

Michel Tremblay plays to be featured at Glasgow's Mayfest

Right:
Michel Tremblay

Michel Tremblay – recognised as Quebec's (and possibly Canada's) leading playwright – ushered in a new era of *quebécois* theatre when his play, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, was first performed in 1968. Since then, he has gone on to national and international triumph, and along the way has generated greater critical controversy than any other Canadian dramatist.

His most obvious innovation was to make his characters speak in working-class *joual*. Not everyone appreciated this move. The theatre critic for Montreal's *La Presse* summed up his reaction to the premiere of *Les Belles-Soeurs* by writing: 'It's the first time in my life that I've heard in a single evening so many curses, swear words, four-letter words and bathroom expressions.'

But in Paris, a review in *Le Monde* took a different approach: '*Les Belles-Soeurs* is in *joual* as *Andromaque* is in *Alexandrines*, because a work needs a language, and a strong work needs a strong language.'

Michel Tremblay's plays tend to feature social outcasts and misfits who often use hard-hitting monologues which are clearly aimed at provoking an audience response. Again, this approach has generated controversy, since Tremblay has used it to expose hypocrisy and to get at the truth as he sees it.

'I don't like writers who write because they think they're right,' he has said. 'I always say that what I write is my version of the truth. It's not "the" truth, but it's the truth for me.'

Below:
The Real World will be performed at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow



Writer of 18 plays

Michel Tremblay was born in 1942 in Montreal's industrial east end. While still in high school, he wrote poems, plays and novels. At the age of 17, he entered the Graphic Arts Institute of Quebec where he studied to be a linotypist, the trade at which he worked from 1963 to 1966.

Now 46, he has written 18 plays, two musical comedies, eight novels, one collection of stories and seven film scripts. He has also translated and adapted plays by Aristophane, Paul Zindel, Tennessee Williams, Dario Fo, Tchekhov and Gogol; and he has written the lyrics of songs recorded by some of Quebec's best known singers.

His play, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, has been translated from *joual* into Glaswegian for the Glasgow Mayfest where – under the title *The Guid Sisters* – it will preview April 27–30 and be performed May 2–14 and May 23–June 4 at the Tron Theatre.

Also during the Mayfest, the Tarragon Theatre of Toronto will be bringing its production of Tremblay's latest play, *The Real World*, to the Tron Theatre. The play will be performed May 14–23.

In addition, a conference on Quebec theatre in general and Michel Tremblay's plays in particular will be held at the Tron Theatre. Tremblay will be attending. 

