

## Theatre Feature

### Liner notes

NOVECENTO (Canada) by Alessandro Baricco, translated by Michael Golding, directed by François Girard, with Tom McCamus. Presented by Théâtre de Quat'Sous at the du Maurier Theatre Centre. April 14-15, Sunday-Monday 8 pm, matinee Sunday 2 pm.

music runs like a subtle, evoca-tive accompaniment under the works of Canadian filmmaker François Girard. Think of his best-known films, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* and *The Red Violin*. He also filmed Peter Gabriel's *Secret World* concert in Italy and directed an episode of the Yo-Yo Ma television series *Inspired By Bach*.

It's not surprising, then, that Girard was drawn to Alessandro Baricco's *Novecento*, the tale of an orphan found aboard a transatlantic liner in the first year of the 20th century. *Novecento* becomes a skilled jazz pianist and never sets foot on shore.

Translated by Michael Golding, the show's a monologue featuring Tom McCamus as *Novecento*'s trumpet-playing fellow musician.

"The piece was a perfect opportunity to zero in on the basics of theatre," notes Girard, "one actor, one story, one audience. I went for that, not trying to make it a bigger show."

"Strangely, in *Novecento* I've resisted the musical content. It's really hard to write about the nature of music, but Baricco -- a musician and former music critic -- has a special skill for doing so. I decided to let the words speak the music and not interfere with the vision the audience might create for itself."

Even so, Girard's no stranger to musical staging. He made his opera debut with a superb production of Stravinsky's *Symphony Of Psalms* and *Oedipus Rex*, a Canadian Opera Company production that's due back in Toronto next year, just after it plays the Edinburgh Festival.

It's Girard's second visit to Scotland in as many years. *Novecento* played there -- both in English and French -- in 2001.

"*Novecento* is a prototype of humanity, someone who's never been on land. In these days when people are trying to define what culture is and what it means, here we're shown someone who belongs to no nation or specific culture. He fascinates me for that reason." JK

