

# Francesca Gagnon

press

*Francesca Gagnon has a very particular voice, powerful, raucous, bewitching ; a virtuosic performance. A must hear, a medley of Janis Joplin and Edith Piaf.*

La Presse, Montreal, QC

*Fête à la Terre, the title of this intimate concert presentation, sums up her (Francesca Gagnon) love for nature, the Earth, and its inhabitants. Her message is harmony amongst all.*

Le Journal de Montréal, QC

*Francesca mesmerized her public, taking them on a trip filled with passion, love and broken dreams ; with her powerful voice and musical cross breed of Spanish guitars, languorous accordions and Mediterranean rhythms. She inhabits her songs with a rare intensity.*

La Tribune, Sherbrooke, QC

*Prepare for an evening of passion and sensitivity, Francesca's voice will seduce you.*

Liaison, Sherbrooke, QC

*Québécois vocalist Francesca Gagnon reigns supreme over the two-hour-plus performance.*

Orange County's Business Lifestyle Magazine, Los Angeles (*Cirque du Soleil*)

*At the forefront of this production is the sumptuous voice of Francesca Gagnon, a Canadian singer ; who lends an ethereal air to the show with her unique singing.*

The Press Democrat, San Francisco (*Cirque du Soleil*)

*If Cirque du Soleil is indeed the eighth wonder of the world, Gagnon is the otherworldly herald who made everyone notice.*

Entertainment Today, Los Angeles (*Cirque du Soleil*)

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La Presse, November 30, 2005—ARTS ET SPECTACLES  
(Montréal, Québec)

Francesca Gagnon *Ode to Earth*

# Whimsical

Fabienne Couturier  
CRITIC

One could say that Francesca Gagnon is *the* voice of the *Cirque du Soleil*. In any case, *the* voice that carried *Alegria*—one of the best known and most popular shows of the Cirque—the world over. Ergo, she fell in love with the world and its music which she now wants to share.

Last night in Montréal, she gave her first solo show, drawn in part from her *Hybride* album released in June.

Francesca Gagnon still has a very distinctive voice—powerful, somewhat husky and entrancing—which she plays like a virtuoso her instrument. Backed by four musicians and two vocalists (all excellent), she comes on stage as a great priestess for peace, very elegant in a long rose-colored dress and prune frock-coat. Her hair is styled Pompadour *trash*, with here and there streaks of color, and a long braid adorned with feathers, rather than ringlets, over her shoulder. Introducing Francesca: whimsical, theatrical, extravagant.

Francesca Gagnon has so much soul (she has more than plenty) in the few songs which she delivers in French, English and Italian that we really sense she's on the right path. Her willpower brings her success! One has to hear her medley of Janis Joplin and Édith Piaf songs to grasp the magnitude of her talent: she completely lets loose, jokes, mistakenly yet coolly gets the words mixed up (that's where the *padlang* comes in handy!) and gives her all.

Francesca Gagnon—additional performance at the Lion d'Or tonight at 8 p.m. (in partnership with Équiterre). Tickets: 514 844-2172.

La Presse, 30 novembre 2005

MONTREAL, QC

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## ARTS ET SPECTACLES

Francesca Gagnon *Fête à la Terre*

# Fantastique

### CRITIQUE

Francesca Gagnon est en quelque sorte « la » voix du Cirque du Soleil. Celle, en tout cas, qui a porté dans le monde entier *Alegria*, l'un des spectacles les plus connus et les plus courus du Cirque, lequel, à son tour, a fait voyager la chanteuse un peu partout sur la planète. Elle en a gardé un amour du monde et de ses musiques qu'elle veut maintenant partager.

Elle donnait hier soir son premier spectacle solo à Montréal, en partie tiré de son album *Hybride*, lancé en juin dernier.

Francesca Gagnon a toujours cette voix très particulière, puissante, un peu rauque, envoûtante, dont elle joue comme un virtuose de son instrument. Entourée de quatre musiciens et de deux choristes (tous excellents), elle entre sur scène comme une grande prêtresse de la paix, en longue robe rose et redingote prune, très élégante. Elle est coiffée à la Pompadour *trash*, avec quelques mèches colorées ici et là, et une longue tresse ornée de plumes qui remplace l'anglaise sur l'épaule. Voilà, c'est Francesca : fantastique, théâtrale, extravagante.

Francesca Gagnon a d'ailleurs tellement plus d'âme (elle qui en a déjà beaucoup) dans les quelques chansons qu'elle offre en français, en anglais ou en italien que l'on voit bien que c'est par là qu'elle doit aller. Quand elle veut, elle peut ! Il faut l'entendre dans un pot-pourri de Janis Joplin et d'Édith Piaf pour mesurer toute l'étendue de son talent : elle se lâche complètement *lousse*, rigole, se trompe mine de rien dans les paroles (là, le *padlang* devient utile !) et donne tout ce qu'elle a.

Francesca Gagnon, en supplémentaire ce soir au Lion d'Or à 20 h (en collaboration avec Équiterre). Billets : 514-844-2172.

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# Passeport, **SVP**

## Voyager pour apprendre

**Amoureuse de culture, de spiritualité et de végétation luxuriante, Francesca Gagnon adore plus que toute autre chose s'imprégner de l'esprit des lieux qu'elle visite.**

DAVID SANTERRE

La voix d'*Alegria*, grande création du Cirque du Soleil qui a fait le tour du monde, a beaucoup voyagé, avec le cirque, mais aussi pour sa propre carrière en chanson.

De l'Australie au Venezuela en passant par l'Afrique, Singapour et la Thaïlande, elle aime sortir des sentiers battus.

«J'adore découvrir la spiritualité des gens. Le bouddhisme et l'hindouisme sont des philosophies de vie qui m'attirent», explique celle qui lance cette semaine un album intitulé *Hybride*.

Conséquemment, l'Asie fait partie des destinations qui l'ont le plus fascinée.

«La Thaïlande est un endroit de rêve pour les paysages, les bords de mer incroyables, pour les Thaïlandais, un peuple fascinant», décrit Francesca.

«Et aussi pour les massages... Après une blessure aux côtes à la suite d'une chute quelques jours plus tôt en Australie, une vieille sage m'a tout replacé», ajoute-t-elle, sourire en coin.

### Afrique enrichissante

Francesca aime apprendre en voyage.

L'Afrique, plus précisément la République centrafricaine, le Gabon et le Cameroun, où elle a fait une tournée, lui ont permis plusieurs constats.

«La pauvreté des gens y arrache le cœur. Mais ces gens sont d'une beauté...»

Même dans cette pauvreté, on voit la bonne humeur dans leurs yeux. On ne veut pas revenir de l'Afrique», raconte-t-elle.

africains l'inspirent aussi beaucoup dans sa création.

«De voir toutes ces injustices, les plus beaux et les pires côtés de l'homme, ça fait réfléchir et apprendre. Ça m'inspire aussi dans ma création», dit-elle.

### Australie, France

Avec le Cirque du Soleil, Francesca Gagnon a aussi passé un bon moment en Australie, où elle

s'est émerveillée devant la végétation dense et exotique.

Elle y a de plus été initiée à la musique traditionnelle par des aborigènes et leur didjeridu.

Comme pour beaucoup d'artistes, l'Europe est un incontournable. Elle y a vécu plus de quatre ans.

«J'ai passé beaucoup de temps à Marseille et à Toulouse. Les gens y sont d'une jovialité et d'un accueil sublimes. Quand on s'y fait un ami, c'est pour la vie. Même si on ne donne pas de nouvelles pendant des années et qu'on se pointe subitement, on est bien reçu», louange l'artiste.

### Rêve glacial

Parmi ses rêves de voyages, il y a le glacial Arctique.

«Depuis que je suis toute petite



Charmante rencontre au Gabon.

Elle a également compris pourquoi les Africains ont la réputation d'être peu stressés et peu pressés...

«Un soir avant un spectacle, vers 8h15, les gars qui montaient la scène plantaient encore des clous juste avant le spectacle... Ils me disaient: *Ne vous inquiétez pas, madame!* Mais avec cette chaleur, on ne peut que faire les choses plus lentement.»

La musique et les rythmes



Avec un aborigène et son didjeridu dans les rues de Sydney.

te que je veux voir des icebergs, comment ils se forment. On dirait que ça me parle d'une façon particulière...»

Journal de Montréal, June 4, 2005

## PASSPORT, PLEASE

# Travel brings knowledge

**Passionate about culture, spirituality and tropical vegetation, Francesca Gagnon loves above anything else to let herself be moved by the spirit of the place she's visiting.**

David Santerre

The voice of *Alegria*—a masterpiece from the *Cirque du Soleil* which has gone round the world—has much travelled with the *Cirque*, and for her own singing career as well. Whether in Australia, Venezuela or Africa, in Singapore or Thailand, she prefers going off the beaten track.

"I love discovering people's spirituality. Buddhism and hinduism are life philosophies which greatly interest me," says Francesca Gagnon, who launched her album, *Hybride*, this week. For that reason, Asia is one of the destinations which most captivates her.

"Thailand is a dream of a place because of its incredible landscapes and seashores, and its fascinating people," explains Francesca. "As well as for massages... After being injured in a fall which happened a few days earlier in Australia, an old wise woman put everything back into place," she adds smilingly.

continues...

photo left:  
Chance meeting in Gabon.

photo right:  
With an aborigine playing  
his didjeridu in the streets  
of Sydney.

... continues

## Enlightening Africa

Francesca appreciates learning while travelling. Africa has allowed her to realize many things, more specifically the Central African Republic, Gabon and Cameroon where she has toured.

"The poverty of the people tears at your heart, but they have such beauty... Even in their indigence, you can detect their good disposition in their eyes. You just don't want to leave Africa," she says.

She has also understood why Africans are reputed not to be stressed, nor in a hurry... "Once, just before a show, the guys setting up the stage were still hammering in nails at around 8:15 p.m... They said to me: *Don't worry, madam!* But in such a heat, you can't possibly do things other than slowly."

African music and rhythms greatly inspire her creative process.

"Seeing all that injustice—the best and the worst of mankind—makes one think and learn. It inspires my creativity," she reflects.

## Australia, France

With the *Cirque du Soleil*, Francesca Gagnon spent some time in Australia where she marvelled at the exotic and luxuriant vegetation. There, she was introduced to traditional music by the aborigines and their *didjeridu*.

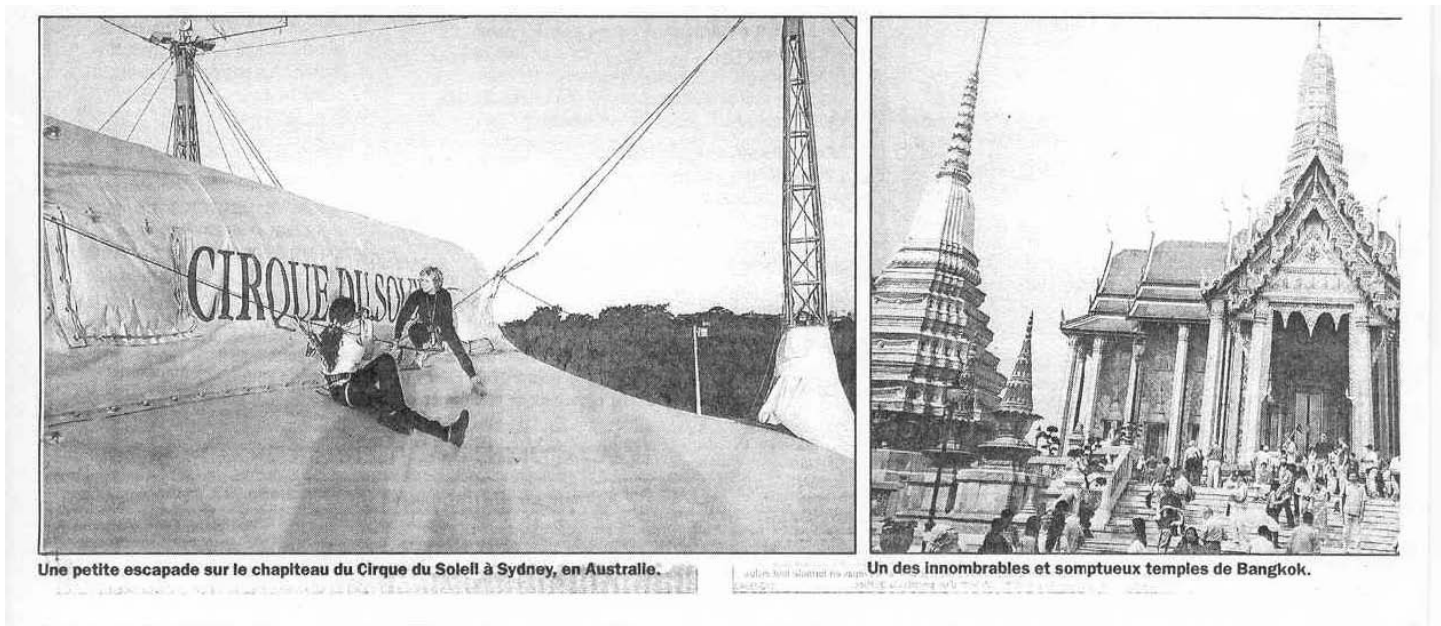
As for many artists, Europe is must. She lived there for over four years.

"I spent a lot of time in Marseille and Toulouse. The people are very cheery and cordial. When you make friends, it's for life. Even if you don't keep in touch for years then happen on their doorstep, you're well greeted," extols the artist.

## A glacial dream

Her dream trips include the glacial Arctic.

"Ever since I was little, I've wanted to see icebergs, how they are formed. They seem to have a particular effect on me..."



**photo left:**  
A quick trek on the Cirque du Soleil's big top in Sydney, Australia.

**photo right:**  
One of the many and magnificent temples in Bangkok.

## ALEGRIA

Not surprisingly, Gagnon's singing amazed the audience. It's not surprising because she's not only had years of practice, but she has also appeared in such prestigious companies as the Opéra Bolshoi and Milan's La Scala.

Her singing added that extra quality Cirque is known for. The songs' tempos and gothic sounds are inspiring, entrancing and add to the suspense that accompanies the actions taking place at the moment. Gagnon's voice is so mesmerizing, a seduced audience member followed her up on stage only to be restrained moments later by the strongman.

The entire mystical atmosphere was one of magical sorcerers and fairies found in the times of Merlin. Somehow it all seemed to fit like pieces of a puzzle. If any one of these pieces were missing, the production would have been incomplete. Although there's no question that the acrobatics make Cirque du Soleil the spectacle it's become, the production wouldn't be the same without the hypnotic melodies, Lemieux's colorful costumes and of course Gagnon's operatic voice. "Alegría" is a wonderful two-and-a-half hour trip through fantasyland.

The Orange County Register **COVER STORY** Sunday, Jan. 22, 1995

### Diminutive Cirque singer packs power

One of the many elements that sets Cirque du Soleil apart from a run-of-the-mill circus is its music. Surreal, eerie, omnipresent, it sounds more like a soundtrack to a David Lynch movie than incidental music for theater under the big top.

One of "Alegría's" featured musicians is Francesca Gagnon, a diminutive 37-year-old Quebecois singer with a searingly powerful voice that belies her size.

"The kind of music we wanted is inspired by what we call 'chanson realiste,'" said Franco Dragone, "Alegría's" director. "You know, like Edith Piaf? (Francesca) has a voice like hers a little

bit. She's very thin, so her voice is like a paradox."

Classically trained as a musician, Gagnon also has studied modern, jazz and African dance. She is well known in her native province, where she has had two No. 1 pop hits. In 1986, Gagnon was awarded a Juno — Canada's Grammy — for best new female artist. This is her debut Cirque du Soleil.



**FRANCESCA GAGNON:** She has had two No. 1 hits in Quebec.