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## **Simon and the Egg avoids preaching**

Environmental message. One-man play layered with meaning, metaphor

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A group of attentive six- to eight- year-olds attended the world premiere of the Youtheatre production *Simon and the Egg*, at Théâtre Calixa-Lavallée Monday.

The one-man, multimedia play written by and starring Youtheatre director Michel Lefebvre launched the company's 40th season. There is a public performance, Saturday.

In the opening moments, Lefebvre, as The Man, grapples with the meaning of a series of objects, letters and a large, glistening, occasionally noisy egg he has received from someone named Simon. It soon becomes clear that these objects can help magically transport The Man and his favourite childhood toy - a rubber chicken - to a paradise named Penumbra.

Following a distinctly pleasurable first contact with Penumbra, The Man is drawn back again and again, but each time the island exhibits increasingly disturbing signs of environmental decay. It is being destroyed by a lethal mix of natural disaster and man-made environmental chaos.

The Man desperately wants to help save his beautiful island and turns to his mystery objects and the mysterious Simon - whom we never actually meet - for answers.

*Simon and the Egg* is Lefebvre's commentary on the fragile state of our planet. Layered with meaning and metaphor, it does not preach, nor does it offer answers. And although it is not what you would describe as subtle in approach, neither is it obvious in its narrative.

But children are far more sophisticated in their thinking processes that we often give them credit for and during a question and answer period following the performance, it was clear they had understood exactly what the play was about.

The otherworldly Penumbran environment is created with hallucinatory talent by video design group fomalade, lighting designer Caroline Ross, composers Martin Messier and Guillaume Poulin and set designer Véronique Bertrand.

On a stage covered with pure white sand and dominated upstage by a large screen upon which the creative team's rendering of Penumbra's destruction unfolds, Lefebvre embraces his text and never plays coy with the audience.

So who is the wise Simon we never meet?

"Simon is us," one wise youngster said following the world premiere. Well put.

Youtheatre presents Simon and the Egg at Théâtre Calixa-Lavallée, 3819 Calixa-Lavallée Ave. in Lafontaine Park Sunday at 1 p.m. Tickets cost \$12 for adults and \$8 for children. For reservations, call 514-844-8781. [www.youtheatre.ca](http://www.youtheatre.ca).

The play will also be performed at Place des Arts, Nov. 27-28 as part of Les Coups de Théâtre Festival international des arts jeune public. Details pending.

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