

Created by

THÉÂTRE À L'ENVERS
coproduced with Place des Arts



Photo: Isabelle Stephen

3-8
years

MWANA and the turtle's secret

www.theatrealenvers.ca

PROMOTIONAL KIT

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Photos: Michel Pinault and Isabelle Stephen

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Information

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MWANA and the turtle's secret

Play summary

Spun from an African tale, this is the beautiful story of a courageous young girl named “ Mwana “ who lives in a village deep in the forest. Every day, a giant monster comes and steals the villagers' food. When Mwana proposes confronting the giant, the Village Chief wonders how such a little girl could defeat a monster that no one has ever been able to stop. Is there a secret that only Mwana knows? The play takes the audience on a theatrical journey of courage, love and friendship as it explores the French proverb “ We often need someone smaller than ourselves ”. The story is told by Canadian and Congolese performers and uses a range of theatrical art forms, including puppets, shadow theatre and object theatre.



Photo: Isabelle Stephen

Genesis of the show

In the course of 2015, Théâtre À l'Envers was fortunate to host a Congolese puppeteer artist, Patience Bonheur Fayulu Mupolonga, with the help of a grant from the Council of the arts of Montreal as part of the *Dem'Art-Montréal* program. It is from the desire to create an African tale in puppets and shadow theater for the early childhood audience that the project was born.

Research was first carried out on the African tales with this artist to determine which would have the most scenic potential to address the toddlers. At the end of this first stage of work, it is the traditional African tale entitled “Satongé - Bia” which was chosen because it allows to pay homage to the child by showing that even the smallest children can show courage and cunning when it comes time to save others.

Théâtre À l'Envers has decided to continue its collaboration with Congolese artist Patience Bonheur Fayulu Mupolonga and co-produce the play with La Place des Arts in Montreal to dramatize this story into a show with a small scenic device, which can be technically autonomous, while promoting a close relationship with the public, like African storytellers. Faithful to its mission of mixing artistic forms and the mixing of people, Théâtre À l'Envers has surrounded itself with a team of creative artists from different artistic and cultural backgrounds (illustration, shadow theater, puppets, music) Congo, Algeria, Peru, Quebec) to create a rich and varied show in its presentation through shadow theater, object theater, puppetry, clowning and storytelling.

Highlights

Théâtre À l'Envers is the recipient of the **Prix Alliances RADARTS-RIDEAU**.

Mwana and the turtle's secret was supported by a residency with **Place des Arts** (Montreal, Quebec) in 2017.

The show was presented at the *Festival Petits Bonheurs Montreal*, Laval and Abitibi during the 2017-2018 season.

Since its creation, the show was performed more than 300 times on tour (2017-2023).

The show was performed 108 times in the Atlantic provinces for 15 188 children.

The show was programmed in the *Conseil des Arts de Montréal* on tour (2018-2019) for 24 representations.

The production was presented on tour in 18 schools in Ontario and 2 schools in Quebec (2018-2019).

The show was performed 5 times in English at the *Wee Festival of Toronto – Arts and culture for Early Years* (May 2019).

The show was subsidized by **Art Council of Canada** and **Conseil des Arts et des Lettre du Québec**.



Cast

Patricia Bergeron

Artistic and Managing Director

Patricia Bergeron is the General and Artistic Director of Théâtre À l'Envers, which she co-founded in 2007. As an actress and puppeteer, she has directed over fifteen plays and authored three theatre works for young audiences (*Woânda*, *Tetsuo*, *Mwana et le secret de la tortue*). *Woânda* and *Mwana and the Turtle's secret* have been presented in French and English nearly 300 times each in Quebec, Ontario, the Maritimes, as well as in England, and showcased in Philadelphia (USA). Initially trained in acting at the École supérieure de théâtre de l'UQAM, she continued her education through workshops in acting, mime, dance, mask work, puppetry, and shadow theatre with masters in France, Belgium, and Italy, leading her to explore the blending of these various forms of artistic expression. She has toured with several theatre companies locally and internationally, including *Aladdin* with Théâtre Sans Frontières (England), *Tsûru* with Carbone 14 (winner of the 2001 Masque for Best Young Audience Production), for Théâtre de la Dame-de-Coeur, Illusion Théâtre de marionnettes, and more. Holding a master's degree in theatre since 2017 (UQAM), she is particularly interested in visual writing through movement and the poetic body of the actor and puppet, combined with shadow theatre.



Robine Epanda Kaseka Kia

Actress

Self-taught, Robine participated in the Open Workshops on Diversity at the TNM and was mentored at the Black Theatre Workshop. She was also a finalist in the Diversity Auditions organized by Diversité Artistique Montréal. From 2019 to 2022, she portrayed *En survolant la mer Égée*, a solo performative theater piece directed by Thomas Duret of the Baobab company, a multidisciplinary creation. Since then, she has taken on multiple roles in young audience theatre, including productions such as *Baobab* (Théâtre Motus), *Hermanitas* (Théâtre des petites âmes), *Mwana and the turtle's secret* by Théâtre À l'Envers in co-production with Place des Arts (in both French and English versions), as well as a short-term replacement role in *À table* by L'Arrière-scène. On the English side, she has been featured in *The Dream Project 3.0* (Yonder Window), *It Felt Empty...* (National Theatre School of Canada), and *Troilus and Cressida* (Théâtre sans argent).



She is also a member of the Afro-Colombian dance troupe Tribu Kumbé, which participated in Nuits d'Afrique. In the summer of 2022, she was part of the cast of *Indiscrétions publiques*, directed by Frédéric Jeanrie, as well as the *Au fil des mots* reading series presented by À voix haute.

Creative Team

Ideator: Patricia Bergeron, Patience Bonheur Fayulu Mupolonga, Marie-Ève Lefebvre and Steve Beshwaty

Text and adaptation: Patricia Bergeron in collaboration with Patience Bonheur Fayulu Mupolonga

Director: Patricia Bergeron

Assistant director: Marie-Ève Lefebvre

Performers: Patience Bonheur Fayulu Mupolonga or Robine Epanda Kia Kaseka and Patricia Bergeron

Set and costume designer: Fanny Bisailon Gendron

Illustrations, visuals and mask: Steve Beshwaty

Puppets and mask: Salim Hammad

Shadow theatre: Marie-Ève Lefebvre

Lighting: Mathieu Marcil

Music: Dumisizwe Vuyo Bhembe

Technical sheet

About the show

It is a self-contained show with sound and lighting, handled by both performers.
The show turns therefore without a director.

Stage dimensions: 5.50 m width x 4.88 m depth x 2.44 m height (18' width x 16' depth x 8' height).

Allow a minimum of 4-5 feet between the stage and the first row of spectators on the ground.

Target audience: 3 to 8 years old (families) and 4 to 8 years old (school groups)

Performance length : 45 minutes

Max capacity : 150 to 250 spectators

Set-up : 3 hours before the show with the help of a technician to unload the transport vehicle and set up the sound system, the set and the lighting.

Strike : 1h30

Staff on tour : 2 performers

Type of show : Play with storyteller/puppeteers, shadows, objects and puppets

Type of rooms: This show is designed for small and medium size areas, but also community halls, schools and non-traditional

Video links

Trailer : <https://vimeo.com/477997968>

Full length version in english : <https://vimeo.com/343309420>

Password : TAEMwana

Material and technical needs

Sound:

- in case of a performance in an equipped space, the TAE uses loudspeakers that are connected to its own mixer backstage. The sound is controlled by the performers using Q-lab. A sound technician is required to set the sound balance;
- in case of a performance in a non-equipped area (schools, community halls, etc.), the company may provide speakers for an additional- charge (rental). Please notify the company if this is the case;

Lighting:

- 2 accessible and separate electrical outlets;
- very low light in order to see the shadows;
- if spotlights are available in the theatre, the lighting could be enhanced by adding 4 white lamps and 4 blue lamps in FOH;
- note that FOH lights can be controlled by a technician or controlled by the lighting board operated by the performers on stage.

Background:

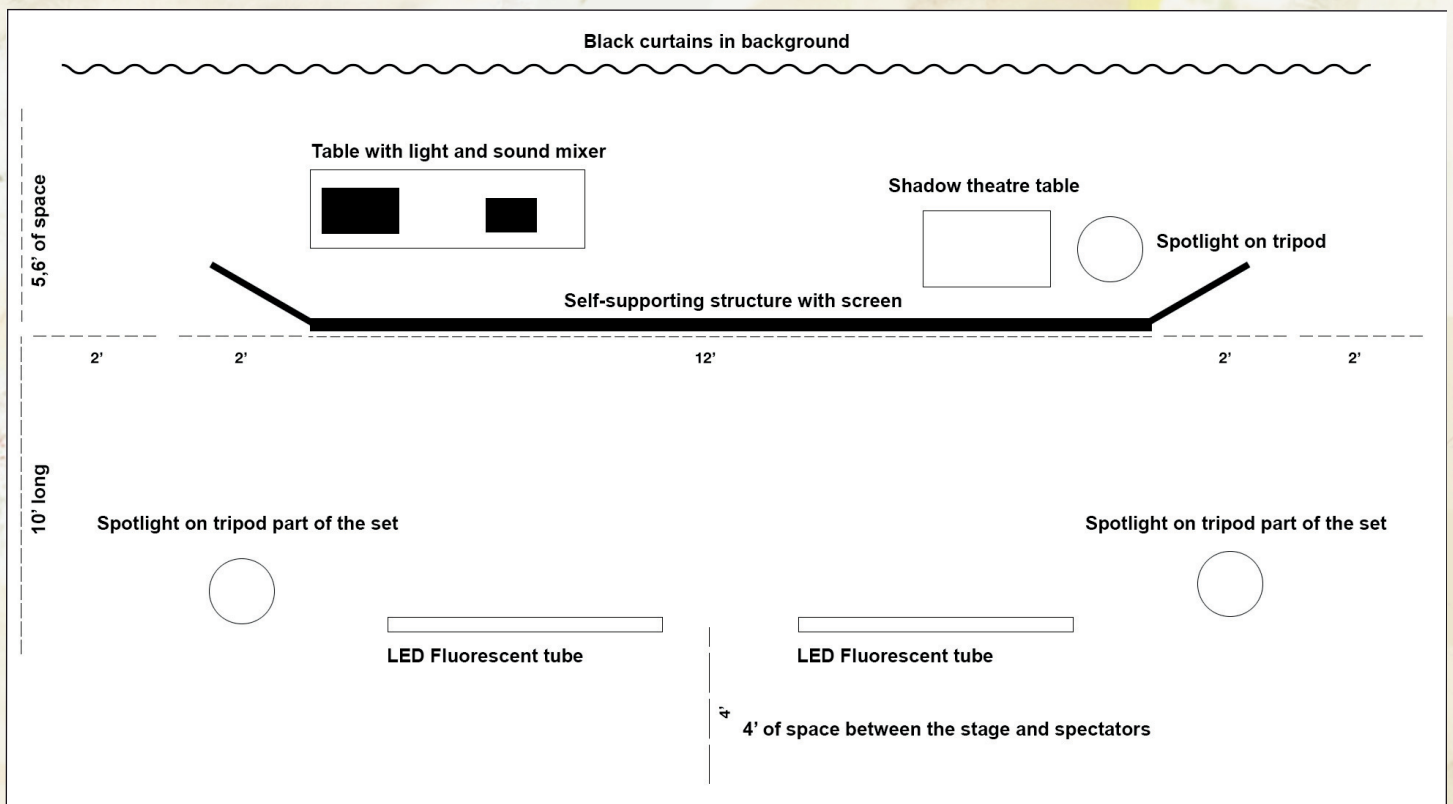
- 1 black curtain for the back stage (approximately 20 ft or 6 m and 12ft or 3.7 m);
- 2 black curtains for the sides.

Weight and volume of design set and accessories:

Weight: 143 kg

Volume: 1,12 m X 1,1 m X 2,3 m = 2,83 m³

Stage Plan



ANNEX

Shadow theater workshop

The shadow theater workshop aims to familiarize the child with the work of light and shadows through various play games where everyone is invited to participate. A second part can be added to create and present a theater play.

The workshop is offered in two versions (short or long) in one or two periods of activity (depending on the choice of the teacher):

First part: (1 h): introduction to shadows - Bodily

Second part: (2 hrs) (optional): creation of a short shadow play with silhouettes.

Target audience: from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade of primary.

Number of participants: one class students at a time (approximately 18 to 25 participants).

Cost of the workshop: Contact Théâtre À l'Envers for further details.

Théâtre À l'Envers offers introductory shadow theater workshops. It is also possible to finance this activity through the Culture à l'École program.

See the link below for more informations:

<https://cultureeducation.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/repertoire/30382> (Artist: Patricia Bergeron)
and <http://www.theatrealenvers.ca/TAE/ateliers/>



Hand-made Tom-Toms workshop

Hand-made percussion workshop:

(1:45 h) (introduction to percussions and creation of a handmade tom-tom)

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