



CANZONA FURIOSO

— A PUPPET SHOW WITHOUT WORDS BY —



AGES 5 AND UP · 60 MINUTES · AVAILABLE FOR TOURING

SUMMARY

Everyone is chasing after everyone else, and the war grinds to a halt.

***Canzona Furioso* is a new creation: a non-verbal adaptation of *Furioso*, a play by Olivier Kemeid, originally created as a puppet theatre production in 2021.**

Orlando, knight of the North, and Abderam, knight of the South, are both in love with Yuhuan, a Far Eastern princess. Held prisoner by the camp of the North, Yuhuan manages to escape.

Orlando and Abderam recklessly forsake the war between their armies and set off in search of the princess. The king of the South, panicked at the idea of losing his best general, sends Malek to bring back Abderam. Meanwhile Bradamante, knight of the North, is in love with her enemy of the South and sets off in search of him.

In other words, everyone is chasing after everyone else for all sorts of reasons, and in doing so they keep the two camps from tearing each other apart despite their long-standing warmongering. A thousand and one adventures ensue, with a hippogriff, an orca whale and a sorceress who **hates** princesses.



CREATION TEAM

NON-VERBAL ADAPTATION AND
DIRECTION

Simon Boudreault

BASED ON AN ORIGINAL TEXT BY

Olivier Kemeid

PUPPETS AND SET DESIGN

Richard Lacroix

SOUND DESIGN

Michel F. Côté

LIGHTING

Gilles Perron

WORKSHOP SUPERVISOR

Richard Lacroix

CAST AT CREATION

Mathieu Aumont · Caroline Bélanger · Carolina Chmielewski · Kénio Gilbert

ARTISANS

Jean Cummings, Ève-Lyne Dallaire, Marie-Ève Fortier, Alice Lepage-Acosta, Richard Lacroix, Myriane Lemaire, Richard Morin, Samuel Saint-Pierre, Aidan Sparks, Heidi Turcot, Clémentine Verhaegen, Mélanie Whissell

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Cole Foundation for its generous financial support toward the writing and production of this creation.

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A WORD FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

By removing spoken dialogue, another dimension reveals itself.

Simon Boudreault

Canzona Furioso is a new creation, a free non-verbal adaptation of *Furioso*, a play by Olivier Kemeid that Théâtre de l'Œil originally created as a puppet theatre production in 2021.

During an exploratory workshop last year, I began to perceive the tremendous potential of this adaptation: a version carried entirely by action on stage, where the story unfolds through movement, scenography, music, lighting, and the expressive language of the puppeteers and their puppets.

By removing spoken dialogue, another dimension of the piece reveals itself. The puppets become the true storytellers of the story, conveying emotion, humour and conflict through gesture, rhythm and a performance that is both burlesque and poetic. This transformation also highlights one of the great strengths of puppet theatre: its ability to communicate complex ideas through performance rather than words.

Freed from linguistic barriers, *Canzona Furioso* becomes accessible to younger audiences (ages 5 and up) as well as to spectators from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In this new form, the themes of the show, such as breaking stereotypes, feminism, cultural diversity, self-determination, openness to others, and living together in peace and harmony remain strong and spark the imagination.

The production invites audiences everywhere to experience the story intuitively, through the universal language of theatre, puppetry and performance. In short, the language of life.

Embracing *Orlando Furioso*

The *Furioso* adventure began when Olivier Kemeid discovered the book *Orlando Furioso*, by Ariosto, with illustrations by Gustave Doré. He was captivated by the story.



There's a chivalric side to it, a myth that fascinates me. While doing research on this epic poem, I discovered that it had been adapted for puppet theatre in Italy, the Sicilian « pupi ». It seemed like an interesting territory to explore. [...] In Furioso, the war ends because the two knights are too busy pursuing their beloved. It's wonderful.

The playwright used this opportunity to explore Ariosto's work and put his own spin on it. As in many of Olivier Kemeid's plays, cross-cultural sharing is a recurring theme.



I think it's a great subject that can spark dialogue about the relationship between East and West, but more generally, between oneself and the Other. [...] The characters in Furioso could just as easily be kids playing make-believe knights and princesses in any primary school playground.

Subverting conventions to open up dialogue

For Olivier Kemeid, subverting conventions, as Ariosto did, was essential: « First, so that it would feel resolutely contemporary and reflect my own beliefs. That is also what I find particularly moving about Ariosto's work: it is utterly visionary. »

Like Ariosto's work, *Furioso* features characters who defy convention. The knights, for example, prove far less courageous than expected, the princesses far more impetuous than usual, and the women, in general, remarkably fearless.

Through the lens of deconstructed conventions, several themes emerge that are sure to spark dialogue: cultural diversity and exchange, the importance of friendship — which can even grow out of confrontation! — feminism, and a passionate defence of peace.

At first glance, the characters seem stereotypical, because there are knights and princesses. But then we play with those conventions and dismantle them.



BIOGRAPHY

Olivier Kemeid — original text

Playwright and director Olivier Kemeid has written some fifteen plays, both independently and in collaboration, as well as numerous adaptations and reinterpretations presented in Quebec and internationally. Among his most notable works are *Five Kings – L'histoire de notre chute*, *Moi, dans les ruines rouges du siècle* and *L'Énéide*. A graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's Playwriting program, he also holds a bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy from the Université de Montréal. He has served as a guest professor at UQAM's École supérieure de théâtre, as Artistic Director of Espace Libre, and later as Artistic Director of Théâtre de Quat'Sous in Montreal, where he pursued an engaged and contemporary artistic vision.

Envisioning a production inspired by comedy



Wanting to invite accomplished contemporary playwrights to create works of puppetry for young audiences, Simon Boudreault gave Olivier Kemeid carte blanche, drawn to his distinctive and inspiring poetic universe.

The production invites young audiences into an offbeat world where the puppeteers' performances take centre stage. Simon Boudreault envisions a production in which the puppeteer's body itself becomes part of the set or even a puppetry object.

I want there to be a close relationship between puppet and puppeteer.

What I really like about Furioso is the way he plays with our preconceived ideas about characters and stereotypes. The way he deconstructs relationships between men and women, our relationship to love, and our relationship with others is skilful without ever becoming moralizing. It's playful.

The puppets have a highly polished aesthetic, while the staging is organic. It evokes the idea of travelling performers telling a story with whatever they happen to have at hand.



BIOGRAPHY

Simon Boudreault — adaptation and direction

Playwright, director, actor, and improviser Simon Boudreault is a prominent figure in contemporary Quebec theatre. For nearly ten years, he performed with the Ligue nationale d'improvisation, where he received several distinctions. In 2005, he founded Simoniaques Théâtre and went on to create several notable productions, including *Comment je suis devenu musulman*, *Gloucester*, *As Is*, *Sauce brune* and *Je suis un produit*. In 2012, his play *D pour Dieu ?* was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award. His collaboration with Théâtre de l'Œil began in 1999 with *Le jardin de Babel*. He later created *La Félicité* and the non-verbal production *Sur 3 pattes*, which toured as far as Asia. Since 2020, he has served as Artistic Director of Théâtre de l'Œil, carrying forward the artistic legacy established by André Laliberté.



INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD LACROIX · PUPPETS AND SET DESIGN

Puppets and a set in constant evolution

To encourage reflection on war and the need for dialogue with others, Richard Lacroix chose to create puppets that gradually become more flexible as the story unfolds. They also pay tribute to Sicily's traditional rod puppets, known as « pupi ». He emphasizes the importance of the celestial quality that runs throughout the production, providing a gentle counterpoint to the knights' confrontations.

He drew inspiration from the architecture of moon gates found in Chinese gardens: circular openings in walls that provide passage into the gardens. The audience is immersed in a world suspended between heaven and earth, between war and the stars, between madness and wisdom and, above all, in a world where confrontation gives way to reaching out to others.

What purpose does war serve? The entire play revolves around that question. What I'm trying to do through my work is bring that dimension to the production without becoming moralizing.

As the knights become aware of their own violence, they gradually shed the characteristics of rod puppets and become increasingly mobile in space.



BIOGRAPHY

Richard Lacroix — puppets and set design

Acclaimed scenographer Richard Lacroix has collaborated with Théâtre de l'Œil for many years while also working with numerous Quebec artists, including Martine Beaulne and Sylvain Émard. His career has also led him to contribute to major projects, notably the scenography for the Cirque du Soleil production presented as part of Quebec City's 400th anniversary celebrations in 2008. In theatre for young audiences, his creations have travelled around the world through productions such as Théâtre de l'Œil's *Le Porteur* and *La migration des oiseaux invisibles* by Mathieu, François et les autres... His artistic collaboration with Simon Boudreault continued with *Sur 3 pattes* and later *D pour Dieu ?*, a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award. His work is distinguished by remarkable visual inventiveness.

Richard Lacroix's reflections, drawn from the creation of Furioso, also illuminate the scenographic choices of Canzona Furioso, in a renewed approach.

Reviews

Designed by Richard Lacroix, who also created the beautiful set design, the puppets are superb. Whether wearing a suit of armour, riding a horse, a hippogriff, a snake, or a sea monster, whether fighting or fleeing, they let the audience appreciate every detail of their design, right down to the slightest rebellious lock of hair.

DAPHNÉ BATHALON · THEATRE.QUEBEC



With Furioso, Théâtre de l'Œil fosters reflection and provides educators with a genuine teaching tool.

PATRICE BONNEAU · JEU, REVUE DE THÉÂTRE

The story unfolds in the distant past, where humour and witty one-liners are plentiful. In orchestrating this story, the four puppeteers were able to seamlessly and perfectly interweave their presence.

GABRIELLE SIMARD · LE QUOTIDIEN

KEY INFORMATION

Access key information in your language.

Scan the QR code to access essential information about *Canzona Furioso*: the summary, technical specifications and touring information.

 Français



 English



 Español



 한국어



 日本語



 简体中文



AGE

Ages 5 and up

DURATION

60 minutes

FORM

Without words



The creative team



Michel F. Côté

SOUND DESIGN

A composer, multi-instrumentalist, and co-founder of the 8records label, Michel F. Côté has developed a prolific artistic practice spanning music, dance, and theatre. He is associated with several ensembles, including Mecha Fixes Clocks, Klaxon Gueule, Pink Saliva and Jane and the Magic Bananas. In dance, he has collaborated with choreographers such as Catherine Tardif, Louise Bédard, Chanti Wadge, José Navas and Sylvain Émard. In theatre, he has worked with such renowned artists as Martin Faucher, Brigitte Haentjens, Simon Boudreault, Wajdi Mouawad and Robert Lepage. For Théâtre de l'Œil, he created the sound designs for *Sur 3 pattes*, *Furioso*, *Perruche* and *Monsieur Nicolas et la lune*.



Gilles Perron

LIGHTING

Having worked at various times as a props master, set designer, and technical director in theatre, film, and television, Gilles Perron joined Théâtre de l'Œil in 1997. Until 2021, he played a central role in the company's technical direction, overseeing set construction, stage management, and touring logistics. He has also designed the lighting for many of the company's productions, making a significant contribution to their distinctive visual identity. Closely involved in the creative process, he has actively contributed to shaping Théâtre de l'Œil's stage universe through an approach that is both sensitive and rigorous.



The puppeteers



Mathieu Aumont

PUPPETEER

A 2017 graduate of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal, Mathieu Aumont is a Quebec actor and artist recognized for his work in theatre, puppetry, and circus arts. He has collaborated with established puppetry companies, including Théâtre de l'Œil, where he worked on *Furioso*, and Théâtre de la Dame de Cœur, where he performed in *Victor et le cadeau des songes* and *Le Grand Bric-à-Brac*. His career has also taken him on international tours, notably to France with Ex Machina for *Le Rossignol et autres fables*, a production combining acrobatics and puppetry. A multidisciplinary artist, he also practices unicycling, juggling, acrobatics, and tap dancing.



Carolina Chmielewski

PUPPETEER

An actor, puppeteer, and cultural mediator, Carolina Chmielewski has developed an artistic practice centred on interculturality, intimate narratives, and sociocultural issues. In 2020, she co-founded Théâtre de la flamme with Cleo da Fonseca, a company dedicated to creating work for young audiences and to arts mediation. As a puppeteer, she has performed in Théâtre de l'Œil's *Furioso*, directed by Simon Boudreault and written by Olivier Kemeid, as well as Théâtre de la flamme's *La floraison des souvenirs*. In the fall of 2025, she began a master's degree in theatre at UQAM, where she also works as a teaching assistant in the Graduate Diploma (DESS) in Puppet Theatre.



Kénio Gilbert

PUPPETEER

Originally from Martinique, Kénio Gilbert developed an early interest in performance by imitating the dances and expressions of his favourite artists. Initially drawn to sports, he later discovered a true passion for acting. After studying theatre at Cégep Lionel-Groulx, he continued his training at UQAM's École supérieure de théâtre, where he also completed an acting internship in Belgium. His strong sense of rhythm and interest in singing and dancing led to his first roles in musicals such as *Hommage à Grease* and *Brunch! The Musical*. He continues to pursue a career on screen, with notable appearances in *Menteuse*, *STAT* and *Antigang*. *Canzona Furioso* marks his first experience in puppetry.



Caroline Bélanger

PUPPETEER

A 2014 graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's Acting program, Caroline Bélanger is an actor and co-founder of Le Théâtre du 2x4 and La Fille du Laitier, with which she has created and performed in several original productions. Over the years, she has appeared in various short films, lent her voice to advertising campaigns, and performed in several television series, including *Olivier*, *District 31*, *Fragile* and *Contre-Offre 2*. In 2025, she performed in Créations Unuknu's *Monstres*, followed by Advienne que Pourra's *Orgueil et Préjugés* at Théâtre Denise-Pelletier. In spring 2026, she completed the tour of Théâtre de la Petite Marée's *La Nuit du Caribou*.

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AGES 5 AND UP · 60 MINUTES · NON-VERBAL

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

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SCHEDULE

Performance dates

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THE THÉÂTRE DE L'ŒIL TEAM

Simon Boudreault

Artistic Director

Joël Losier

General Manager

Vikram Basistha

Market Development Manager

Myriane Lemaire

Technical Director

Frédérique Simard

Accountant Technician

Founded in 1973 in Montreal (Canada), Théâtre de l'Œil is a touring company that creates original puppet shows for young audiences and families around the world.

Written by Véronique Grondines · Translation Denise Babin · Layout Frédérique Simard · Photo credits Michel Pinault, Enric Llagostera, Alexya Crêteau · Drawings Gustave Doré, Richard Lacroix · Portraits Maxyme G. Delisle, Marili Levac Clark, Gilles Perron, Théâtre de l'Œil, Marie Lassiat, Guillaume Boucher, Enric Llagostera