

KINDRED WIDOWS

Claudine Rivest



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Kindred Widows is a wordless visual theatre performance for adults, about the transmission of memories among women of different generations. It explores the metaphorical possibilities of a piece of clothing, and plays with hand puppets whose lightheartedness contrasts with the strangeness of garment puppet. Live accompaniment from fiddle and foot percussion oscillates between sound effects and traditional tunes; the music is an integral part of the dramaturgy.

"The image is an object that exists in itself, that touches the inexpressible and that cannot be described without distorting it. The image is an object of thought, dream and criticism. It is a free and autonomous object. It is alive. - Patrick Bonté -

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

A few years ago, my aunt told me about her childhood home: her mother's hat collection; the lump in her grandmother's back. Her grandmother who always sat in the corner of the kitchen. Her grandmother who, after the death of her husband, stopped speaking for 18 years. I was overwhelmed by a strong feeling of astonishment and déjà vu; a kind of vertigo in front of all these inner lives that will remain secret, and that constitute our individual and collective memory.

Possessed by the strong image of my great-grandmother, I created the short form piece *Amanda*, the first iteration that would become *Kindred Widows*. Digging into her story made me interested in the stories of the other women who gravitated around her. Beyond factual experiences, my questions are related to perception, identity, the unconscious, and the shifts between the real and the imaginary.

Through a fragmentary staging, I seek to create a language without words, anchored in bodily feelings. Using a wearable garment as a puppet allows me to highlight the ambiguous relationship between actor and object; between the body and what animates it. Meanwhile, hand puppets, provide me an outlet to break the weight of silence and to transgress conventional gestures.

I've approached this project as a sort of quest for a sense of belonging through the memories of the women in my family. The inclusion of traditional music, rooted in its revival of the past, offers another terrain for exploring how snippets of memory are transmitted through generations.

SYNOPSIS

Kindred Widows paints a dreamlike portrait of a family that is both terrifying and banal. Through the story of Amanda, who was mute during the last 18 years of her life, this work examines how memory is passed along between women of different generations. Drifting between reality and imagination, the dining room table serves as a theatre where the past resurfaces. As the violin plays, fragments of life, loaded with secrets, flow into each other, and overlap with everyday gestures. An invitation to step into the elusive world of memory.

ARTISTIC TEAM

CREATION, DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE

Claudine Rivest is a multidisciplinary artist whose work focuses on puppetry arts. She has trained in both visual arts (Atelier Sfumato, 2008) and contemporary puppet theatre (UQAM, 2017). She creates contemplative and non-verbal universes that are both playful and strange, and draw their inspiration from clowning, dance, and micro-theatre. Both a performer and a visual artist, she also works with several theatre companies as a set designer and puppet designer. Her short pieces *Pipo* and *Amanda* have been performed in Québec and abroad. *Kindred Widows* is her first long-form creation.



STAGE DIRECTION

Sophie Deslauriers trained as a sculptor in synthetic materials, moulding techniques and resins. She then trained with costume and set designer Natacha Belova and the Point-Zero company in Brussels before returning to acting and manipulation at the Théâtre aux Mains nues in Paris in 2013. In Quebec, she completed a thesis at UQAM, adapting Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *MAUS* for puppet theatre. Today, she continues to be involved in directing as well as designing puppets, sets and costumes.



MUSIC

Isaac Beaudet-Lefebvre began learning the violin at a young age. Fascinated by the traditional music of Quebec, he began his classical training while working on the folk repertoire. He subsequently became familiar with the Irish tradition during several visits to that country. He was then introduced to jazz by completing the jazz composition and arrangement technique at the CEGEP de St-Laurent and discovered klezmer music with the group Ichka. Now established in Trois-Rivières, he devotes himself to his art within several groups such as Kavaz, Isabelle Charlot and the Delegation.



LIGHTING DESIGN

Nancy Longchamp has worked in the performing arts for twenty-five years. A lighting designer by trade, she has worked in lighting design, artistic creation and lighting management. Through her work with Théâtre Momentum, Théâtre Sans Fil, Théâtre des Deux Mondes and Kobol marionnettes, Nancy has developed her expertise. For the past fifteen years, Nancy has specialized in the design and manufacture of self-contained lighting systems and wireless lighting accessories for several puppet theatre companies, including Théâtre de Deux Mains and Théâtre des Petites Âmes.





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CREDITS

Creation, design and performance: **Claudine Rivest**

Stage direction: **Sophie Deslauriers, Claudine Rivest**

Music: **Isaac Beudet Lefebvre**

Lighting design: **Nancy Longchamp**

Collaboration on the design of animated costumes: **Sylvie Baillargeon**

Collaboration on the design of the scenography: **Paul Foresto**

Assistance with puppet design: **Sophie Deslauriers**

Advisor on hand puppet manipulation: **Noë Cropsal**

Advisor on dramaturgical movement: **Olivia Faye Lathuillière**

Co-production: **Les Sages Fous**

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DURATION 50 minutes / General audience, 12 years +

PARTNERS



In Coproduction with Les Sages Fous.

This research and creation has been in progress since November 2020 thanks to the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec as part of the Mauricie territorial agreement and the company Les Sages Fous. *Kindred Widows* was presented in unfinished form during the Café causerie *Créations dans l'œuf* at the Festival de Casteliers in March 2021, as part of the Micro-Festival de marionnettes inachevées presented by Les Sages Fous in October 2021 and as part of *Prélude* at the Maison internationale des arts de la marionnette in November 2021. The premiere was presented at the Festival de Casteliers in March 2023.



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CONTACT

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