



Ombres Folles

Biography and Press Kit

Founded in 2005 in Montréal, Québec, Ombres Folles theatre company creates shows that spark the whimsical imagination of both young and old. The company is actively engaged in the development of contemporary puppetry and of theatre for young audiences. Ombres Folles explores the crossroads of genres where puppet, shadow, and object theatre meet, while delving into our fears, failings, and taboos. With its shows, Ombres Folles presents a luminous and inventive vision of the world. By choosing stories that have a strong dramatic quality, and by instilling them with a good dose of poetry, humour, and humanism, the company's artists create works that are capable of travelling, both geographically as well as within audience members' hearts.

Ombres Folles has created nine shows and performed over 600 times in Canada, France, Serbia, South Korea, Ukraine, and the United States of America. The company is now widely recognized in the youth theatre and puppetry communities. Between 2015 and 2017, the show *Les Routes ignorées/ Off the Beaten Path* received several prizes from Maison de la Culture Trois-Rivières (QC), International Festival of Children's Theatre (Subotica, Serbia) and Puppet UP! International Festival (Kyiv, Ukraine). In 2019, Ombres Folles was delighted to present its new show, *Celle qui marche loin* (a co-production with French company RoiZIZO théâtre) as part of the official line-up of the Festival international des arts de la marionnette à Saguenay (Québec) and the Festival mondial des théâtres de marionnettes de Charleville-Mézières (France). In 2023, the show *Quijote* was one of the few international guests of the National Puppetry Festival, organized by Puppeteers of America, in College Park (MD, USA). In 2024, the show *Pomelo* was part of the great ASSITEJ International Festival in South Korea, with a 13 performances' tour.

More information, photos and videos: www.ombresfolles.ca

POMELO (2021)

Daphné Bathalon, "FIAMS 2021: Four days and 18 performances later..."
Montréal, August 3, 2021:

"[...] With its big eyes and its long, expressive trunk, Pomelo's fluffy puppet, as well as its miniature or light and shadow versions, embodies all the naivety and tenderness of childhood. One would want to jump on stage to give him hugs. The magnificent set design by Maxime Després and Maude Gareau (who co-wrote



the adaptation as well as directing and performing) makes you want to stroll through this lush garden. The little audience of three years and older also meets a very zen snail and a dancing frog.

Pomelo is bursting with bright colors, joie de vivre and lively musical notes thanks to the live performance of bassist Pierre-Alexandre Maranda. His adorable main character charms from the start with his inexhaustible capacity to marvel at absolutely everything: the vegetables growing in the garden, the water wetting the earth, the leaves flying away, the snow covering the ground with a white carpet. [...] "

Louis-Dominique Lavigne, author, "Day 5 at FIAMS"

Facebook, August 1, 2021:

"[...] As soon as the vegetable garden is highlighted, I am won over. What a fascinating place! Magical! With its vegetables, insects, frogs, snails and larvae. Beautiful characters in the making. [...] As the show builds, the images led by Maude Gareau grab me. Once again, the live musician is brilliant. His instrument - the double bass - which in an orchestra always remains discreet, in the theater on the contrary when it is in the spotlight, it fascinates. In *Pomelo* the musician Pierre-Alexandre Maranda is breathtaking. His musical choices lead to lyricism. He never falls into anecdotal description. [...]"

CELLE QUI MARCHE LOIN (2019)

David Lefebvre, "FIAMS 2019 day 1 - of Rockies and Wonders"

Montréal.qc.ca, July 26, 2019:

"Presented in its North American premiere, *Celle qui marche loin* is the most recent production by Ombres Folles (who produced the excellent *Quichotte* and *Les routes ignorées*), in co-production with RoiZIZO théâtre (France). Through Serge Bouchard, Maude Gareau met "Madame" Marie Iowa Dorion Venier Toupin, the first woman to cross the Rockies three times on foot - accompanied by her two children! An extraordinary Sioux pioneer, she is one of those "remarkable forgotten people", as Bouchard so aptly puts it, who forged modern America. With the complicity of her colleague, Gildwen Peronno, writer, director, set designer and performer, Maude Gareau takes us back to the heart of our acquired knowledge (who discovered America first? Columbus? The Vikings? Indigenous Australians?) to break down clichés and redefine the North American continent more adequately with a touch of well-placed feminism ("because it is the victorious, white men who write history").



The techniques of Ombres Folles, related to those of RoiZIZO, are always simple, but very effective: for example, with a thick rope, the contours of the continent are drawn on the ground. Then a bag of marbles is poured out to illustrate the many tribes of the First Nations. The image is perfect. Thanks to several

objects (houses, bottles, rocks, saws) hidden in two black boxes on wheels, as well as Olivier Monette-Milmore's musical score, the two performers plunge the audience into the heart of this absolutely epic and exceptional story, but, above all, true, between St. Louis, Missouri and Fort Astoria, Oregon. We can only applaud the work of the two companions, who, in a way that is as playful as it is exciting, interest us in characters that the great History has put aside."

Mathieu Dochtermann, "'She who walks' farther than Davy Crockett"

TouteLaCulture.com, September 6, 2019:

"[...] It is a powerful narrative that is offered in *Celle qui marche loin*: multi-generational, with the breath of the epic, it is a kind of anti-western where the heroes are mixed-race and female, where the viewer feels the immensity of the territories, the impossible stretching of time, the extreme rigour of the northern climates. It is another story of the crossing of North America from the East to the West Coast.

To serve this odyssey from the time of the colonists, it is the subtle metaphor of the theater of images that is used by the authors and interpreters, Maude Gareau from Quebec and Gildwen Peronno from Brittany. Toys, a few flags, an impressive scaffolding of saws, a touch of acting to embody the protagonists, that's all it takes for these two to represent a snowstorm or the immensity of the Rockies. Some images are strikingly accurate, such as this America populated with marbles representing the indigenous tribes, trampled by the newly arrived white man. [...]

The space is intelligently used, with beautiful effects of scale and topographical finds. We know that object theater has a beautiful propensity to allow a quasi-cinematographic writing on stage: it is particularly successful here, where the majestic wide shots follow the zooms, where the travellings from courtyard to garden breathe their life into the show. [...]

This is a modern fresco, which is as much a work of rehabilitation as of entertainment. A very nice moment of theater, rich in emotions, which, under the surface of the pleasure experienced, leaves a thoughtful shiver, a reverence for the fragility of existence and the exceptional courage of anonymous people who will never be the heroes celebrated by History."

QUICHOTTE (2017)

Daphné Bathalon, Critique

Montréal.ca, November 18, 2018:

"[...] The clownish duo formed by Benjamin Déziel and Maude Gareau, who jointly sign the text, direction, shadows and interpretation, sets the tone for a production full of mischief, humour and amusing finds, between shadow theater, puppets and objects. In *Quichotte*, Cervantes' characters literally appear from



the book, passing from the image to the third dimension in an instant. A piece of paper crumpled before our eyes stretches to form the skeletal and aging figure of Quichotte and two balls form that of the silly but generous peasant who accompanies him, Sancho Panza. The shadows projected by their silhouettes draw the outlines of the exciting and, above all, chivalrous adventures that the poor man imagines with a troubled mind.

The shadow structures (pop-up) conceived by Isabel Uria also produce wonders, first presenting themselves under a simple appearance and then better revealing themselves when crossed by light. They give life to the famous windmills that Quichotte confuses with terrible giants, to the inn magnified into a castle by the galloping imagination of the knight with the Sad Figure. Déziel and Gareau manipulate them with dexterity to tell us the great moments of these adventure novels. Inevitably, several passages are left out of the adaptation, to the despair of one of the narrators, but the cuts and transitions are made with great humor. The fragility of the paper, which can be crumpled, rolled, torn, and made to disappear into confetti, gives a playful and ephemeral aspect to the story of this important 17th century work. Like the adventures that Quichotte invents for himself, the glory and image of the character created by Cervantes have become greater than his story and the reflections that it carries.

With *Quichotte*, Ombres Folles brings these reflections to the forefront and raises interesting questions about the importance that we give today, in the age of social networks, to the image we project, to the point of disguising the truth to make it more exciting... like Don Quichotte!"

LES ROUTES IGNORÉES (2012)

Michel Bélair, « Plein les yeux »

Le Devoir, May 13, 2014:

"But above all, we must highlight a major surprise: *Les routes ignorées* by the Quebec company Ombres folles. Playing with shadows, but especially with puppets of all sizes and large books - from which characters or even entire sets emerge! - the two actors tell children from five years old a whimsical story inspired by a Russian tale. It is in the way they tell the story, and in the way they bring an amazing rhythm to the production, that it all stands out brilliantly."

David Lefebvre, Critique

Montréal.qc.ca, February 2, 2013:

"*Les routes ignorées* is a delight for the whole family. Charming and playful, the play features lively performers, music (Olivier Monette-Milmore) inspired by the tale's country of origin, and an ancestral story that awakens the imagination again and again."

