

Created by
THÉÂTRE À L'ENVERS

For children
5 years of age
and older

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE BIRDS

A visual poem of shadows and music



Illustration: Riverjune

PROMOTIONAL KIT

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Photos: Michel Pinault

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Information

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Mission

Théâtre À l'Envers (TAE) was established in 2007. Its mandate is to create original works based on a creative research and experimentation process that merges different artistic and theatrical forms, with the aim of reaching out to younger audiences and young people in general. The company practises a contemporary form of puppet theatre that combines acting, shadow theatre, masks, dance, etc. TAE strives to offer original theatrical performances in which the visual dramaturgy is at times poetic, at times humorous. TAE strives to share an original perspective on the world, by sometimes going "against" (*à l'envers*, in French) the established order. Its performances are enriched by cultural mediation projects that help lay the groundwork for new productions. The company focuses on the integration of artists from other fields and cultural communities in an effort to add depth and meaning to its productions.

History

Shows:

2017 - **Mwana and the Turtle's Secret**, created in **coproduction with Place des Arts**

- Written and directed by Patricia Bergeron in collaboration with Patience Bonheur Fayulu
- With storyteller, actor, puppet, shadow theatre and objects for children aged 3 to 8 years
- Presented more than 114 times since it was created
- Presented in English at the 2019 Wee Festival in Toronto (5 performances)
- Presented on a tour of French schools in Ontario and Alliance Française Toronto, for 18 performances (2019)
- Presented as part of the 2018-2019 Conseil des arts de Montréal tour (24 performances) and in Quebec more than 60 times
- Winner of the 2019 RADARTS/RIDEAU award
- Presented at the 2020 OFF-IPAY showcase (Philadelphia, USA) with the support of the Quebec Delegation in New York
- A tour of nearly 35 shows in Acadia was planned in 2020-2021 and has been postponed to 2021-2022

2012 - **Tetsuo**

- Shadow and manga theatre for children aged 6 to 12 years
- Adaptation by Patricia Bergeron of the work of Osamu Tezuka
- Presented at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ)
- Created with Congolese artist Kens Mukendi

2011 - **L'Ezdaï**

- Written and directed by Lynn Katrine Richard
- With actors, puppet theatre, shadows and video for children aged 6 to 10 years

2007 - **Woânda**

- Written and directed by Patricia Bergeron
- With actors, puppets, shadows and video for children aged 4 to 9 years
- Winner of the *Mon Accès à la scène* contest in 2007, organized by the Accès Culture network, the Fondation du Maire de Montréal and Cirque du Soleil
- Toured Quebec (2007-2019) with over 250 shows
- Toured, in co-production with Théâtre Sans Frontières, in England in 2018 (22 performances) in French and English, with a team that was half Canadian and half English

Shadow theatre film made during the pandemic:

2021 - *La voix du coquillage doré* (French version), presented as part of the Montréal International Children's Film Festival (FIFEM))

2020 - *The Golden Conch Shell* (English version), an 18-minute film for children aged 4 to 9 years, created by Théâtre Sans Frontières (UK) in co-production with Théâtre À l'Envers (Quebec)

Presented at the Forum Cinema in Hexham (UK) on August 21, 2020

Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDHHiC8XeYo>

Outreach projects:

The company is registered with the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec (MCCQ) as a member of the *Culture à l'école* program. Théâtre À l'Envers has been presenting shadow theatre workshops in elementary schools and to presenters since 2008.

Artistic outreach projects related to the company's creations:

2019 - *Mô-Namour: Using paper and shadow theatre to talk about abuse*

2016 - *Lifting the veil on hypersexualization*

2010 - *Ezdaï: an inner and outer world in transformation*

2007 - *Woânda: When resilience and friendship help with grief*

The Little Girl and the Birds

The tale of *The Little Girl and the Birds* is a metaphor illustrating the beauty and pitfalls of the creative process. A little girl is swinging in her garden, when suddenly she hears the cry of a mysterious bird. The bird draws her into the hollow of an old tree, where she climbs down into a secret cave. There she discovers a cloth bag. But the bag keeps filling itself with birds as the little girl tries to bring it back home, beyond the maze of roots she must navigate to find the exit. At first, the birds are frail young chicks, so delicate you'd think they were made of dust, but they soon grow into a multitude of feisty, wild birds asking to be released so that they can fly away. She tries to abandon the bag, but the further she gets away from it, the more the birds' cries seem to beg her to not to leave. Frightened, she begins singing to herself, and this soothes the birds. It is by trusting what is hidden deep within her and following her intuition that she will allow herself to be guided by the cry of a single bird who will lead her to the exit, and onto new opportunities to explore life.

This visual poem takes the form of shadow projections on a large screen, accompanied by live music played on a violin and/or piano. The story is an invitation to take the plunge into one's very core and imagination, and give free rein to the creative spirit.



Photo: Michel Pinault

Video link

Demonstration of the play: <https://vimeo.com/504948149/19d2a77056>

A Tale of Initiation

This story is a tale of an initiation that takes place over a brief period of time. It contains allegories of the creative process. The little girl must first listen to her "intuition," and follow it, just as she follows the bird's song. Then she needs to go down "inside herself," like going down into the roots of a hundred-year-old tree, to draw the inspiration and strength she needs to give form to her intuition. The bag she finds there is full of ideas that will prove, at first, too fragile, just like dust bunnies. As the bag becomes increasingly heavy, she starts to be afraid, worrying that she won't find a way to express what she wants to say to the world. But the little girl manages to find her way back up to the surface, and her ideas have taken the form of flaming, raging, determined birds that she can finally let fly away, where they take shape.

Shadow theatre techniques

For this show, Théâtre À l'Envers decided to use a light table with a video projector to create shadows from silhouettes and three-dimensional objects. Sometimes body shadows created with shadow lamps are added, as well as white shadows, shadow masks, etc.



Photos: Michel Pinault



Originators

Patricia Bergeron

Director, actress and playwright

Patricia Bergeron has trained as an actress and puppeteer and holds a Bachelor's degree in Acting and a Master's degree in Theatre from UQAM's École supérieure de théâtre. She toured in Quebec, France and England with more than a dozen different companies before creating Théâtre À l'Envers in 2007, for which she serves as General and Artistic Director. This is where she learned her trade as a theatre manager while continuing to write, direct, act and be a puppeteer. Patricia uses shadow theatre and puppetry to develop a style of writing in images, which is at the core of her creative process. She is passionate about the value of encounters with the public and has been creating cultural mediation projects for close to fifteen years, with many different kinds of audiences. Patricia worked as a cultural mediator at La TOHU for three years, which gave her a taste of the circus world and allowed her to work closely with community organizations in the Saint-Michel district. She also facilitates shadow theatre workshops in Québec schools.



Oriane Smith

Author and musician

Oriane Smith was born in France in 1988, by the sea, in a city shrouded in fog. She has lived in Montreal as an expatriate since 2014, trading the sea for Quebec's snowy forests. Oriane is an author and speech therapist but also a musician, so she likes to compose her stories with both words and sounds. She has recorded two albums of instrumental music under the pseudonym Orange Mist. She has also released two children's books, one entitled *Ohé!*, with La Courte Échelle and another one entitled *En Route!* with Les 400 Coups. She is preparing a third for publication in the fall of 2021. Oriane feels strongly about strengthening the social fabric through art, and initiated the "Petits bals sauvages" project in 2019 in Montreal, in partnership with the Maison de l'Innovation Sociale and Balfolk Montréal, with the goal of fostering social inclusion and citizen participation through traditional music and dance. *The Little Girl and the Birds* is her first script developed for shadow theatre.



Julia Derdour

Illustrator

Julia Derdour, who works as an illustrator under the name Riverjune, was born in Paris in 1989. As a young child she began spending most of her time observing the world around her and drawing it in great detail. In 2012, she began studying at the Beaux Arts de Bruxelles and completed her studies with qualifications as a teacher. Julia moved to Montréal in 2014. There she began giving visual arts classes, in the form of short introductions to art history, to young children in elementary and preschool programs. At the same time she continued working on her own illustrations, especially watercolours and images of birds. After several exhibitions, including one at Chalet Smith (on Mount Royal), Julia decided to teach watercolour techniques to people of all ages.



Over the years Julia's passion for drawing has developed alongside a growing interest in environmental protection. She gradually began using her art as a way to raise awareness about endangered animal species and our ecological footprint. Since 2019 the street has become her playground, a place where she creates murals with strong messages, often in collaboration with other artists and neighbourhood ecology organizations. As a teacher, Julia understands the important role that children will play in saving our planet and confronting the ecological challenges that lay ahead; her projects are therefore essentially inclusive, with a major citizen participation component. For example, in 2021 as part of the Mu festival, she will create a group mural in partnership with a Montréal school and an Aboriginal artist (Jacques Newwashish).

Credits

Original idea: Oriane Smith, Julia Derdour and Patricia Bergeron

Story: Oriane Smith

Stage director: Patricia Bergeron

Assistant stage director: Audrey-Maude Blais-Gallant

Shadow silhouette designer: Julia Derdour

Lighting and set designer: Julia Derdour

Music and soundscapes designer: Oriane Smith

Illustrations: River June

Videographer: Nick Jewell

Shadow and image writing advisor: Marcelle Hudon

Collaborators

Sara Sabourin, Set and Lighting Designer

Sara Sabourin became passionate about puppetry in 2012 after getting a taste of it in her final production with Théâtre de la Pire Espèce for her Bachelor's degree. She learned how to manipulate and build puppets from local and international artists. In the spring of 2020, she completed a program in stage design at the École supérieure de théâtre, specializing in set and lighting design.

In 2017 Sara designed and built the puppets for *Charly in the Desert*, produced by Création In Vivo (Ottawa). She performed in Émilie Racine's giant puppet show *Céleste* at FIAMS, at the Festival mondial des théâtres de marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières and at MASA in Côte-d'Ivoire. Sara is also a member of the cast for Émilie Racine's new creation, *Life of Pi* (Collectif Pi). This year she is designing the lighting for the storytelling Céline Jantet's show *Maman est un mythe* as well as the puppet show *Statue* by Céline Chevrier and Kristina Troske.

Audrey-Maude Blais-Gallant, Assistant Set Designer

Born in the small village of Aguanish, far out in the Côte-Nord region of Quebec, Audrey-Maude Blais-Gallant grew up surrounded by fishermen, rivers and black flies. She recently graduated from UQAM with a degree in Communications and Theatre. For several years Audrey-Maude has worked at book fairs as a representative of the publishing house Les Malins. She is passionate about art, literature and theatre. Audrey-Maude is particularly interested in creating visual dramaturgy. Her participation as Assistant Director in the shadow theatre project *The Little Girl and the Birds* will give her a real opportunity to put into practice what she learned in directing classes taken as part of her theatre studies.

Marcelle Hudon, Shadow Theatre and Image Writing Resource Person

Marcelle Hudon is an interdisciplinary artist interested in the intersection of puppetry, sound creation, the movement arts and the visual arts. She specializes in shadow theatre and live video projection, and uses various objects and automatons to illustrate the wanderings of the mind. Marcelle's performances and installations have been presented at international puppetry and interdisciplinary arts festivals. At the same time, she has collaborated as a visual designer on several works for adults as well as children. Marcelle has a talent for visual metaphors and has imagined and manipulated live images for: *Les doigts mobiles* for the NAC Symphony Orchestra, the opening of MIAM, *Les fourberies de Scapin* at TNM, *La maison molle* by Gilles Arteau, and *Babel Orkestra* by Jean-Jacques Lemêtre, presented under the large dome at SAT.

Marcelle Hudon is the co-creator, with Théâtre de la Pire Espèce, of *L'effet Hyde* and *Die Reise ou les visages variables* by Félix Mirbt. She is also a performer/manipulator on stage, on television and in film. She manipulates the puppet Jenny, the main character in *Clyde Henry's Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, and is part of a team of manipulators for *The Seasons*, by So Called. For the last few years she has played the unbearable and endearing mouse in Les Soeurs Lapointe's *Impromptus* at the Casteliers Festival.

Nick Jewell, Videographer

Nick spent over 5 years wrangling in the post production industry in London, before going travelling at 27 years old in Asia and beyond. Highlights over the next few years include creating event recap videos for the Shanghai Huawei Expo in 2017, and for the Instagram TV launch in 2018 on behalf of Facebook. He has recently been focussed on his trailer and feature film editing completing a trailer for a documentary film for a Montreal Based Director Stacey Tenenbaum, which was shown at Hot Docs festival in 2019. Currently he is working on several projects within the Art and Culture industry within Montreal.

Summary technical sheet

The Little Girl and the Birds is a show that can be performed outside as well as in a venue.

Target audience: all ages from 5 years old

Capacity: about 300 persons

Type of Show: No lyrics, shadow puppetry, video projection and live musician

Outdoor version:

Scenic space

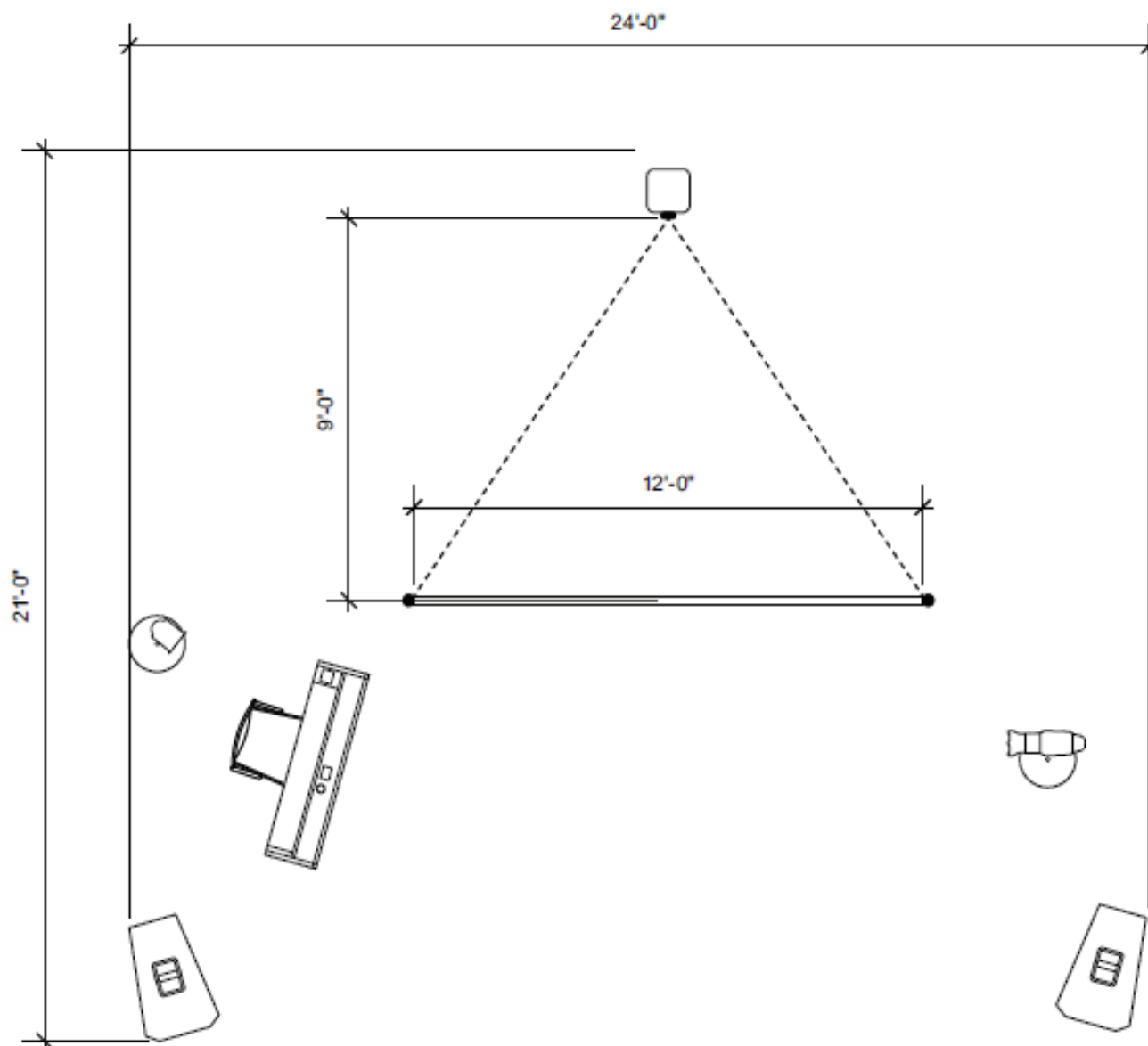
- This show is played at dusk during summer and fall (June to September)
- The show is played on video screen. A space protected from rain and wind must be provided to protect the screen and projector placed behind the screen.
- Minimal space must be 20ft deep by 12 ft to 25 ft large. The public must not be able to pass between the screen and the projector.
 - * Refer to plan for more precisions.

Set-up: 2 hours before the show

Technicians needed: 2 technicians will be necessary

Strike: 1 hour

Number of people on tour: 1 musician and 1 TD/stage manager



Indoor version:

Scenic space

- Ideally, minimal space must be 25 ft deep by 35 ft width. Minimal height of the grid must be 11ft from the stage, but a version using the small screen that we use for the outside version is also available.
- The venue must provide enough darkness for the shadow puppets and the video projection.

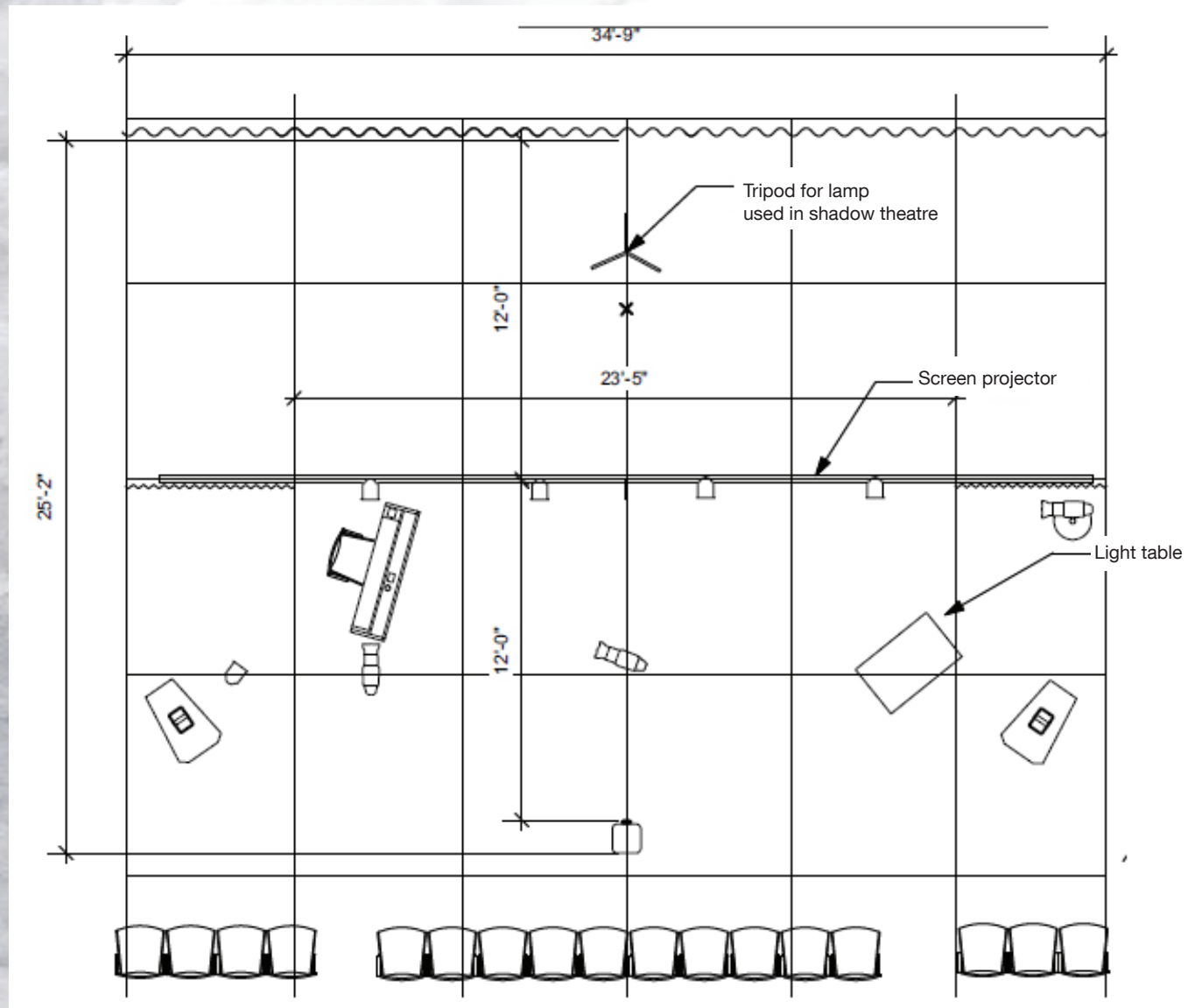
Set-up: 4 hours before the show

Technicians needed: 2 technicians will be necessary

Strike: 1.5 hour

Number of people on tour: 4 performers and 1 TD/stage manager

*The detailed technical sheet for both versions of the show is available on request.



Appendix

Shadow theatre workshops

The shadow theatre workshop aims to familiarize children with light and shadow work through various games in which everyone can participate. A second part can be added to create and present a shadow play on a small screen.

The workshop is offered in two versions (short and long), based on the teacher's choice:

Part 1: (1 hour) - Introduction to body shadows

Part 2: (2 hours) (optional) - Creation of a short play with silhouettes

Target audience: Children from pre-school to sixth grade

Number of participants: One class at a time (approximately 18-25 participants)

Cost: Contact Théâtre À l'Envers for more information

Théâtre À l'Envers offers introductory workshops in shadow theatre.

This visit to the classroom can also be funded through the Culture à l'école program

See the following links for more information:

<https://cultureeducation.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/repertoire/30382> (Artist: Patricia Bergeron)

and <http://www.theatrealenvers.ca/TAE/en/ateliers/>



“Meet the Artist” workshop

A group of students or the general public is invited to a 15 to 20 minutes meeting with one or more of the production's artists to talk about the creative process behind the show, including the development of its shadows, illustrations and music.

Drawing, illustration and mural workshop

Drawing on the know-how of Riverjune (Julia Derdour), create your own illustrations and posters on a watercolour board. In this workshop you will learn the key techniques for painting birds in watercolour. The workshop is open to children 5 to 10 years of age. It can be presented in schools with readily available materials, such as gouache (an opaque watercolour paint) and fine brushes. We recommend using Canson paper, which is stiffer. This activity works best with a group of 10 to 20 children.

About the illustrator :

Ever since she was a child, Riverjune has spent most of her time observing the world around her and drawing it in great detail. Never without her notebook, she draws the world with a personal touch. Over the years her passion for drawing has developed alongside a growing interest in environmental protection. Her work has become a means for communicating about endangered animal species and our ecological footprint.

