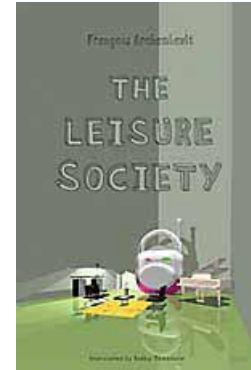


Editor's Choice: Literary

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

3209 Archambault, François. **The Leisure Society**. Translated by Bobby Theodore. Vancouver: Talonbooks. 96p. \$15.95pa. ISBN 0-88922-531-1pa. CCIP. DDC C842'.54.

François Archambault, a 1993 graduate of the National Theatre School, has already achieved a reputation as a sharp social satirist. His first professionally produced play, *Cul sec (Fast Lane)*, created much media controversy. Another of his plays, *Si la tendance se maintient*, about the referendum on Quebec sovereignty, ran with considerable critical brouhaha during the referendum campaign. *15 secondes* received a Governor General's Award in 1998, and Bobby Theodore's English translation of it was short-listed for the same award in 2000. *La société des loisirs* was a 2003 GGA finalist and received the "Masque" for the Best Original Play from the Académie Québécoise in 2004.



The Leisure Society is so deft and nimble that it is impossible to tell that one is actually reading a translation of Archambault's original play. It is a wild roller coaster of a romp that is hysterically funny even as it sets off inner alarm bells at virtually every turn. In an opening question-and-answer scene reminiscent of *A Chorus Line*, a married couple with one child insist rather too vehemently that they love each other, that they are happy, and that they intend to adopt a visible-minority child to make their family complete. The rest of the play brings in their best friend, Mark, 35, and his current sleeping partner, a young woman of barely 21, and charges along in sketch fashion to expose their lives of superficial consumerism, off-the-rails child-rearing, trendy erotic fantasies, and glib conversation that moves from euphemistic lies to betrayals and socially awkward pauses. Many readers will find at least three or four pages of the wildly entertaining dialogue to have crossed the line because of subject matter or language, but the precise offending pages will differ according to one's personal attitudes and sensitivities. The reaction is certainly intended, because Archambault portrays a society that *should* be raising an alarm.

A brilliant play by a latter-day Molière with an incisive Swiftian twist, it is highly recommended, but note the caveat about subject matter and language.

Reviewer

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Publisher

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