

CARBON COPY BOY

A DARK AND DIRTY TALE

PRESS KIT



Design: A. Bernard / Pire



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Origins

This work echoes an earlier play, *Leo the zero*, co-produced in 2005 with Théâtre Bouches Décousues and the Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. Étienne, Leon's brother, is the main character in this new story and his take on the meaning of family is quite different. Whereas Léon tried to free himself from his mother's apron strings, Étienne, a little carbon copy boy with a dark and dirty history, wants to get rid of his father, a man-cow with a slow and awkward gait who is afraid of everything and doesn't do much. A useless father.

The Mythical Family

The story explores the mythical Quebecois family. Ethienne cannot (or does not want to) describe his family's origins rationally. His idiosyncratic family is larger-than-life: How else could his mother have given birth to 57 children without any divine intervention? And such ugly children to boot! Such idiots! How did he end up being the only rational one? This must be a sign from the gods. But above all, he is fed up with his vacuous, half-bovine father and seeks some explanation for such cruel and inhumane punishment. Maybe his father was turned into a cow in order to pay for a sin committed / a mistake made by someone in his family... Étienne desperately needs to understand. He needs to figure out the all-powerful reason behind this life sentence he has been given in order to make sense of it all. Even if he has to invent the whole story to explain his family's woes.





The Double

The title *Carbon Copy Boy* is a throwback to the technique used to copy a document by placing carbon paper between two sheets of paper. Whatever is written or drawn on the original on top is copied onto the paper underneath. The handwriting on the under-copy is the same as on the original, but is smudged and less clear. This notion of a dirty, messy double is at the heart of Francis Monty's story about Étienne where reality mingles with dreams and fantasy. Which of Étienne's realities will we choose to believe? Who is this shadow-double he talks about? What are its true origins?

Background

Carbon Copy Boy was the brainchild born during Francis Monty's playwriting residency in Limoges in 2003. A first draft was then presented in 2005 during a public reading at the Festival du Jamais Lu in Montréal. The project remained tucked away in a back drawer for a while, since Francis did not feel the same emotion or sense of urgency he had experienced in Limoges. Following his father's death in 2008, *Carbon Copy Boy* took on greater meaning owing to the fact that it specifically addresses father issues. He slowly went back to writing between tours. He shook the story around, flipped a few lines, mangled the dramatic structure and broke its linearity as he explored the story through collages and a series of short vignettes.

An individual is hard for me to define; it's as if he or she is a jigsaw puzzle full of holes. These holes are a way of incorporating theatrical images based on object and paper theatre.
-Francis Monty

The text was then presented in May 2011 at a public reading where an idea for stage direction was also presented during the Festival du Jamais Lu. Other public readings were held in 2012 before adult and youth test audiences: in March at the Festival Nouvelles Zébrures in Limoges and the Festival Méli'Môme in Reims; in May and September at the Théâtre Aux Écuries in Montréal; and in October at the Festival M'auteurs in Reims. In the fall of 2012, a playwriting residency at Bouffou Théâtre à la coque in France that came on the heels of a public reading at the youth theatre festival Marmailles in Rennes helped the creative team put the final touches on the show. *Carbon Copy Boy* premiered in Montréal in November 2012 at the Festival Les Coups de Théâtre's 12th edition.





A bestiary illustrated with a little help from objects

The actor-storyteller spins a tale from behind his work table, using sheets of paper, drawings and various objects he has placed around him. He draws upon these various materials to create and perform the story's many characters.

Paper is arguably the most widely used object in everyday life. Yet somehow its very existence ends up hidden behind the message it communicates. Such an ephemeral nature carries an undeniable emotional charge. Paper objects convey great fragility. On the one hand, Étienne channels his violence into his art: he draws. And with his messy black scrawls, he tells the story of his family's origins. On the other hand, the result is lightweight, volatile ... and fragile. An evocative paradox!

Writing for the Object

Object theatre is often seen simply as manipulation or transposition theatre, where a character (Ubu in *Ubu on the table*, for example) is represented by an object (a bottle). But it is actually so much more. The object is all at once form, symbol and character. Its semantic ramifications are considerable. In object theatre, a red apple can be the forbidden fruit, the coveted object (as in the *Bible*) or a symbol of discord (as in the *Iliad*). Its colour is associated with passion while its shape evokes bountifulness. It can be a wheel, a star, etc. If it falls, autumn is near. If there's a hole in its skin, something must be gnawing at its conscience (could it be doubt? or a worm?). Take a bite and you reach its core or very heart... and a thousand new images come to mind.

Since 1998, Théâtre de la Pire Espèce has been exploring writing for the object as well as writing in conjunction with the image. This type of writing is time consuming and commands an unconventional playwriting approach. Writing for the object is like composing an original score for an orchestra. The composer must have an intimate knowledge of every instrument's technical characteristics and range in order to compose music that will highlight their strengths. Similarly, the object theatre "orchestra" consists of a battery of inanimate objects and the writer must explore each and every object's theatrical potential in rehearsal to truly write for them.

With *Carbon Copy Boy*, Francis Monty builds on the discoveries made when creating *Ubu on the Table* and *Perseus*. This time, his writing for the object deliberately involves each object in every aspect of the creative process.





The author

Francis Monty

A 1997 graduate of the playwrighting program at the National Theatre School of Canada, Francis Monty is a theatrical jack of all trades – directing, clowning, puppetry and his many writing projects all intertwine. In 1999 he co-founded Théâtre de la Pire Espèce with Olivier Ducas, and both share the position of artistic director. He has co-created many of the company's plays, including *Ubu sur la table* and *Persée*. A number of his plays have travelled across Canada, and to Brazil and Europe, including *Par les temps qui rouillent*, *Déclownestration*, *Traces de clowne*, *Léon le nul*, *Ernest T.* and *Nous sommes mille en équilibre fragile*. He received the 2005 Masque award for best original script for *Romances et karaoké*, the 2014 Cochon dramatique for best original script for *Petit bonhomme en papier carbone* at the Gala des Cochons d'or and *Ernest T.* was nominated for best original script for young audiences for the Louise LaHaye Award.



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Credits

Written and directed by **Francis Monty**
Performed by **Francis Monty** or **Étienne Blanchette**
Original music and stage management: **Mathieu Doyon**
Assistant stage director: **Manon Claveau**
Scenography: **Julie Vallée-Léger**
Illustrations: **Francis Monty and Julie Vallée-Léger**
Artistic collaboration: **Étienne Blanchette**
Lighting consultant: **Thomas Godefroid**
Technical direction: **Nicolas Fortin**
Technical direction, production and stage management: **Clémence Doray**

A Théâtre de la Pire Espèce, Méli'Môme Festival (France) and Petits et Grands Festival (France) co-production, in collaboration with Bouffou Théâtre à la coque (France).

This production received support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Conseil des Arts de Montréal and the Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques du Québec (CEAD).





In the Media

“We are delighted to witness this unbridled story come together before our very eyes with the help of a few pieces of torn paper, and through the actor-storyteller’s ingenious and nimble manipulation that commands our admiration. This Carbon Copy Boy will definitely leave its mark wherever it goes...”

Michelle Channonat, *Reveujeu.org*

“The 12th Coups de théâtre festival’s Coup de cœur”

Michel Bélair, *Le Piccolo*

“A Black Pearl combining audacity and ingenuity... [...] We’ll come back for more.”

Michel Bélair, *Le Devoir*

“Intelligent, poetic.”

Cynthia Boucher, *Blogue La Vitrine*

“A stunning solo performance by Francis Monty who has penned a flawless and often hilarious tale, accompanied by musical sound effects by Mathieu Doyon. [...] Laughter bursts are unrestrained, the paper’s fragility is captivating and the alternate emotions of vulnerability and empathy are engrossing. Charming and hilarious.”

Brigitte Manolo, *DFDanse.com*

“Once again, Francis Monty has demonstrated his incredible storytelling talent and his knowledge of the objects he manipulates. [...] Captivated by the story emerging from the paper, we allow ourselves to be surprised by the inventions conjured up by Monty and his musical team mate Mathieu Doyon.”

Daphné Bathalon, *Montheatre.qc.ca*

Fifth grade students’ (12 to 13 years) comments following a public reading at the Festival M’auteurs in Reims, France - October 2012

“I loved it! It was fun and I had never seen this type of show. I would love to see it again.”

“I really liked this show because it is about the hate we can feel all our lives for our parents. Francis Monty explained this period while making us laugh and in a totally different way than in other shows. I would love to see this show once it’s finished. For many of us, this was our first experience with a work in progress.”

“What I really liked in this show was the wordplay (on cows), the teasing and the everyday language. [...] I found it original, especially the depiction of characters and the use of objects that have two functions within the story.”