



East-West romance: The family saga of *The Dragons' Trilogy* is told in English, French and Mandarin.

Miraculous enchantment

WHAT: The *Dragons' Trilogy* by Robert Lepage and others, directed by Lepage
WHERE: Events Centre, till March 18
REVIEWED BY: Laurie Atkinson

ROBERT LEPAGE has been described as a maker of romantic theatre for the wired world and *The Dragons' Trilogy*, which made his reputation as a world-class director when he was only 27 back in 1985, shows why this description is so apt.

He and his company take a leisurely four hours of stage time to tell this novel-like family saga that covers 75 years of friendship between two Quebecois cousins, Jeanne and Francoise.

Jeanne's life is marked by tragedy: a love affair ruined by her alcoholic father, an unfortunate marriage to a Chinese man, a physically and mentally disabled daughter.

The ebullient Francoise finds a husband after World War II and bears him a son who eventually finds a much happier East-West romance with a beautiful Japanese-Canadian artist.

THEATRE

There are subplots that intrigue as well: a Mr Crawford, an Englishman, born in Hong Kong, who sets up a shoe shop in Quebec, and ends up a drug addict in a wheelchair; a Madam Butterfly who bears the child of an American sailor and dies in Hiroshima.

There are diversions, too, such as the long comic scene of Francoise buying duty-free presents while a French-speaking Canadian airline pilot tries to get her to talk in English for him to the attractive saleswoman, who later meets up with Francoise's son.

However, it's not the stories — told in English, French and Mandarin — that hold the attention so much as the immaculate manner in which they are performed on a large rectangular pit full of grit and decorated with only a street lamp and a small hut at one end which is backed by a huge screen.

Only once does the action on stage disappoint (a heavy-handed

sexual symbol with ropes), but for the rest miracles of invention happen regularly. The hut becomes an X-ray machine, a duty-free shop, and a Chinese laundry. Shoes that have been neatly arranged about the stage are trampled into the grit by the armies of World War II in an unforgettable image of the indifference of war.

Hands beating out a rhythm on an oil drum become a poker game, the voice-over of a touch-typing course counterpoints a diagnosis of breast cancer, and two skaters encircle the stage to *The Skaters' Waltz* as the armies kill the civilians in further examples of the brilliance of this superb production.

The appallingly uncomfortable Events Centre seats could not spoil this evening of theatrical splendour and enchantment. Even the usual coughers were silent throughout, such was the commitment given by the audience to this search for a synthesis of opposites expressed so longingly in the Kurt Weill song, *Youkali*, that Francoise sings.