

## 'Bite Your Tongue': Philippe Keb Blanchard brings quality theater from Quebec



Theater of the New City



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Fellow North Americans, the Quebecois live lives much like our own, but a language barrier often keeps us from being aware of their artistic accomplishments. That's where Philippe comes in. **Philippe Keb Blanchard**, a man who has lived in both the US and Canada, translates works of art from French into English. Able to capture the nuances necessary for high quality translations, he has made a niche for himself that helps to bridge the cultural gap with one of New York's closest neighbors.

"**Bite Your Tongue**" is one such example. A translation of Etienne LePage's "Rouge Geule" (which roughly translates to "red mouth of the beast"), the play depicts characters from different walks of life who share their private thoughts and judgments with the audience. Since they reveal their stream of consciousness and the things they would never say out loud, the audience is treated (or subjected) to some vulgar and biting statements.

Philippe said that audiences of "Rouge Guele" were perturbed - in the sense that they were left looking at the people all around them, and wondering what they might be thinking! The play really brings to the fore the fact that everyone has those thoughts. It also leads people to question how well they really know people.

While a certain degree of angst might follow people out of the theater, there is a more liberating side. One eventually begins to wonder, "Does it really matter that people think this way? Does it really change anything?" And while the play does not purport to answer these questions, people who have experienced the play generally go back to their lives, no worse

for the wear. In fact, "Rouge Guele" was immensely popular in Quebec.

Out of 22 short stories that he was able to draw upon, Philippe chose to draw elements from 19 of them, while LePage chose 17. Thus, the plays are different, yet the tone and message are the same. Philippe built the characters as archetypes. He portrays one of the characters himself, while another is played by the incomparable **Audrey Lorea**. Philippe has been active in film and theater since 2004.

"**Bite Your Tongue**" can be seen at the **Theater for the New City** from February 28 through March 17. Friday and Saturday evening performances start at 8PM while Sunday matinees are at 2PM.