



ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

TO THE LIGHT

BY EVELYNE DE LA CHENELIÈRE

TRANSLATED BY JOHN MURRELL

DIRECTED BY VANESSA PORTEOUS



JULIE ORTON AND ELINOR HOLT PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIN WALLACE

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Directed by Vanessa Porteous

STUDENT MATINEE 11:30am | WEDNESDAY October 25th, 2017

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ABOUT THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

A woman's voice is heard in the dark. She is Lily Briscoe, a youngish painter, and a houseguest at matriarch Mrs. Ramsay's family summer home by the sea. We meet Lily after the war, back at the summer house, trying to feel something about the death of Mrs. Ramsay. You have the sense that for her, hope departed with Mrs. Ramsay's death and the war. She can't even really grieve – she doesn't feel anything, which as we all know, is the worst and most desolating state of all.

The play is told in flashes of light and darkness, in monologue and dialogue, and in a kind of timeless emptiness. A world of memory where time is suspended. As light and shadow flash over the two characters, like seasons, like waves, like time passing, an unlikely friendship blooms between these two very different women. The play explores the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsey, both as it was, and as it could be in this space of memory where the rules of time are suspended. They say all the things they never said, never could say. Ultimately, Lily understands that, thanks to memory, no one ever really disappears from your life. She also comes to see that her life, and therefore her artistic practice, is incomplete without the figure of Mrs. Ramsay, contradictory and problematic though she might be

Inspired by the novel "To the Lighthouse" by Virginia Woolf, *To the Light*. Our production includes video and projection. A pianist playing classical repertoire from the era, in the interludes between the scenes, and underscoring the live dialogue, will voice the power of the waves, and the effects of time loss and renewal. The production is an immersive and sensory experience, with the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Briscoe at its heart.



SETTING

This play takes place in the Ramsay's family summer home by the sea. The play shifts through time periods spanning ten years, before and after the Great War.

STYLE/ STRUCTURE

Every play is unique and all good playwrights adapt the form to properly express their subject. *To the Light* is no exception.

In *To the Light*, certain standard features of storytelling are absent. We aren't told about location. There are very few stage directions. We don't get much information about what they're doing, during the dialogue, or what's meant to happen between the words. We aren't told many facts about the characters.

Then there's the question of time. Many plays start in a certain time period, and jump back and forth – and that happens here. But in addition, sometimes they seem to be operating in many times at once, or are able to communicate outside time, as though they're in a kind of a limbo. Certain moments repeat. The script has clues that you won't find in other scripts, but they're more poetic than explanatory. Each section has a title, and throughout the play there are references to 'light' and 'darkness'. They look like stage directions, but clearly don't literally mean 'lights up' and 'lights down.'

When we think about what the playwright said about what she was trying to achieve with this play: "*I was looking for a way to express a sort of internal chaos, inside which our memory hesitates, enlivens, calls out and invents, mixing sensations and events, remembrances and phantasms. This place of memory, inhabited by both the living and the dead, must summon up all verb tenses/all conjugations in order to speak of a time that doesn't really exist.*" we can understand why she's taken this unusual approach. She says that to bring that 'interior chaos' of memory to life, she will need to use 'all the verb tenses.' She will need to push the boundaries of language and 'ordinary', linear story-telling, to get under the surface. The play doesn't just describe that internal chaos of memory, loss, absence, grief. It embodies it. It attempts to plunge the audience into that experience too. It is meant to 'feel' like memory feels.

CHARACTERS

Lily Briscoe – Lily Briscoe is a young woman taken in by the Ramsay family. She is a painter and an artist. Lily is independent, alone, introverted, and devoted to a forward-looking artistic practice. She is resistant to the traditional female roles of marriage and domestic obligations. She never wants to marry and resists the current societal expectations of femininity. Lily is focused on her art and wishes to be remembered for her work. Lily goes through a transformation throughout the play, struggling with her admiration for Mrs. Ramsay and her rejection of the ideas Mrs. Ramsay stands for, and ultimately overwhelmed with the loss of Mrs. Ramsay herself.

Mrs. Ramsay- Mrs. Ramsay is in the heart of a large family, sociable, and conventional in her values. She is a matriarch and protector over her brood of children. She represents the ultimate wife; kind, gentle, loving, but able to stand her ground. She is a beacon of positivity in a sea of uncertainty. While Mrs. Ramsay seems perfectly submissive to Mr. Ramsay's foul manners, the play asserts that she is well aware of what she is doing. Mrs. Ramsay is clever and knows exactly what she is doing. In addition to being married to somewhat renowned metaphysical philosopher, she too studies and has rather brilliant ideas of a philosophical nature. Mrs. Ramsay displays a hidden intelligence that allows her to move through the world as a woman in this time period. Comforting the men in her life while at the same time being utterly in control.

Musician- The female characters are joined onstage by a male pianist. This musician will be performing classical repertoire from the era, in the interludes between the scenes, and underscoring the live dialogue. This presence will voice the power of the waves, and the effects of time loss and renewal allowing the music and accompaniment to act as a third character in the performance. .

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**EVELYNE DE LA CHENELIÈRE**

Playwright *Lumières, Lumières, Lumières*



Evelyne de la Chenelière, author and actress, wrote several plays which were staged in Quebec as well as abroad, and translated and published into several languages. To name only a few, *Des fraises en janvier*, *Henri & Margaux*, *Aphrodite en 04* and *Le plan américain* (recipient for best play of the Festival Scoops to Saarbrücken in Germany in 2009). Her work is an accurate observation of the human nature. In 2006, she was named recipient of the Governor General's Literary Award for her collection *Désordre public*. In

2009, the play *Les pieds des anges* was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award (2009) and was awarded with the Grand Prize of dramatic literature (2010). Her play, *Bashir Lazhar*, has been the object of a cinematographic adaptation by Philippe Falardeau and was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2012 Academy Awards. Her play *La chair et autres fragments de l'amour* is an adaptation of the novel *Une vie pour deux* by Marie Cardinal and was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award (2012). She has been Espace GO's artist in residency for the past three years during which time she wrote *Lumières, Lumières, Lumières*. Evelyne de la Chenelière's first feature film is currently in development with Micro_scope.

"I was looking for a way to express a sort of internal chaos, inside which our memory hesitates, enlivens, calls out and invents, mixing sensations and events, remembrances and phantasms. This place of memory, inhabited by both the living and the dead, must summon up all verb tenses/all conjugations in order to speak of a time that doesn't really exist."

-Evelyne de la Chenelière

JOHN MURRELL

Translator To the Light

In addition to writing numerous original works, John Murrell has translated over a dozen plays in both Russian and French. John has earned a national and international reputation for translating plays by Chekhov, Ibsen, Rostand, Racine, Sophocles, Cocteau, into English. John was short-listed for a Governor General's Award for translating the work of playwright Carole Frechette, whose drama *Thinking of Yu* premiered at the Alberta Theatre Projects Enbridge playRites Festival of New Canadian Plays in 2012

John was born in 1945 in Texas, but has lived for many years in Calgary, where he completed his education. His play *Memoir* has been translated into more than 15 languages. John was the playwright-in-residence with Alberta Theatre Projects from 1975 to 1976, Associate Director with The Stratford Festival from 1977-1978, and the head of the Banff Centre School of Fine



Arts Playwrights Colony in 1986. In 1988 he was appointed as the head of The Canada Council's Theatre Section. He is a Lifetime Member of Playwrights Guild of Canada. In 2002 he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and awarded the Alberta Order of Excellence. In 2008, he received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement, Canada's highest honour in the performing arts.

DESIGN

Costume Design

by Hanne Loosen

Lily begins the Play in a pale blue dress pictured here. Her costume in Act 1 uniquely identifies her from Mrs. Ramsay. The two costumes intentionally create a visual contrast between the two characters. If you look closely you can see Mrs. Ramsay's colors flecked on her smock to show that even in the beginning when they are opposites there is still something that ties them together.



Mrs. Ramsay wears this in the first and second act. The picture of femininity, in florals and pink. She represents the ultimate "wife". The dress is typical of the high fashion of the era and also helps to show her status as a society lady of the time. These colours contrast with Lily's reflecting their contrasting views.



In the second act Lily's costume is similar to Mrs. Ramsay's, however keeping with the colour pallet of her original costume. This costume visual represents Lily's character beginning to be shaped and influence of Mrs. Ramsay. As we explore the second act of the play the contrast between the characters becomes less





- pianist -
Bryce Kulak
JK

Bryce Kulak will be joining the actresses on stage as their accompaniment, bringing another level of musicality to the piece. His costume will be reflective of the era of the play, to connect him with the world of the story. The colour pallet of the costume will coordinate with the other characters on stage.

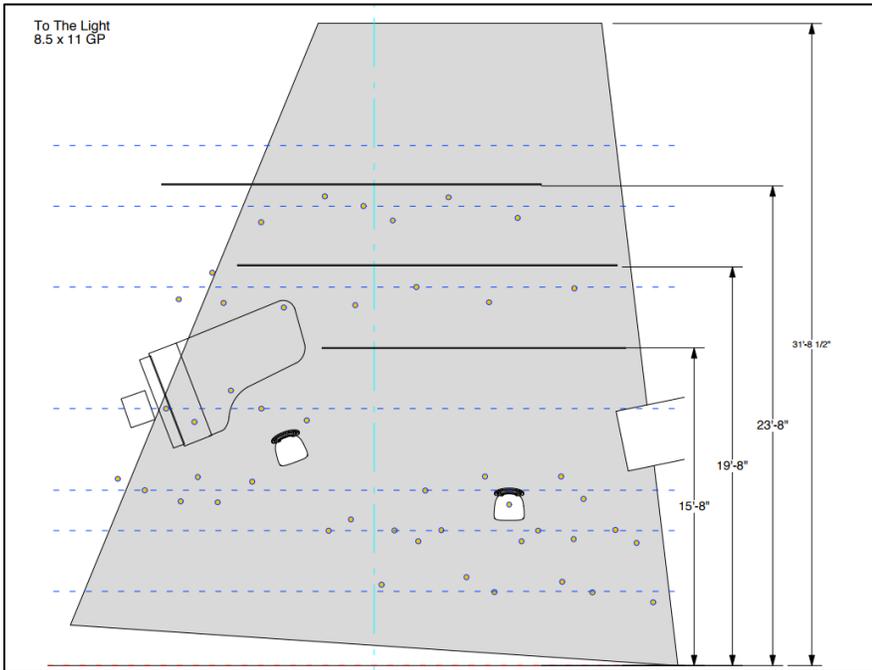


- Mrs Ramsay - Act III
JK

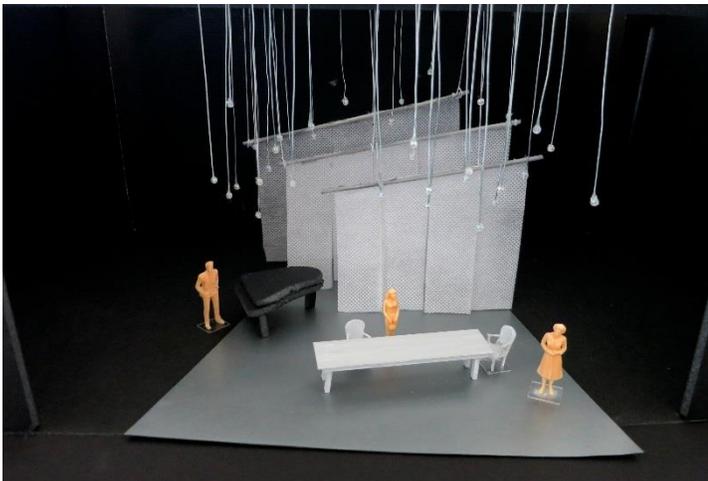
In the final act Mrs. Ramsay is dressed in a gauzy long dress. Comprised of layers of fabric of varying transparency, this garment represents Mrs. Ramsey's departure from the natural world, and is now exists simply as a presence, a feeling and a memory. This garment doesn't necessarily represent any time period, in fact it seems timeless.

Set Design

by Narda McCarroll



This is an image of a “mini plan” which is an early to scale draft of what the set will look like. These drawing are used by the set builders as well as the lighting designer.



These are the images of the Final Maquette. This is a built to scale model of the set design. This model is used by the builders of the show to ensure all elements are the correct shape size and colour and also by the Director who will reference the model when blocking the show.

THEMES AND TOPICS

Themes	
Gender Roles Generational Divide Friendship	Life's Work, and Legacy The true nature of Time Grief and Loss
Post Show Discussion Topics	
<p>1) How do Mrs. Ramsay and Lily's views of marriage differ?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) How is the role of women depicted in the world of this play? How does this compare to what we see in our own community?</p> <p>2) What do you think draws Lily and Mrs. Ramsey together despite their conflicting views?</p> <p>3) What is the significance of Lily's painting?</p> <p>4) How does the use of light versus darkness in this piece add to the narrative?</p> <p>5) Compare the accomplishments of Mr. Ramsay, Lily, and Mrs. Ramsay. How do they affect how they will be remembered?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) What is similar/different about how they approach their life's work?</p> <p>6) What is the significance of Mrs. Ramsay's death?</p> <p>7) How does the play explore not only the painfulness of time, but the restorative healing of time as well?</p> <p>8) How does the playwright's use of grammar in the different acts of the show help us to the construction of time in this play?</p>	

ADDITIONAL READING

Who Was Virginia Woolf?

Born into a privileged English household in 1882, author Virginia Woolf was raised by free-thinking parents. She began writing as a young girl and published her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, in 1915. She wrote modernist classics including *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando*, as well as pioneering feminist works, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. In her personal life, she suffered bouts of deep depression. She committed suicide in 1941, at the age of 59.



Early Life

Born on January 25, 1882, Adeline Virginia Stephen was raised in a remarkable household. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was a historian and author, as well as one of the most prominent figures in the golden age of mountaineering. Woolf's mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen (née Jackson), had been born in India and later served as a model for several Pre-Raphaelite painters. She was also a nurse and wrote a book on the

profession. Both of her parents had been married and widowed before marrying each other. Woolf had three full siblings — Thoby, Vanessa and Adrian — and four half-siblings — Laura Makepeace Stephen and George, Gerald and Stella Duckworth. The eight children lived under one roof at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington.

Two of Woolf's brothers had been educated at Cambridge, but all the girls were taught at home and utilized the splendid confines of the family's lush Victorian library. Moreover, Woolf's parents were extremely well connected, both socially and artistically. Her father was a friend to William Thackeray, the father of his first wife who died unexpectedly, and George Henry Lewes, as well as many other noted thinkers. Her mother's aunt was the famous 19th century photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.

From the time of her birth until 1895, Woolf spent her summers in St. Ives, a beach town at the very southwestern tip of England. The Stephens' summer home, Talland House, which is still standing today, looks out at the dramatic Porthminster Bay and has a view of the Godrevy Lighthouse, which inspired her writing. In her later memoirs, Woolf recalled St. Ives with a great fondness. In fact, she incorporated scenes from those early summers into her modernist novel, *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

As a young girl, Virginia was curious, light-hearted and playful. She started a family newspaper, the *Hyde Park Gate News*, to document her family's humorous anecdotes. However, early traumas darkened her childhood, including being sexually abused by her half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, which she wrote about in her essays *A Sketch of the Past* and *22 Hyde Park Gate*. In 1895, at the age of 13, she also had to cope with the sudden death of her mother from rheumatic fever, which led to her first mental breakdown, and the loss of her half-sister Stella, who had become the head of the household, two years later.

While dealing with her personal losses, Woolf continued her studies in German, Greek and Latin at the Ladies' Department of King's College London. Her four years of study introduced her to a handful of radical feminists at the helm of educational reforms. In 1904, her father died from stomach cancer, which contributed to another emotional setback that led to Woolf being institutionalized for a brief period. Virginia Woolf's dance between literary expression and personal desolation would continue for the rest of her life. In 1905, she began writing professionally as a contributor for *The Times Literary Supplement*. A year later, Woolf's 26-year-old brother Thoby died from typhoid fever after a family trip to Greece.

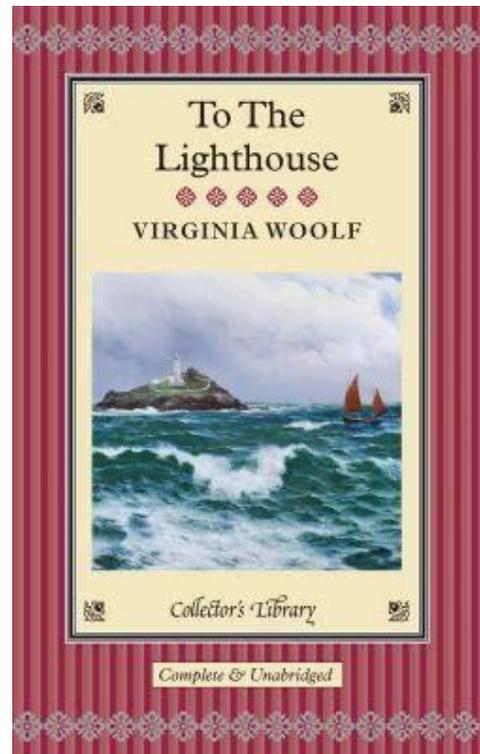
After their father's death, Woolf's sister Vanessa and brother Adrian sold the family home in Hyde Park Gate, and purchased a house in the Bloomsbury area of London. During this period, Virginia met several members of the Bloomsbury Group, a circle of intellectuals and artists including the art critic Clive Bell, who married Virginia's sister Vanessa, the novelist E.M. Forster, the painter Duncan Grant, the biographer Lytton Strachey, economist John Maynard Keynes and essayist Leonard Woolf, among others. The group became famous in 1910 for the Dreadnought Hoax, a practical joke in which members of the group dressed up as a delegation of Ethiopian royals, including Virginia disguised as a bearded man, and successfully persuaded the English Royal Navy to show them their warship, the HMS *Dreadnought*. After the outrageous act, Leonard Woolf and Virginia became closer, and eventually they were married on August 10, 1912. The two shared a passionate love for one another for the rest of their lives.

Literary Work

Several years before marrying Leonard, Virginia had begun working on her first novel. The original title was *Melymbrosia*. After nine years and innumerable drafts, it was released in 1915 as *The Voyage Out*. Woolf used the book to experiment with several literary tools, including compelling and unusual narrative perspectives, dream-states and free association prose. Two years later, the Woolfs bought a used printing press and established Hogarth Press, their own publishing house operated out of their home, Hogarth House. Virginia and Leonard published some of their writing, as well as the work of Sigmund Freud, Katharine Mansfield and T.S. Eliot.

A year after the end of World War I, the Woolfs purchased Monk's House, a cottage in the village of Rodmell in 1919, and that same year Virginia published *Night and Day*, a novel set in Edwardian England. Her third novel *Jacob's Room* was published by Hogarth in 1922. Based on her brother Thoby, it was considered a significant departure from her earlier novels with its modernist elements. That year, she met author, poet and landscape gardener Vita Sackville-West, the wife of English diplomat Harold Nicolson. Virginia and Vita began a friendship that developed into a romantic affair. Although their affair eventually ended, they remained friends until Virginia Woolf's death.

In 1925, Woolf received rave reviews for *Mrs. Dalloway*, her fourth novel. The mesmerizing story interweaved interior monologues and raised issues of feminism, mental illness and homosexuality in post-World War I England. *Mrs. Dalloway* was adapted into a 1997 film, starring Vanessa Redgrave, and inspired *The Hours*, a 1998 novel by Michael Cunningham and a 2002 film adaptation. Her 1928 novel, *To the Lighthouse*, was another critical success and considered revolutionary for its stream of consciousness storytelling. The modernist classic examines the subtext of human relationships through the lives of the Ramsay family as they vacation on the Isle of Skye in Scotland.



Woolf found a literary muse in Sackville-West, the inspiration for Woolf's 1928 novel *Orlando*, which follows an English nobleman who mysteriously becomes a woman at the age of 30 and lives on for over three centuries of English history. The novel was a breakthrough for Woolf who received critical praise for the groundbreaking work, as well as a newfound level of popularity.

In 1929, Woolf published *A Room of One's Own*, a feminist essay based on lectures she had given at women's colleges, in which she examines women's role in literature. In the work, she sets forth the idea that "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." Woolf pushed narrative boundaries in her next work, *The Waves* (1931), which she described as "a play-poem" written in the voices of six different characters. Woolf published *The Years*, the final novel published in her lifetime in 1937, about a family's history over the course of a generation. The following year she published *Three Guineas*, an essay which continued the feminist themes of *A Room of One's Own* and addressed fascism and war.

Throughout her career, Woolf spoke regularly at colleges and universities, penned dramatic letters, wrote moving essays and self-published a long list of short stories. By her mid-forties, she had established herself as an intellectual, an innovative and influential writer and pioneering feminist. Her ability to balance dream-like scenes with deeply tense plot lines earned her incredible respect from peers and the public alike. Despite her outward success, she continued to regularly suffer from debilitating bouts of depression and dramatic mood swings.

Suicide and Legacy

Woolf's husband, Leonard, always by her side, was quite aware of any signs that pointed to his wife's descent into depression. He saw, as she was working on what would be her final manuscript, *Between the Acts* (published posthumously in 1941), that she was sinking into deepening despair. At the time, World War II was raging on and the couple decided if England was invaded by Germany, they would commit suicide together, fearing that Leonard, who was Jewish, would be in particular danger. In 1940, the couple's London home was destroyed during the Blitz, the Germans bombing of the city.

Unable to cope with her despair, Woolf pulled on her overcoat, filled its pockets with stones and walked into the River Ouse on March 28, 1941. As she waded into the water, the stream took her with it. The authorities found her body three weeks later. Leonard Woolf had her cremated and her remains were scattered at their home, Monk's House.

Although her popularity decreased after World War II, Woolf's work resonated again with a new generation of readers during the feminist movement of the 1970s. Woolf remains one of the most influential authors of the 21st century.

“Virginia Woolf.” Biography.com, A&E Networks Television, 15 Sept. 2017, www.biography.com/people/virginia-woolf-9536773. Accessed 19 Sept. 2017.

“Duree Reelle”: Concepts of time in the play

By Vanessa Porteous, Director, To the Light

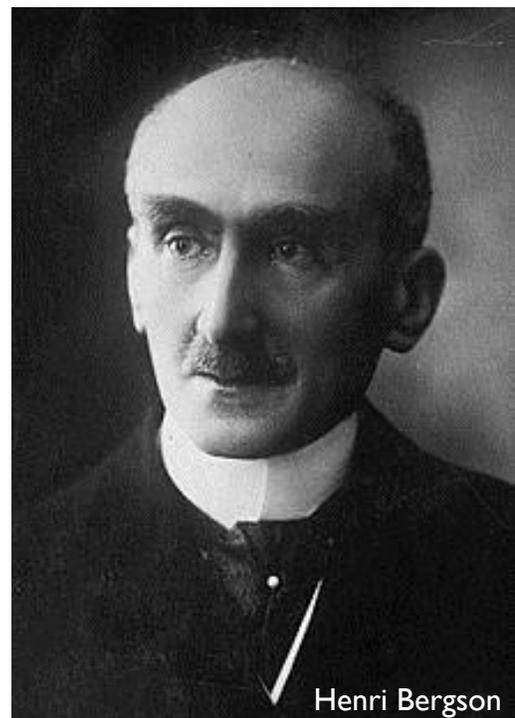
Virginia Woolf survived a series of terrible personal catastrophes in her youth. She lived through World War One and part of WWII, and faced bouts of serious mental illness throughout her life. She herself believed that time was much more ‘like a wave’ than a series of events strung along a line one after another. She was influenced by French philosopher Henri Bergson, who argued that our conventional sense of time, measured by minutes and seconds, was actually an illusion. It was just a handy trick of the mind, a metaphor, not the reality.

Instead, he thought, there are two kinds of time. One: what he called geologic time – the vast eternity of rocks and stars, “the waves and crevices of measureless matter,” which humans can only glimpse in flashes. In this production we’ve tried to evoke that ‘geologic’ or cosmic time, the bigger natural world outside the characters, in the video projections.

The second kind of time was something he called ‘real duration’ – our lived experience of time, where it feels like certain moments last forever, when things that happened years ago continue to resonate every day of our lives, when a decade passes as though in an instant. He called it “Duree Reelle”.

I think Virginia Woolf was trying to express the feeling of this in *To the Lighthouse*, the novel upon which this play is based. I think that perspective is one of the things that drew Evelyne de la Chenelière to adapt the work – Evelyne thinks the same thing. With this play Evelyne is trying, not only to talk about that and to have that as a theme, but to give the audience a lived experience of ‘duree reelle.’”

When I came upon that expression, “duree reelle”, it made a lot of our instincts about how to create this production come together. In this production, we want to give our audience an experience where



Henri Bergson

(without exactly knowing it), they are invited to tune into ‘duree reelle.’ Taking the time to experience the music of Debussy live in between the parts just ‘felt right’ to us – now we have a word for why.

That idea of ‘duree reelle’ has continued to feed the design team, and will feed our creation in the rehearsal hall too. Silence and openness, paying attention to tempo, repetition and variation, jump cuts... all these aspects of the show help create an atmosphere of ‘duree reelle’ We don’t want our play to just intellectually be *about* a different way of understanding life, but to embody it and demonstrate it.

