, Now Magazine, December 4, 2015.



Review: « P@ndora is Unflinching, Vital and Important Theatre for Young Audiences » by Maighdlin Mahoney, Mooney on Theatre, December 8, 2015.



Award: *Public Choice* of the top 8 productions in Toronto in 2015, by The Theatre Reader.



Nominee: *Outstanding PACT Production & Outstanding Lighting Design* (Martin Sirois) au Montreal English Theatre Awards 2016.

Review: P@ndora

Held prisoner by online pornography and issues of self-image, Pandora looks for an escape route

BY KATHRYN GREENAWAY, THE GAZETTE MARCH 13, 2012



Zarrin Darnell-Martin gives a wonderful performance as Pandora, a teenager struggling to escape pornography's hold on her life.

Photograph by: Marie-France Coallier, THE GAZETTE

MONTREAL - The text is laced with metaphor, the staging highly stylized and the context surreal. Such a combination could have spelled disaster in less capable hands. But Tuesday's world premiere of P@ndora, a Youtheatre play about a teenage girl's troubling encounter with online pornography, was a unmitigated success.

There is one public performance at Théâtre Calixa Lavallée, on Thursday, before the company begins a 30-show tour of Montreal-

area high schools.

Playwright Sarah Berthiaume's writing is tight and relevant. She spent time with adolescent girls and boys before putting the final touches on the work, which she shaped with the help of fellow playwright Simon Boulerice. (The original French version was translated by Nadine Desrochers. The company can perform the play in either language.)

During the creative process,

P@dora director Michel Lefebvre watched nervously from a near distance. When it was time to put action to the words, Lefebvre's touch was meticulously spare.

"A straightforward look at porn would have been too much to handle," Lefebvre said following the English premiere, which played to a packed house of attentive anglophone and francophone students.

"It's about a young girl judging herself, harshly," Lefebvre said. "I felt she was imprisoned in this vortex of porn."

To create a sense of heightened constraint, the wonderful Zarrin Darnell-Martin (as the girl, Pandora) performs the entire play atop a large metal box.

During Tuesday's performance, light filtered through the box's perforated lid. Its front was a screen, which occasionally lit up with hallucinatory images created by Frédéric St.-Hilaire.

Metal poles surrounded the box like so many guards corralling Pandora. (The play's terrific set design is by Max-Otto Fauteux, with striking lighting by Renaud Pettigrew and an ominous electro thrum by Guillaume Lévesque.)

Francis-William Rhéaume plays Pandora's crush, a blogger named Alex with a penchant for short stories that end badly. Recited throughout the play, the dark and distorted stories clung to the edges of Pandora's struggle with her self-image and her horror and fascination with online porn. She had just wanted to take a peek. Things got out of hand.

The play's title is a direct reference to the Greek myth about the young woman who receives the gift of a box that, unbeknownst to her, holds all the evils of the world. She is forbidden to open it, but succumbs to her curiosity, lifts the lid and unleashes unspeakable horrors.

Rhéaume also takes on the role of a shadowy "search-engine" figure, with distorted voice and red fox mask, who nudges Pandora farther and farther into her online nightmare.

As she struggles to escape his hold on her, her shame manifests itself as a seeping, oily stain on body and soul.

Both Darnell-Martin and Rhéaume gave strong performances that engaged the young crowd completely.

"Pornography is pervasive in our society. It's easily accessible on our smart phones," Lefebvre said. "And these kids are at an age where they have questions about sexuality and how it's supposed to work. I wanted this play to start a discussion."



photo credit: Robert Desroches

A PANDORA'S BOX THAT SHOULD BE OPENED AND EXPLORED

December 3, 2015

Milica Marković

Staff Writer/Fact Checker/Editor

We often forget nowadays that just like our world, the virtual realm is very real, because we pour so much of our lives into it - so much so that it practically makes our real-world decisions for us.

In response to this growing influence of online media, playwright Sarah Berthiaume focuses her piece *P@ndora* on the controversy surrounding cyber-pornography, through the lens of a female high school student named **Pandora** (Bria McLaughlin). One day, when the polysemous character **Firefox** (Sean Colby) slides a lighter with the website *foxylady.com* imprinted on it under **Pandora's** washroom stall, she succumbs to her inner curiosity and visits the site. There, she discovers imagery both disturbing and enticing at the same time, further aggravating her struggles with her already low self-esteem and perplexing her relationship with her crush **Alex**(Sean Colby) as a result.

Berthiaume's script is remarkable in raising many important issues in our attitudes towards cyberspace through its open-

ended nature and allegorical features. I always say that expression over exposition is the way to go in a visual medium, and *P@ndora* as a whole effortlessly delivers on that front. Whether or not **Pandora's** initial interaction with **Firefox** actually happens or is just a figment of her imagination is left for us to decide, but the point is that this piece showcases the degree to which we associate the images we see online to our own lives. In many ways, our culture bombards us with images and literature around sex and so our sexuality is largely informed by behavioural and aesthetical expectations established by the media. In *P@ndora*, these notions are evident through **Firefox's** stereotyping of gender roles in sexual relations and, especially, sexual politics.

I like that **Alex's** hobby of blogging is a driving force in this narrative. Unbeknownst to him, his recited fictional stories metaphorically describe **Pandora's** situation as it unfolds as well as foreshadowing her fate. As a blogger myself, I find this an inspiring plot device.

McLaughlin skillfully portrays the multiple dimensions of sixteen-year-old **Pandora's** personality. On the one hand, she is audacious and sure of everything, but on the other, she is vulnerable due to her inability to determine where she stands in her dominance, or lack thereof, over media influence. She believes that her shame comes from her obsession with wanting to become as beautiful as the porn stars she watches, but her real shame actually derives from her negligence to talk to someone about it.

Colby is able to oscillate between his roles of **Alex** and **Firefox** with complete ease. **Alex** is a nerdy, though greatly emotional boy, who genuinely cares for **Pandora's** well being. However, he soon realizes that **Pandora** has inner demons that she needs to overcome, so he doesn't allow himself to become too attached to her. **Firefox**, on the other hand, is a manipulative, pimp-like figure that feeds on **Pandora's** conscience, trying to tell her what to do and how to act according to how women are commercialized – even if it may not be suitable for her.

Prior to seeing the performance, I had anticipated that it would rely heavily on digital media in order to effectively tell this story and immerse the audience in the interactions between the characters and the Internet. To my pleasant surprise, the use of technology is minimal, so as not to distract from the vocal and bodily expressiveness of the performers.

The set consists of a single, large glass box placed centre stage that serves as a constant reminder of **Pandora's** consequences for her actions, as every decision and encounter she makes take place atop or near the box. I'm glad that the creative team went with this sort of simple yet versatile form of symbolism. Frequently heard evocative sounds composed by Thierry Gauthier and designed by Guillaume Lévesque dovetail flawlessly with Martin Sirois' unique geometrical lighting design. Every heartbeat and every tense moment is felt with each resonance and is complemented by precise shaping of light that illuminates the actors' bodies.

This is a performance that every individual who has ever been hesitant to openly discuss pornography should see. It teaches us that although we will always expose ourselves to potentially explicit images, whether we intend to or not, it is our choices in how we internalize such imagery that will shape our discourse and overall lifestyle.

Presented by Youtheatre and directed by Michel Lefebvre, P@ndora is playing at Young People's Theatre until Dec. 11. For more information visit: youngpeoplestheatre.ca



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>>> P@NDORA

A teen's sexual desires both draw and repulse her in a show aimed at older teens

BY [JON KAPLAN](#)

DECEMBER 4, 2015 9:48 AM

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Bria McLaughlin and Sean Colby

P@NDORA by Sarah Berthiaume, translated by Nadine Desrochers (Youthatre/Young People's Theatre, 165 Front East). Runs to December 11, December 5-6 at 2 pm, December 8-11 at 10:30 am and 12:45 pm. \$19-\$24. 416-862-2222, youngpeoplestheatre.ca. Rating: **NNNN**

P@ndora is unlike almost any show I've seen at **Young People's Theatre**. Dealing with a teen's sexual urges and the sense of shame she has because of those desires, the show is barefaced and unapologetic in its language and themes.

Yet it's also poetic, suggestive and nuanced, a clever variation on the Greek myth of Pandora and her monster-filled box.

You won't be surprised about that unusual combination of elements if you've seen other works by Quebec playwright **Sarah Berthiaume**; Canadian Stage presented *The Flood Thereafter* and *Yukonstyle* a few years ago. Blending surreal incidents and everyday reality, Berthiaume's writing is intriguing and thoughtful, never going where you expect it to.

P@ndora, translated by **Nadine Desrochers**, presents the outer and inner life of Pandora (**Bria McLaughlin**), a high schooler who has a shy crush on Alex (**Sean Colby**), a guy who fills his

blog with short stories that end unhappily. One day in the washroom, she meets an unseen perv – her word – who hands her a lighter embossed with the website foxylady.com.

It's a porn site, and Pandora watches an explicit video involving a hot man and a masked woman who, after the teen is turned on by what she sees, unmask to reveal Pandora's face. Later visits to the site reveal similar sexual encounters but different role-playing costumes. How, she wonders, did these videos get made?

She later meets the figure who gave her the lighter: Firefox (Colby), a red fox who both fuels her desire and stokes her sense of shame about her body and her cravings. Calling her "chickie" and labeling her a slut, he feeds those opposing feelings of interest and disgust; he seems to have Pandora hooked.

When she's with Alex she's tongue-tied, unable to make the connection she wants despite the rom-com alternatives in her head. After she leaves him suddenly at a party when a spreading black stain appears on her crotch, she isolates herself but can't keep Firefox away. The show's open-ended resolution relies on confrontation and self-acceptance.

Berthiaume's writing is strong, Pandora's narrative alternating with Alex's blog stories, sensual tales whose elements finally coalesce into a portrait of Alex herself. Dream and reality also blend, so that at times we're not sure whether what we see is going on in Pandora's mind or the outside world. The engaging McLaughlin and Colby make the action believable, no matter where it occurs.

Directed and presented at YPT by **Youtheatre's Michel Lefebvre**, who commissioned the work for his Montreal company, the show is visually strong, too. Lefebvre provides the scenography, while **Guillaume Lévesque's** unsettling sound design and **Martin Sirois's** lighting are powerful. The lighting, relying on hand-held tablets and various tones of fluorescent illumination placed on the theatre's floor and ceiling, defines the play's disquieting world as carefully as the script does.

🔖 Tags ***Youtheatre, teen sexuality, Sarah Berthiaume***

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COMMENTS

P@NDORA (YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE)

DECEMBER 8, 2015 | MAIGHDLIN MAHONEY

P@dora is Unflinching, Vital and Important Theatre for Young Audiences



It is sadly rare to see people communicating with teenaged audiences about the gritty and too often taboo issues affecting their lives. *P@dora*, now playing at *Young People's Theatre*, is a refreshingly candid look at the affects of Internet porn on a young girl, aimed at audiences 15 and up.

As the audience entered, we were hit immediately by the sounds of static reverberating through the fog that enveloped the set. Through the haze, a clear rectangular box and scattered LED lights were all that could be seen on the *Young People's Theatre* stage.

The first action of the show was a monologue, the first of several, by the male half of the two person cast, Sean Colby. His clear and concise story telling, lit by the screen of an iPad amid the last wisps of mist, was a telling preface to 50 minutes of eerie confusion and disarming sincerity.

After the opening, the story shifts it's focus to Pandora, played by Bria McLaughlin. She starts out as an average high school girl with a crush on a fellow student: Alex, played by Colby. Her opening monologues include references to hating high school, being frozen by nervousness around her

crush, and her best girl friend, clearing identifying her as what many would consider the “average teenage girl”, or at least the type most portrayed in movies and TV.

After encountering a strange, faceless man in the bathroom at school who directs her towards a porn site, the real meat of P@ndora begins. I was surprised and impressed at the blunt candour used in a scene where Pandora describes her first experience of the porn on this particular website, and McLaughlin brought a mixture of sensuality, embarrassment and shock that perfectly suited the moment. I was especially pleased to see this scene written for a female character.

From there, P@ndora goes on to examine the pressures and additions that can result from teenagers being exposed to pornography, specifically via the Internet. While I applaud the subject matter and their willingness to take it head on, at times it was unclear whether they were warning or condemning. I would be wary of a show that discourages young people from exploring their sexuality completely, but understand and encourage the desire to make aware the dangers of porn, especially if it is a teen's sole exposure to sex. I hope the show can act as a warning not only to young people, but also to the adults that have the power to educate them in a safe and open way.

The actors did a respectable job of walking this fine line throughout the show, my only complaint being that, as is a danger with very small casts, the action began to seem repetitive at times. The script allowed for this as well, revisiting many of the same themes with repetitive language. Kudos must be given to the sound and lighting design, by Guillaume Levesque and Martin Sirois respectively, for breaking P@ndora up with decisive changes in the look and sound of the set. Certain scenes also did a good job of breaking the constant tension, including a refreshingly light scene between Colby and McLaughlin where their characters innocently flirted at a friend's party.

The story of P@ndora ends inconclusively, and spirals into confusion for both the characters and the audience. While I wish we had gotten a bit more closure, perhaps it enhances the point of the story that we did not.

While some will agree and some will disagree with the message of the show, and perhaps the fox mask was a bit much, I would strongly recommend P@ndora for young people and their parents or teachers. P@ndora takes on difficult subject matter unflinchingly, and I only hope that those who see it will make an effort to do so more often.

Details: