



Lucie Tripone, the D-Day Academy & Rots Rendez-Vous 44

PRESENTS

A staged reading in English with French subtitles of the play:

Only the Dead

Written by Mike Jankowitz

&

Directed by John Druzba

*Based on the stories of the
Canadian survivors of the Battle of
Putot-en-Bessin on June 8, 1944*

Photo - Archives publiques du Canada, Public Domain

A play in two Acts with a brief Intermission

DATES: **June 5th 6.30pm : Centre d'Animation de Rots,**
Rue Haute Bonny, 14980 Rots
June 7th 6pm : D-Day Academy,
15 Rte de Bayeux, 14980 Rots

With the support of the Municipalities of
Authie, Rots and Thue et Mue (Putot-en-Bessin),
their mayors and their inhabitants



FREE

Information : lucie.tripon@gmail.com



LOCATION

The action of the play *Only The Dead* mainly takes place in Manitoba (Canada) in 1954 and in Normandy (France) in June 1944 .

ABOUT

The story recounts the Canadian defence of the village of Putot-en-Bessin on 8 June, 1944, and the capture and subsequent murder of many of those defenders by the German 12th SS Panzer Division.

The story is told through the post-war memories of some of the surviving Canadians, as they grapple with the legacy of the battle and the psychological toll of their costly victory.

Cast I:

Battalion Headquarters Royal Winnipeg Rifles:

Lt. Col. Matthew Jennings.....Mark Loughney
(Lieutenant Colonel)
Maj. (Major) Fraser Rudd.....Jean-Baptiste Bazin
2IC (Second-In-Command)
Lieutenant..... John Druzba
Jenning's batman..... Pierre-Henry Dutrieux

Company A:

Lt. (Lieutenant) Robert Milgram Alex Elmaleh
Commanding Officer 9 Platoon (later Major, Royal Fusiliers,
British Army)

Company B:

Pte (Private) Iverson.....Pierre-Henry Dutrieux

Company C:

Maj. (Major) Edward Evans.....Nicholas LePage
Commanding Officer
Cpt. (Corporal) Harris Leveque Supreet Mahanti
13 Platoon
Pte (Private) Walter Staczik..... John Druzba
13 Platoon
Pte (Private) Bryce McAndrews..... Nicholas Lepage
13 Platoon
Pte (Private) James Hightower.....Jean-Baptiste Bazin
13 Platoon

Cast II:

Company D:

Major (later Lt. Col) Longmuir (Longy) Fuller..... Josh Dooley
Commanding Officer
2IC (Second-In-Command)..... John Druzba
Fuller's Batman..... Pierre-Henry Dutrieux

Carrier Platoon, RWR

Private (Pte) Lorne 'Abie' Abrams.....Pierre-Henry Dutrieux

3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery

Lieutenant Burgess.....John Druzba

Civilians (in order of appearance)

Bartender, Legion Hall.....Pierre-Henry Dutrieux
Elsie Milgram..... Claire Feuille
Anne Fuller..... Kendall Mason
1st English girl..... Kendall Mason
2nd English girl..... Michelle Bonfils
Yvonne Leveque..... Michelle Bonfils

Director:

John Druzba

French translation:

Lucie Tripone

Sound effects:

Michel Tripone

Assistant/Video:

Hassan Hamza

CAST BIOGRAPHIES I:

Jean-Baptiste Bazin is a French-Chilean actor, filmmaker, and screenwriter. He started his career as a child actor in the film *Messieurs les enfants*, then focused mainly on theater in France. He is also the co-director of the theater company *Castigat Ridendo Mores*. He has recently completed a new translation of David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*, which he will be directing in 2025.

Michelle Bonfils is an actress, poet and lover of strong feelings. Originally from Los Angeles, she studied acting in New York at Atlantic Theater Company and HB Studios. In 2022, she published her first poetry book *Live This Feeling*. She currently lives in Paris.

Josh Dooley is an NYC based actor and sometime producer who has worked in theater since the age of 4. Both of his grandfathers served in WWII, though not in Normandy. Selected credits include: Gareth in *Philadelphia Here I Come*, The Arliss track of *Greater Tuna*, Vinny Bavasi in *Proposals*, the Adam track if *The Complete History of America* (abridged), and Jack in *Incorruptible*.

Pierre-Henry Dutrieux trained as an actor at the Atelier Blanche, Salant in Paris for 3 years. When he left school, he took on projects on stage such as “Et après l’amour” at the Théâtre du Funambule, “At two o’clock in the morning” by Falk Richter in *La Jonquière*, but also a production of “La Dispute” by Marivaux; and starred in numerous short films. In 2016, he filmed a documentary on the situation of natives in the United States in the midst of Trump’s election. Recently he worked on films with Olivier Van Hoofstadt (“Sorry for the inconvenience”) and Hassan Guerrar (“Barbes d’or”).

CAST BIOGRAPHIES II:

Alex Elmaleh is a native of New York City, wherein he is based as an actor. He is a member of the Actors' Equity Association and the Screen Actor's Guild of America. He is descended from people from Seine-Maritime. His family participated among others in the bombing campaign over Germany, Alsace and Lorraine, and built the Liberty Ships. He hopes to do honor unto those who shed their blood for France and against Fascism.

Claire Feuille is an NYC based actor and writer who has trained at Dartmouth College, LAMDA, and the Powerhouse Theater Company at Vassar. Both of her grandfathers fought in WWII, and she is very happy to be in Normandy for this occasion. Selected credits include: Like Other Girls (Edinburgh Fringe; The Triad NYC), A Christmas Carol (Northern Stage), Queen Margaret of Anjou in She Wolf of France (Dartmouth College), Rosalind in As You Like It (Powerhouse Theater), Viola in Twelfth Night (LAMDA). www.clairefeuille.com @clairefeuille

Nicholas LePage is a Canadian actor currently based in Odawa (Ottawa), and he is of Acadian and Swedish descent. He has performed previously at the Centaur theater in Montreal, Crows Theatre in Toronto, and holds a masters in human ecology from Lund University. He feels honored to present the story of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.

Mark Loughney trained at the HB Studio in New York and the Tim Welch Vocal studio in New Jersey, Mark performs as both an actor and musician. His most recent role was in the independent horror film parody "Steamed." He is also a founding member of the New York area band Sara Hodd + The Drive. Mark is a graduate of Seton Hall University and Rutgers University.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES III:

Supreet Mahanti is an actor based in New York. After performing frequently in school and college dramas, he took a break from acting to pursue a career in advertising. He has been active in filmmaking throughout his communications career, and rediscovered his passion for acting at HB Studio, New York, where he has been honing his craft since 2022. His recent credits include Our day will come, an independent film. He hails from India.

Kendall Mason (she/her) is a US based actress. She recently finished touring with the Pickles Theatre Company in France and Belgium. Past works include: A Piece of My Heart (Firebox Theatre Company), Much Ado about Nothing (Shakespeare at the Castle), and The 39 Steps (Prime Stage). Kendall is very excited to be apart of the 80th anniversary of D-Day and to pay her respects to all the soldiers who fought during WWII.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY:

John Druzba (director/actor) is honored to be invited onto this creative team. He studied classical theater at BADA's Midsummer at Oxford under Paola Dionisotti and Mick Barnfather, with ongoing study in NYC at HB Studio, Barrow Group and Upright Citizens Brigade. Recent credits include Tudor in Like a Queen or Whatever at HB Studio and Benjamin Franklin in Home of the Brave at the Queens Short Play Festival. He is best known for being a former background-actor on Saturday Night Live. Hobbies include singing, comedy, lindy-hop & environmental conservation.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:

Mike Jankowitz is a professional playwright and actor who was trained by famed acting teacher Stella Adler. He has performed extensively in the United States as well as authoring several plays, but, in part because of his deep affection for and associations with the nation and peoples of Canada, considers his most ambitious and important project to date a planned trilogy of plays - of which this is the first - revolving around the murder of Canadian prisoners-of-war by the Waffen SS in the days immediately following 6 June 1944.

Already reasonably well-versed in World War Two history, he began researching various books on the Battle of Normandy and moved on to extensive research of primary sources at National Archives Canada, the Public Records Office (UKNA) in Kew, London, and various Regimental Museums and Archives, among other venues - as well as interviewing several dozen Canadian veterans and their families, and attending several D-Day commemorations in Normandy, starting with the opening of the Juno Beach Centre in 2003 and continuing for the 60th, 65th, 70th and 75th anniversaries (including on-the-ground research at each of the Canadian battle sites related to the murders).

PRODUCER BIOGRAPHY:

Born in Caen, **Lucie Tripon** grew up in Authie and has lived in New York for more than a decade. She is a freelance writer and translator who has also acted in various independent films and plays and short sketches performed on stage in London and New York. She co-wrote and co-directed the short narrative film *Pink Dolphin* (selected at the 2015 Cannes' film festival short corner section). She met Mike Jankowitz in New York and from their random encounter she decided to do what she could to have *Only the Dead* be heard in Normandy as to pay tribute to the Canadian and WWII soldiers and bring that story to her fellow Normans with the help of an amazing cast and team.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY BY THE PLAYWRIGHT

On 6 June, 1944, the long--awaited Allied invasion of Northwest Europe began. One of the most defining and decisive operations of the Second World War, D-Day - as it became known - was at the time the largest and most expensive operation of its kind ever attempted. Preceded by large-scale parachute drops and glider landings, the amphibious assault on the Normandy coast was divided into 5 assault beaches; the Canadian beach-head, code-named Juno, stretched from Graye-sur-Mer in the west to Langrune-sur-Mer in the east and involved the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division (commanded by Maj. Gen. R.F. Keller) and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade (as well as a unit of Royal Marines Commando). Although suffering the second-highest casualty rate of all of the beach-heads, the Canadians managed to push further inland than any other Allied troops - a success which also meant they were positioned to take the brunt of the German armoured counter-attacks.

The following day, the advancing armoured and infantry units of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade were met head-on by a substantially larger force of 3 battalions of infantry and a battalion of tanks from the notorious 12th SS 'Hitler Youth' Panzer Division in and around the village of Authie. While the Germans prevented the 9th Brigade from reaching their objective, Carpiquet Airport, the commander of the German force, Kurt Meyer, was (more crucially) stopped well short of his objective - Juno Beach itself.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY (END) BY THE PLAYWRIGHT

The next day - 8 June (D plus 2) - the Germans attempted to secure a staging area, in the villages of Norrey-en-Bessin, Putot-en-Bessin, and Brouay, for a full-scale counter-attack against the as-yet still vulnerable Allied beach-heads. But the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, comprised of the Regina Rifle, Royal Winnipeg Rifles, and Canadian Scottish Regiments (with one battalion each) had already reached their final D-Day objective (becoming the first Allied units to do so), establishing a Forward Defense Line along the Caen-Bayeux railway, with the Regina's in Bretteville l'Orgueilleuse and (vitally, as it turned out) Norrey-en-Bessin, and the Winnipeg's in Putot-en-Bessin - which was also a Corps boundary between the Canadians and British troops advancing from Gold Beach.

Having failed to dislodge the Regina's from Norrey (which the Germans would repeatedly fail to do), Wilhelm Mohnke's 3 battalions of Panzer Grenadiers from the 26th Regiment of the 12th SS Division, along with the 12th SS Recce (Reconnaissance) Regiment as well as the better parts of at least 2 battalions from the just-arriving Panzer-Lehr Division, turned their attention on Putot-en-Bessin.

What followed there and later in Bretteville and Norrey would be among the most decisive actions of the Battle of Normandy - and perhaps the war.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Originally written in 2007, *Only the Dead* has been the subject of a public staged reading in Winnipeg (Canada) and in New-York City (USA). The public staged readings of June 5 and 7, 2024 in Rots will be a Premiere in Europe.

The play touches upon many aspects regarding the Canadian involvement in Normandy in WWII. It provides a historical account of the events on June 8, 1944 in Putot-en-Bessin, and informs us about the war crimes committed against the Canadian soldiers in Normandy by the German SS, including the lack of proper justice and accountability that followed. It also explores the long-term psychological trauma and tolls the war had on veterans and their difficulty (and in some case inability) to resume a normal life.

As Plato wrote: “*Only the dead shall know the end of war*” (the title to this play is taken from the first part of that quote). Formulated in Ancient Times, this Antic truth has never ceased to be relevant as shown in the play.

In fact, as we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in a world environment with rising hostility and talks of even a possible WWIII, *Only the Dead* appears more than ever relevant to us. It invites us to meditate on the human cost of war and to cherish and renew our attachment to the values of peace, democracy and freedom those young Canadian and Allied forces fought and gave their lives for.

DEDICATED TO



**The Canadians
who fought in Normandy
and beyond,
Those that survived
and those that did not,
Who gave their all for all of us.**

We wish to thank the following:

Our partners: Jean-Pierre Benamou, the D-Day Academy, and l'Association Rots Rendez-Vous 44;

The following persons for their extraordinary support: Robert and Martha Rowen, Peter Buckley, our director John Druzba, our actors, the mayors of Authie (Olivier Simar), Putot-en-Bessin (François Touyon), Rots (Michel Bourguignon) and Thue et Mue (Michel Lafont), and Rots' deputy mayor Jacky Besnier;

As well as: Xavier Douesnel, Viviane and Michel Tripone, Lucas Bléger, Chris Sacarabany, Emma Auvray, the hosting families (Durand, Grandsire, Lafont, Lebougeois, Plessis-Duchemin, Soos), Ben Alexander, Felix Rodriguez, the management and staff of Cora Rots, Kris Devasabai and Antoine Tripone, and everyone who contributed...

The author also would like to thank personally:

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles Regiment, the late Lockhart Ross Fulton, the late Norm Donogh, the late John Mitchell, Jim Parks and many other veterans of the battle of Normandy, and David and Denise Warwyk, Dwight Macauley, and the Canadian Consular General of New York.

