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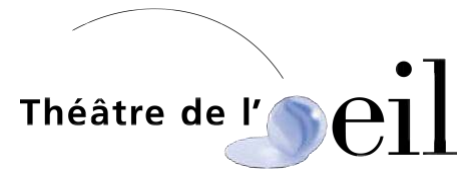
Montréal

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Marketing

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*A visual excursion without words
into the heart of the forest*

About the show

Simon Boudreault, a loquacious playwright and, also an aficionado fan of stylistic exercises, had long wanted to write a show without words. His collaborator Richard Lacroix wanted to place his chosen medium—scenography—at the heart of the story and let the images do the talking. Both men had previously worked with Théâtre de l'Œil—Simon as a puppeteer/author and Richard primarily as a set designer—so their involvement was a natural fit. In this production, they present a multifaceted story about the forest, a place of tales and legends, of dreams and fears, of mythical and imaginary creatures. A vast expanse of woodland that remains uncharted territory in the eyes of many people.

Through the medium of puppetry, Simon and Richard embark on multiple ways of exploring the forest and its paths, under the watchful eye of André Laliberté, artistic director and general manager of Théâtre de l'Œil and artistic consultant for this production. Richard is in charge of the set and puppet design as well as storyboarding, while Simon handles storyboarding and stage direction, which is marked by many shifts in tone in true cabaret style. They are assisted by Gilles Perron (lighting) and Michel F. Côté (music), thus complementing an environment that evokes the true nature of the forest—from the play of sunlight on the leaves of the trees to the spectre of shadows as night falls and an endless soundtrack of enchanted rustling. Watch out because the forest never sleeps!

Synopsis

What is that three---legged creature wandering about? Gazing through its single large eye, Camera observes the moon from a great distance and ants from up close! On the big screen, Camera's lens lays bare a teeming slice of life, including Stamoé, a curious and possessive squirrel, Philomène the Ancient and other denizens of the forest that never sleeps.

3-Legged Tale is a poetic reflection not only on the cycle of life and the flow of time that changes us all, but also on the constant cycle of rebirth, like grass that grows again after a fire or flowers that appear after the snowfall.



Photo: L. Gniwesch

3-Legged-Tale was created in November 2010, in conjunction with *Les Coups de Théâtre* festival in Montreal.

Interview with André Laliberté

Théâtre de l'Œil co-founder, artistic director and general manager



Photo : L. Gniwesch

When asked about his role in the production of *3-Legged Tale*, André Laliberté uses the analogy of giving birth. He likens his work as artistic consultant to that of a “mid-husband”—someone who helps playwrights bring their ideas and dramatic works to life. After nearly 40 years in children’s theatre, his extensive knowledge of puppetry gives him the necessary objective distance to

guide other playwrights embarking on their creative journey.

Serving as artistic consultant also allows other voices to come to the fore: “Every production is unique and personal. I don’t think I could have done what Simon and Richard have achieved. [...] It was so funny when they came to me with the *3-Legged Tale* project because Simon is such a chatterbox, yet he wanted to produce a show *without* dialogues! I thought it would be a wonderful challenge.” Putting together a show without words gives rise to a form of poetry that is more visually based: the “unsayable” must be expressed through images, according to André. Needless to say, this wasn’t the first time that Simon or Richard had collaborated with Théâtre de l’Œil. Simon’s initial contribution came as a puppeteer and then as a playwright (*Dear Fizzy / La Félicité* in 2002); he has received a number of theatrical awards. Richard has worked closely with Théâtre de l’Œil for many years.

When asked about the most memorable aspect of the show, André stops thinking for a moment before answering: “One of the show’s messages is quite obviously that life is a process of renewal, a wheel that keeps on turning. But there is another message, and it’s all about fantasy [...] That for me is the essence of theatre! You enter a realm of fantasy where anything is possible.”

Part of a whole

Interview with Simon Boudreault, co-author, storyboard and stage direction



Photo: Sylvain Légaré

According to Simon Boudreault, *3-Legged Tale* is all about transformation: “A transformation that happens both inside and outside of us. It tells the story of a manufactured object (the camera) that must confront nature, life, the cycle of the seasons, night and day. In so doing, it is transformed.”

As a playwright for children as well as adults, Simon Boudreault draws on his experiences as if they were interconnected vessels. The term “young audiences” is not an inherent constraint for him;

quite the opposite: “Children accept theatrical codes more easily, but their expectations are the same. Precision is essential with puppetry. As soon as something feels like an unpolished draft version, it’s game over! Everything is possible, as long as things remain clear and precise.” Although puppets offer authors more freedom by enabling them to move away from and transpose reality, which makes for greater poetry, a puppet show requires a good deal of writing and re-writing since anything that’s superfluous or would go without saying needs to be pruned out. Writing a show without words poses various challenges, while the storyboarding prompted Mr. Boudreault to invent a new working method: “To establish the staging, describe the actions, set the scene, etc., the text must be descriptive, a little like stage directions. In this sense, collaborating with Richard was very illuminating insofar as his work consists of visualized writing. So we worked a lot with scale models.”

3-Legged Tale is an ode to life at its most cruel and its most beautiful. He concludes: “The show explores our relationship as human beings with nature. We’re often told that we’re alienated from nature, as if nature were on one side and humans were on the other. In fact, everything is a part of nature, even our idiocy! That is basically the show’s message: we are part of a whole, we are only temporary stewards of the world around us. We must understand this principle in order to gain self-respect.”

Reinventing life

Interview with Richard Lacroix, co-writer, storyboard and set designer



Even though he now plays in the big leagues, Richard Lacroix gladly admits that working on plays for young audiences is a way for him to revisit his childhood. For this production, he drew on his memories of the great forests of Abitibi in northern Quebec, following the tracks of his father, who was a hunting and fishing enthusiast.

“With puppetry, I discovered a sense of wonder in reinventing life. Everything is possible with a puppet, even if it merely conveys a state of mind, like a mask, which

imparts very little information compared to the human body. A puppet achieves expression via movement. Starting out with a blank page is akin to reinventing movement. With a puppet, how do you communicate sadness, for example? Tilting the head down, is that enough? So we add other signs: music, lighting, etc. I do what I call ‘drawn writing’. First I encapsulate the story in images, which gives me a sense of perspective; other ideas emerge from there. Then I establish intuitive links and modify them afterwards if need be. It’s a very organic way to create!”

He adds: “In reality, Philomène was a figure from my childhood. She was an elderly Aboriginal woman who spoke neither French nor English. She would stop by my father’s grocery store. She was a clan chief, a beacon of wisdom and authority. In the show, she becomes a Nature-Goddess. She acts indiscriminately, driven only by her desire to create. She is the giver of life (symbolized by the butterflies) and the bringer of death (as she plucks leaves from the trees). The forest is all about continuity and transformation. The concept of mourning doesn’t exist in the forest. A seed does not die when it becomes a flower—it is transformed.” The forest is the

main character of the story and is treated as such. The space is transformed because it is alive: “The set is animated. It is an integral part of the canvas upon which the story unfolds. Simon and I initially went exploring in the forest with puppets, playing around with various themes. We then took photos and made films in the workshop; we also compiled a whole raft of documents. One of these explorations even prompted us to reinvent the video process! We recreated it using puppetry techniques. This exploration with the Camera character enabled us to show successively a long---distance shot of the moon and a close---up of ants. So Camera is both a microscope and a telescope. Puppets of shadow and light and acetate cut---outs—all of these aspects reproduce cinema techniques and establish a link between the human eye and the camera.”

He concludes: “*3-Legged-Tale* invites us to celebrate life as an eternal renewal and to embrace transgressions. It tells us that we can be daring and vanquish our fears while taking all the time we need. In the continuum of life, nothing is permanent. So let’s be patient, let’s take pleasure in observing the world around us. Seeing, understanding and having a good time: those are the three major guiding principles of the show.”



Photo: Léon Gniwesch

A few characters

- Camera:** The main character, an intruder in the forest. Through its lens, we see the teeming life of the woods.
- Stamoé:** A curious and possessive squirrel.
- Philomène:** An ancient inhabitant of the forest, she lives in harmony with nature.
- Papa-Buck:** An impetuous but friendly moose.
- Bichette :** The young and playful daughter of Papa-Buck.
- Vieil ours:** A bear at the end of its life. During its last few breaths, a moth emerges from its ear.
- Caliban:** At night, the forest becomes Caliban, a frightening creature of the shadows.

3-Legged-tale was presented

FESTIVALS

Festival Casteliers (Canada, 2012)

Festival Petits Bonheurs (Canada, 2012)

Calgary International Children's Festival (Canada, 2012)

Festival Les Coups de Théâtre (Canada, 2010)

2014-2015

CANADA

Montreal (Qc)

CHINA

Guangzhou

TAIWAN

Taipei

Chiayi

2013 – 2014

CANADA

Sainte-Thérèse (Qc)

Saint-Jérôme (Qc)

Montreal (Qc)

Présenté in eight boroughs through the Conseil des arts de Montréal en tournée

2012-2013

CANADA

Alma (Qc)

Montreal (Qc)

Sainte-Geneviève (Qc)

Salaberry-de-Valleyfield (Qc)

CHINA

Macao

Hong Kong

U.S.A.

Madison (Wisc.)

Springfield (Ill.)

Urbana (Ill.)

2011-2012

CANADA

Beloeil (Qc)

Châteauguay (Qc)

Drummondville (Qc)

Joliette (Qc)

Ville de Saguenay (Qc)

Laval (Qc)

Longueuil (Qc)

Quebec (Qc)

Saint-Hyacinthe (Qc)

Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu (Qc)

Saint-Léonard (Qc)

Terrebonne (Qc)

Trois-Rivières (Qc)

Montreal (Qc)

Calgary (Alb.)

2010 - 2011

CANADA

L'Assomption (Qc)

Maison Théâtre

Montreal

Shawinigan (Qc)

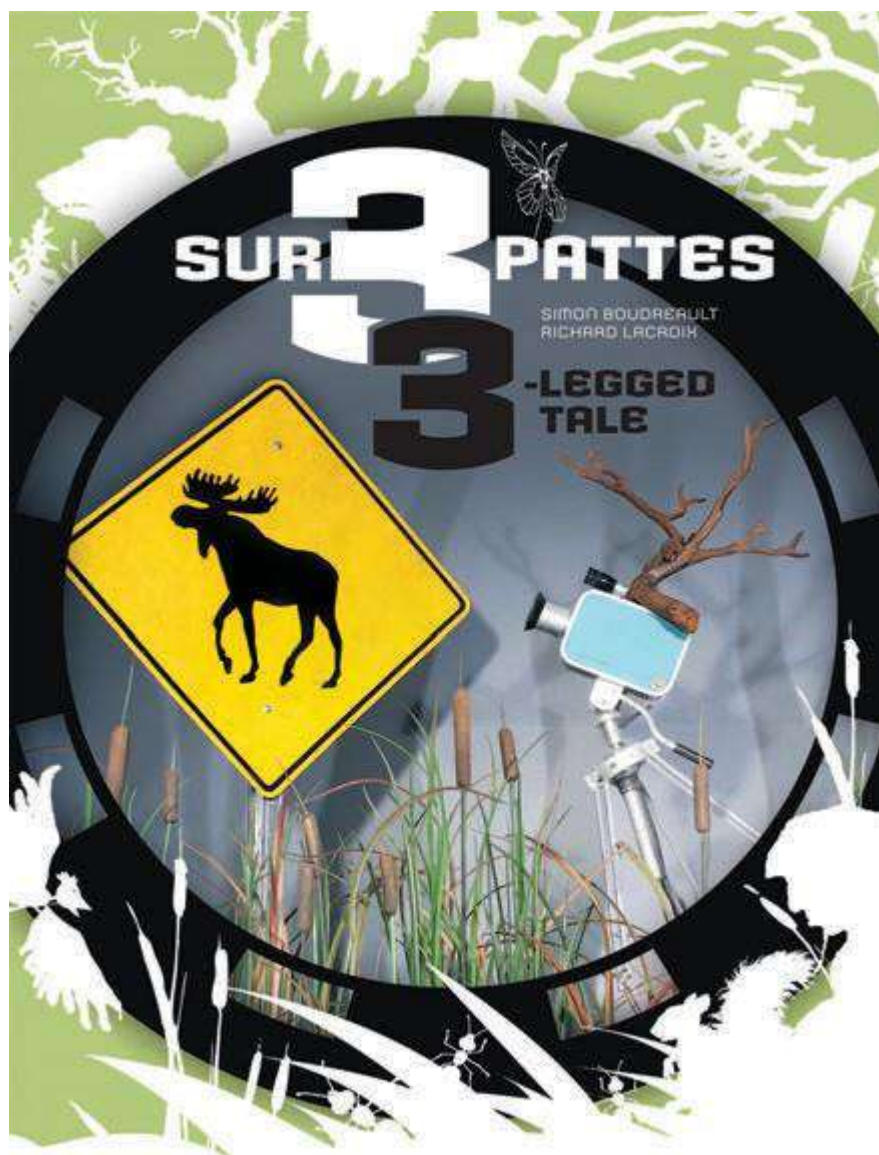


Storyboard	Simon Boudreault Richard Lacroix
Stage Direction	Simon Boudreault
Puppets, Set and Props	Richard Lacroix
Sound Design	Michel F. Côté
Lighting	Gilles Perron
Artistic Consultant	André Laliberté
Casting	Jean Cummings, Stéphane Heine Myriame Larose, Graham Soul
Workshop Supervisor	Richard Lacroix
Production Team	Isabelle Chrétien, Jean Cummings, Éliane Fayad, Jacinthe Plamondon, Loïc Lacroix-Hoy, Gilles Perron, Marie-Pierre Simard
Set construction	Jean-François Touzin inc.
Study Guide	Julie Laviolette, Michelle Chanonat
Interviews with the Creative Team	Michelle Chanonat
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Simon Boudreault et André Laliberté - Artistic Codirectors and General Comanagers
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Véronique Grondines - Market Development Manager
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Reviews

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« The action takes place over four seasons, both night and day, allowing for stunning and delightful set changes. We are in a magical puppet theatre, which fills the stage and where the manipulators are completely hidden. All of the focus is on the objects and the puppets, some of which are enormous, that appear in the magnificent set (it must be emphasized – it is truly magnificent) by Richard Lacroix. He co---wrote the story with Simon Boudreault, who is responsible for the stage direction.” Josiane Desloges, LE SOLEIL, December 7, 2011.

“Sur 3 pattes is a visually---engaging experience with plenty of humour to capture the attention of the very young. The manipulation of the video---camera puppet was particularly strong, injecting real personality into the rusted, inanimate object.” Kathryn Greenaway, THE GAZETTE, May 27, 2011.

“The simple idea of giving life to this camera — like all of the other “garbage” that will be recycled one way or another over the years — is brilliant, all the more so as it makes it possible to play with perspective and changes of size, from very large to very small, during the three seasons in which we see the camera evolve.” Michel Bélair, LE DEVOIR, May 20, 2011.

“With Théâtre de l’Œil, we have become accustomed over the years to veritable journeys into the imagination, and Sur Trois pattes (3---Legged Tale) by Simon Boudreault, which was presented Wednesday and Thursday at the Coups de theatre, is certainly no exception to the rule.” Michel Bélair, LE DEVOIR, November 20, 2010.

“Well received by the school groups invited to the premiere (...), the techniques used are extremely effective when the camera becomes closely interested by life in mutation, the result of which is projected on a large screen at the back of the stage.” Jean Siag, LA PRESSE, November 20, 2010.

**English Translations by Graham Soul*

REVIEW



MAISON THÉÂTRE

In *Sur 3 pattes*, playing at Maison Théâtre, a Mother Nature/forest witch character makes butterflies appear and disappear at will. The show has no dialogue and is aimed at children 5 to 10 years old.

No words needed to amuse

Play offers a potent mix of visuals and music

KATHRYN GREENAWAY
THE GAZETTE

Maison Théâtre closes its season with a Théâtre de l'Oeil puppet play about a roving video camera and its interaction with nature.

Sur 3 pattes is suitable for children 5 to 10 years of age and plays at Maison Théâtre until June 5. It has no dialogue, which makes it accessible to all linguistic audiences.

During a morning school performance of the Richard Lacroix and Simon Boudreault co-creation, the audience was treated to a potent mix of visuals (sets and puppets by Lacroix, lighting by Gilles Perron) and music (Michel F. Côté).

Giggles erupted almost immediately when what appeared to be a mountain of garbage centre stage began to wiggle. Out popped a squirrel with an impressive bushy tail. The critter was in search of discarded trinkets and had stumbled across an old lighter, which he jealously guarded from that moment on. The recurring joke – squirrel with coveted lighter – was the first of a number of sight

gags designed to tickle youngsters' funny bones.

The squirrel also dug up the sorry remains of a video camera still attached to its tripod. As magic would have it, the camera came to life and set out to study its surroundings, sometimes at extremely close range. Clever use of shadow puppetry played out within the confines of what appeared to be the camera's lens (projected onto a screen). Cool effect.

As the camera wandered, the garbage dump disappeared and an entrancing forest teaming with activity took its place.

The audience watched the "lens" capture an ant's efforts to transport a piece of bubble gum, which resulted in it becoming stuck to a bubble-gum bubble and floating away. The ant's cries for help as the balloon floated here and there became another anticipated sight gag.

The camera not only observed. It became part of the action, at one point donning a pair of antlers to flirt with a female moose. (Clever musical nod to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.)

Never far away from the camera shoot was a Mother Nature/forest witch character. The wrinkly, jolly lady in a colourful scarf and long skirt first appeared to stroke the fur of a dying old bear and then

make butterflies appear and disappear at will.

It was not her job to change the outcome, but to bear witness to the changes wrought upon the world by its inhabitants.

Sur 3 pattes is a visually engaging experience with plenty of humour to capture the attention of the very young. The manipulation of the video-camera puppet was particularly strong, injecting real personality into the rusted, inanimate object.

The children will be charmed. The adults, however, may find the pacing uneven and some scenes in need of an edit.

Sur 3 pattes, presented by Théâtre de l'Oeil at Maison Théâtre, 245 Ontario St. E., Sunday at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. For reservations, call 514-288-7211 or visit www.maisontheatre.com.

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VIDEO: SUR 3 PATTES

Find this story on our theatre page to click and watch an excerpt from *Sur 3 pattes*, which is the final production at Maison Théâtre, at montrealgazette.com/theatre