

# Leo the Zero<sup>1</sup>



Text: <sup>Francy</sup>Francis Monty



Between two bad encounters at school and his exasperated mother's attempts to help, Leo secretly eats iron nails. *Leo the Zero*, as other children like to call him, dreams of becoming a train, bigger and more powerful than everyone else. This way, he can be strong and solid.

## THE STORY

Written by Francis Monty in 2001, *Leo the Zero* (original title: *Léon le Nul*) is a powerful text that tells the story of Leo's life. At school, little Leo is the scapegoat of his classmates. At home, he tries to find his place between his nervous and impatient mother, and his brother Terry, an excellent chocolate salesman swimming in cash and oh-so sure of himself. In a bid to escape, Leo dreams of become a train – both tough and powerful. He swallows nail after nail as he waits for his birthdays to turn his legs into wheels.

Published by Lansman (Belgium) in 2004, the original work was staged for the first time in 2005 as a Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, Théâtre Bouches Décousues and Théâtre de la Pire Espèce co-production (Montréal, Québec). *Léon le nul* has been performed more than 165 times in Québec and France before enthusiastic francophone audiences. The English translation, *Leo the Zero*, and the Spanish translation, *León, el Bueno para nada* have been performed in Mexico, the UK and Canada.

**« [...] a remarkably intelligent, surprising and poetic text by Francis Monty. Rarely has such 'regular' hardship been portrayed so brilliantly. »**

Michel Bélair, Le Devoir, October 25, 2007

**“Leo the Zero is more than an inventive piece of theatre. It's also a theatre of emotion that kids can relate to.”**

Dominique Lachance, Journal de Montréal, September 27, 2005





# LEO THE ZERO REWORKED

Francis Monty is reworking the show and integrating a narrator other than the main character that draws on stand-up comedy and physical theatre (cf. Philippe Caubère). This will allow the audience to step back a bit from the emotionally charged subject matter.

## The Narrator

*Leo the Zero* deals with bullying and rejection, and the inner strength needed to cope with the pain. In its original form, the story is told by Léon, a bullying victim. After presenting several live readings to school groups, the playwright noticed that some children could not or did not want to identify with Leo, the victim, and deliberately established a distance between themselves and the story.

Adding a stand-up comic narrator will allow the artist to speak directly to the audience while creating a playful and inclusive distance as he addresses not only the victims, but also the bullies and the witnesses, keenly aware of the fact that every one of them, often unintentionally, plays a role in the dynamics of power and aggression.

Narrator and spectator alike will, on occasion, seize the opportunity to take a step back from Leo's misadventures in order to view his behaviours and actions with a critical eye.

## The Classroom

Thanks to the light format of a stand-up show (single performer, no costume, props or set), the work will be easy to present in a classroom setting. The playwright will take advantage of the close-knit dynamic in a small class to observe students' reactions and, of course, to foster discussion on the show's subject matter. These encounters will also help improve and develop the text.



# 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 on the table* and *Perseus*. A number of his plays have travelled across Canada, and to Brazil and Europe, including *Par les temps qui rouillent*, *Déclownestration*, *Traces de clowne*, *Leon the Zero*, *Ernest T.*, *Carbon Copy Kid* 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 *Carbon Copy Kid* at the Gala des Cochons d'or and *Ernest T.* was nominated for best original script for young audiences for the Louise LaHaye Award.

## Creative team

**Text :** Francis Monty

**Performers :** Étienne Blanchette  
or Éloi Archambaudoin or Alexandre Leroux

**Exploration work actors:** Étienne Blanchette, Olivier Ducas,  
Alexandre Leroux and Éloi Archambaudoin

**All audiences from 8 years-old**

**Performance space:** 12' x 16'

## CONTACT

CANADA & INTERNATIONAL : Pascale Joubert  
7285 rue Chabot Montreal (Quebec) H2E 2K7 – Canada  
Mobile +1 (514) 473-0010 | [dev@pire-espece.com](mailto:dev@pire-espece.com)

FRANCE : Nadine Lapuyade, Les Gomères  
14 place de la libération 72610 Ancinnes – France  
Mobile +33(0) 6 75 47 49 26 | [lesgomeres@gmail.com](mailto:lesgomeres@gmail.com)

Montreal (Quebec) H2E 2K7  
CANADA  
[www.pire-espece.com](http://www.pire-espece.com)





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