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POUR LES JEUNES
DE TOUS ÂGES

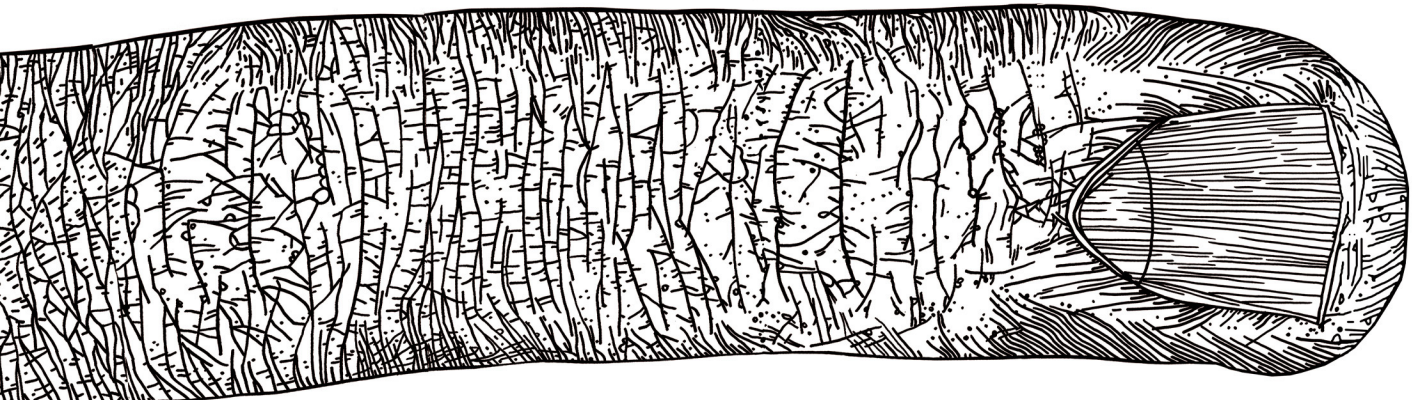
It is with great pleasure that Valise Theater shares with you its new creation, entitled “Letters from Drawing Town”.

Between reality and dream, through drawings and shadows, “Letters from Drawing Town” is a journey into the imaginary and mysterious world of a little boy with a rather strange idea. The show invites you to a poetic encounter where theater and graphic are combined. It is an invitation to dive into an imaginary world populated by drawings, objects, shadows, and video projections.



Word of the author

My artistic life began a long time ago with painting and design. For me, this mode of vital expression represents a refined and pure language that speaks to life. This gives rise to new stories. Letters from Drawing Town is one of those dialogues that began more than sixteen years ago and continues to feed the creative currents of my life. It is a maelstrom where my identity, nature and my childhood dreams merge. In any case, I do not want to give up my dreams.



Word of the director

When you're little, you do what you want. Your dreams are a total space of freedom. You fly with birds, you talk with flowers and you walk with trees. In *Letters from Drawing Town*, I found my childhood follies. I became small again and I rediscovered my imaginary friends!! Let's go now, acquainted with the friends of our dreams!



About the project

This show is an interdisciplinary project that combines puppetry, shadow, video projection, and acting. Through an original text, this show tells the story of a dreamy little boy who dares to look differently. By always questioning himself about natural phenomena, he invents strange creatures in his head. Then he began to draw these imaginary creatures on the paper and stick them to his room's walls. After some time, the little boy's room is filled with thousands of drawings. But, this little boy's craziness does not stop, and he still needs more room to keep his imaginary friends. So, he begins to build a big paper-city for his imaginary friends who have no place on the wall anymore.



Years go by and the little boy grew up. He becomes a great artist, a painter who draws rather strange works. But one day he goes to his old room to visit his old paper city and he is shocked. Because, he realizes that all his drawings are just black and white, without any color. In questioning himself, he finds himself a strange artist who only draws black and white.



But also, he realizes he likes colors too. So, he decides to color all his black and white drawings. But there are already thousands in his paper city, and it would take years to color such a big city. He gets so sad and angry at himself and questions himself. In the end, he decides to share his black and white drawings with people all over the world. So, writing a letter, he invites children to help him color the drawings. Envelopes containing a letter and black and white drawings are sent to children all over the world.



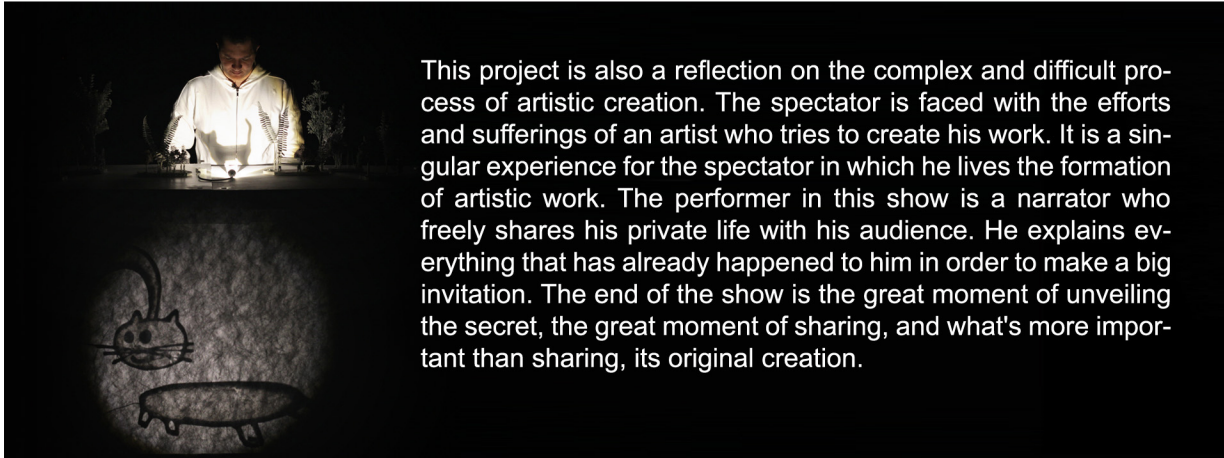
The idea

The original idea of the project is inspired by a coloring workshop, given to Syrian refugee children in 2016 at the CSAI, Social Center of Immigrant Aid in Montreal. At that time, by means of a very simple idea, two interpreters, welcoming children and their families in an already prepared space covered with dozens of black and white drawings, invited them to color the drawings together. This desire for sharing and generosity has resulted in a strong spirit of solidarity between the performers and the newcomer public. It was an event that strongly encouraged us to put on a show around such an idea to be let by the public.



This creation is also the fruit of a meeting between theater and graphic. During the whole process of research and creation, we have tried to explore dramatic relationships between theater and graphic. This present creation is inspired by the original works of an illustrator of children's books. We have a dreamy little boy who draws strange creatures on papers. Drawings that take life and have a lively and poetic relationship with their creator. So, we started doing a new dramaturgy on conventional shadow theater in order to develop an original, fantastic and poetic space that shows the complexity of imagination. We would like to immerse the audience in an imaginary universe where there is a dramatic relationship between the drawings and the body, between the drawings and the objects.





This project is also a reflection on the complex and difficult process of artistic creation. The spectator is faced with the efforts and sufferings of an artist who tries to create his work. It is a singular experience for the spectator in which he lives the formation of artistic work. The performer in this show is a narrator who freely shares his private life with his audience. He explains everything that has already happened to him in order to make a big invitation. The end of the show is the great moment of unveiling the secret, the great moment of sharing, and what's more important than sharing, its original creation.

It is for this reason that at the end of the show, the spectators have a very strong empathy with the main character and they would like to accompany him in the new stage of creation. This is a situation we experienced in our first general at Maison Theater. At the end of the show, we had ten enthusiastic spectators to accompany the character to create the next stage of collective creation. We had a dozen spectators for creativity and a spirit of solidarity. We said to ourselves it's our goal and we got there. The little boy of our story is colored by an audience being so interested in staying with him to continue the creation. Creation never stops. Leaving the room, the audience have envelopes full of black and white drawings. This is a new invitation to continue the creation. The little boy of story is always present to receive colorful drawings. The spectators will color and return the drawings to the little boy. They can even ask him to send them more new drawings. In the performance at Maison Theater, the children were very interested in continuing the creation.



Techniques and explorations

This project is the result of research on contemporary shadow theater. For this purpose, we have researched the shadow projection on the actor's body. We tried to put acting in a lively and interactive relationship with the projection of the shadow and the video. This idea is inspired by the text. We have an artist who gives himself to his dreams and fantasies. Having this idea, we created a space in which the character is surrounded by shadows, projections, and lights. The puppet technique, video, and lighting are all original and all invented for this show. For example, concerning puppets, we have explored a kind of very soft and flexible acetate that allows creating a more fluid shadow space. Our puppets do not have complex joints. But the puppet texture allows us to play more with the imagination of the audience. They are the creatures suspended in the area that move freely in space. These are at the service of a poetic and fantastic creation that allows the public to dive into the imaginary universe of the main character.

Also, the use of the video allowed us to relate the drawings and the actor's body in a very interactive space. This idea is at the service of the idea of animation of the drawings in order to make the public travel in the imaginary universe of the main character. In a free space, an actor tries to relate his body to projected images. This creates more dynamic movements and more complex images. We use the actor's body as a mobile and interactive puppet booth in this show. By relating his body to the shadows, the drawings, the silhouettes, and the videos, the interpreter enjoys all the possibilities of manipulation that could be provided by his body. They allow themselves to be inspired by everything around them.

This show considered a respect towards nature. The main character is an artist who finds his creative ideas in nature. He draws trees, rocks, and his own finger. All these imaginary creatures are inspired by nature. It is by taking inspiration from nature that he creates his drawings. With this idea in mind, we built a multifunctional table. It is a folding table with the possibility to create different spaces. Trees, objects and a large paper city are already installed on this table is just a very simple table at the beginning of the show. It's a table that works itself as a puppet, like a living creator who makes the reaction to the movement of the performer. We are in a dream space where humans, animals, and objects are transformed. This show puts reality into question. What is reality? What do you see or dream? Why do not trees have eyes? Why is a dog's tail on his back and not in another place? Why aren't we as hairy as cats?



Production

As the part of the program Chambre d'amis organized by Maison Theatre in Montreal, and under the artistic direction of Sabrina Baran, co-artistic director of Illusion Theatre, we went through several residencies. This project was also selected as part of the CUBE program, and in the summer of 2018 we had a very inspiring residency at the Carousel Theater. We received the artistic accompaniment of the creative team of this last theater. At the Carrousel, we were explored various techniques and materials. However, the residency at Maison Theatre and Illusion Theatre have allowed us to develop aspects that are more complex. At Maison Theatre, under the supervision of Sophie Labelle, artistic director, we finally found the final form of the show.



Residency's calendar

- Summer 2018, Illusion Theater / Montreal
- Fall 2018, The Carrousel Theater (CUBE program)
- Winter 2019, La Maison Theater (Programme Chambre d'amis)
- Summer 2019, The Carrousel Theater (CUBE program)

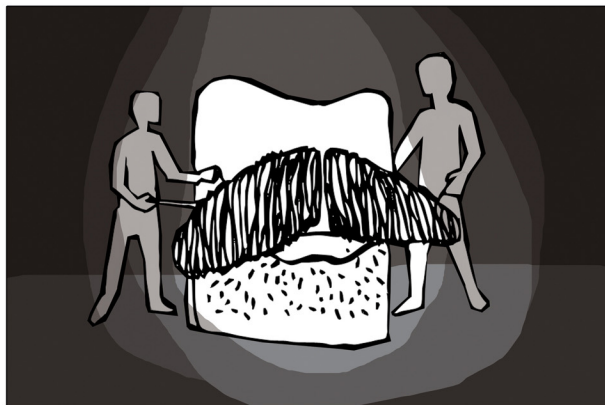
Presentation's calendar

- January 2019, Maison Theater / Montreal
- May 2019, Sherbrook, Magog and Coaticook (Petits Bonheurs Festival, invited by Côté Scène)
- May 2020, Petits-Bonheurs Festival in Montreal and Laval

Artistic approach of Valise Theater

Selected as part of the program *Chambre d'amis*, organized by the Maison Theater, and selected as part of the CUBE program, this project was much appreciated by artists and broadcasters in Quebec. The singularity of this project is to adopt the new technologies in a poetic creation and full of original images. In a modern scenography, and in a very quiet and intimate atmosphere, the show puts the audience in front of a performance that is between theater, graphic, video projection.

This project is a big step in the development of Valise Theater. After five years of research and creation, this project is the first original production of the company. This is the result of the work of an experienced team and graduated from the theater schools who are interested in the art of puppetry. The realization of this project allows the artists of Valise Theater to advance in their research on contemporary puppet theater. Exploration and construction of original lighting for shadow theater, the adaptation of new technologies in puppet theater, and bodily exploration in sight manipulation are some of the results of this production. One of the objectives of Valise Theater is to create a space for artistic collaborations between artists of all horizons in order to make new experiments in the contemporary puppet theater. Thanks to this project, the company has made good progress towards this goal. To carry out this project, illustrators, videographers, experts and experienced puppeteers were invited. Another result of this project is the collaboration of artists from different cultures. It is a multicultural creation created by artists from Quebec, Iran, Mexico, and Brazil. Valise Theater is pleased to operate as a cultural bridge between Quebec culture and aesthetics and those derived from cultural diversity.



Creative team



- **Arash Badretalei (Author and illustrator)**

Graduated in graphic design, member of the Iranian association of graphic designers and illustrators, Arash has been working for some years as an artistic advisor of Valise Theater. He began his artistic journey in 2004 by producing theater posters and illustrations for children books. In addition to his visual arts projects, he also had theater experiences. In recent years, his explorations in visual art and drama have mostly been part of interdisciplinary projects, such as our Letters from the Drawing Town show.



- **Mojtaba Moaf (Actor, Director & Puppeteer)**

Comedian, puppeteer and director, Mojtaba has been working in this field for sixteen years. He graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran since 2002. Upon his arrival in Quebec in 2014, he founded Valise Theater with the goal of creating and producing puppet shows for all audiences. He became interested in new forms of manipulation in contemporary puppet theater by exploring the living and interactive relationships between the puppet and the manipulator.



- **Isabelle Chrétien (Scenographer and puppet designer)**

Isabelle is a lecturer at the UQAM theater school where she teaches the art of puppetry and the creative process at the DESS in the contemporary puppet theater. In her many theatrical creations here and abroad, she explores the specificities and multiform nature of puppetry.



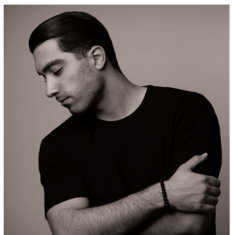
- **Paola Huitron (Actor & Puppeteer)**

Puppeteer and comedian, Paola Huitrón has worked since 2005 in various international companies, always interested in arts and culture. Since 2015 has worked as a guest artist with Quebec companies, Theater Motus and Ondinnok. Currently shares the creation and the stage within the company Valise Theater, of which she finds an enormous human and creative wealth.



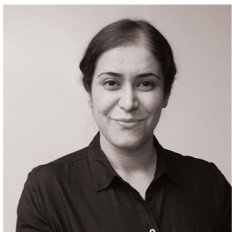
- **Mahmood Poursaee (Video maker)**

Mahmood is a videographer with a strong background in fine arts, theater, and video production. He keeps one foot in both worlds by creating videos combined with the theater that is both innovative and effective. As a member of the Valise Theater's creative team, he provides all the media needs of the company. In addition, he oversees audio-video and digital equipment.



- **Tisa (Composer)**

Singer, songwriter, and music composer, he began his artistic career in 2013 by composing for a few short films. He has a BA in English Literature and has been working with Valise Theater since 2016.



- **Ghazaleh Moradiyan (Staging Advisor)**

Ghazaleh is a puppeteer and playwright. After graduating from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran, she continues her artistic approach in the field of puppet theater. Since 2016, she is the co-artistic director of Valise Theater. For her, puppet theater and the art of manipulation express the craze for discovery and connection to the world of childhood.



- **Rhayssa Freire Rhayssa Freire (Director assistant)**

Rhayssa is a puppeteer, graduated in literature from the University of Brasilia in Brazil in 2010. She has participated in several shows for children. In 2015, she exhibited her scenography project in Puppet Theater at the Prague Quadrennial Scenography. In 2017, she arrived in Montreal to do the DESS Contemporary Puppet Theater at UQAM.

About Valise Theater

Founded in 2015, Valise Theater is focused on providing venues for artists from all walks of life. It is an inspiring collaboration that promotes innovative and interactive experiences for contemporary puppet theater. Our creations are the result of this dynamic and substantial process that has allowed the spectators of many broadcasting centers to discover us, we hope with enthusiasm and wonder.

The creations of Valise Theater are inspired by oriental traditions but adapted to contemporary aesthetics. The founders of Valise Theater have specific trainings in puppetry and diversified professional experience. The first creation of Valise Theater, Mobarak and the Magic, presented at the OUF festival Casteliers was much appreciated by the public. The result was to be retained by the company Casteliers for performances in the summer series Casteliers Sur l'herbe! Inspiring traditional forms of Oriental theater such as Naghali (Traditional Iranian Picture Theater) and Kamishibai (Japanese Traditional Picture Theater), Valise Theater's research addresses the question of the status of the performer in puppet theater to explore new manipulation techniques.



. Those who give importance to the role of the puppeteer as an actor, storyteller, manipulator; Indeed, the postures, gestures and storytelling techniques that are found in some oriental traditions, such as Naghali and Kamishibai, are a source of inspiration for exploring other ways of animating puppetry. A way that seeks the animation without manipulation in the puppet theater. In this case, all the movements of the performer are quite important as handling techniques. From this point of view, the puppet is like a partner who has a rather interactive and lively relationship with his manipulator. The body and the feeling of the performer are as important as the presence of a puppet. To update Asian traditions as a source of inspiration and on the other hand, to establish a new status for the puppeteer as an actor, storyteller, the manipulator is the characteristics of the creations of Valise Theater. Although the artists of Valise Theater come from cultural diversity, they still have the mission to create shows that are well adapted to Quebec aesthetics. Producing the original puppet shows destined for young audiences is the fundamental value of Valise Theater. Valise Theater benefits from the rich cultural background of Quebec's artistic community as a good opportunity to explore and create new practices in the contemporary puppet theater.



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