Theatre and Film Intersect at Sheridan and TIFF Stage & Screen Event

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As part of its Creative Campus Series Sheridan partnered with TIFF for Stage & Screen: a discussion examining the intersection of theatre and film at the TIFF Bell Lightbox. Joining in conversation with moderator Ralph Benmergui, former CBC-TV host and Sheridan’s Executive Advisor to the President, was director of stage, opera and film Atom Egoyan and artistic and general director of Canadian Stage, Matthew Jocelyn.

“These types of interdisciplinary conversations highlight the innovative ways in which theatre is being influenced by film and changed by technology,” said Ronni Rosenberg, Sheridan’s Dean of the Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design and one of the event organizers. “What better way to explore this topic than to hear from two of Canada’s brilliant and innovative theatrical minds.”

Jocelyn described how traditional theatre has for hundreds of years been about a frontal and “here and now” experience from the stage to the audience. When technological interventions are introduced such as projections or live streaming, “It allows us to explore elsewhere and otherness and expands the dimensions of what is possible on stage,” he explained. “Merging theatre and film creates a layered, deconstructed and fragmented experience that can create a change in perspective and the ability to fill in absent spaces.”

Incorporating technical elements like projection “amplifies the experience” according to Egoyan, “adding a level of awareness and access that you wouldn’t have otherwise.” He described the significance of achieving the moment in a production when the audience crosses a barrier from an understanding of what’s artificial and what’s real on stage.

As a director who uses theatrical and cinematic elements, Jocelyn explained that there is less
concern with focus and perception. “Directors are working increasingly with layering effects in narrative so that the audience has to be more active in putting together pieces of the puzzle to create their own experience.” This requirement from the audience adds a level of multitasking and for Egoyan, it means producing a show that embraces both treatments is often a lesson in experimentation.

To illustrate the intersection of theatre and film Egoyan and Jocelyn shared video clips from their productions of Samuel Beckett’s *Eh Joe*, Richard Strauss’ opera *Salome*, *Kiss & Cry* by Michèle Anne de May and Jaco Van Dormael, Robert Lepage’s *Needles and Opium* and Chris Haddock and Stan Douglas’ *Helen Lawrence*.

Stage & Screen was the third installment of Sheridan’s Creative Campus Series. The inaugural event featured a lecture and conversation with author Lawrence Hill.

*Pictured above (left to right): Moderator Ralph Benmergui and directors Matthew Jocelyn and Atom Egoyan.*