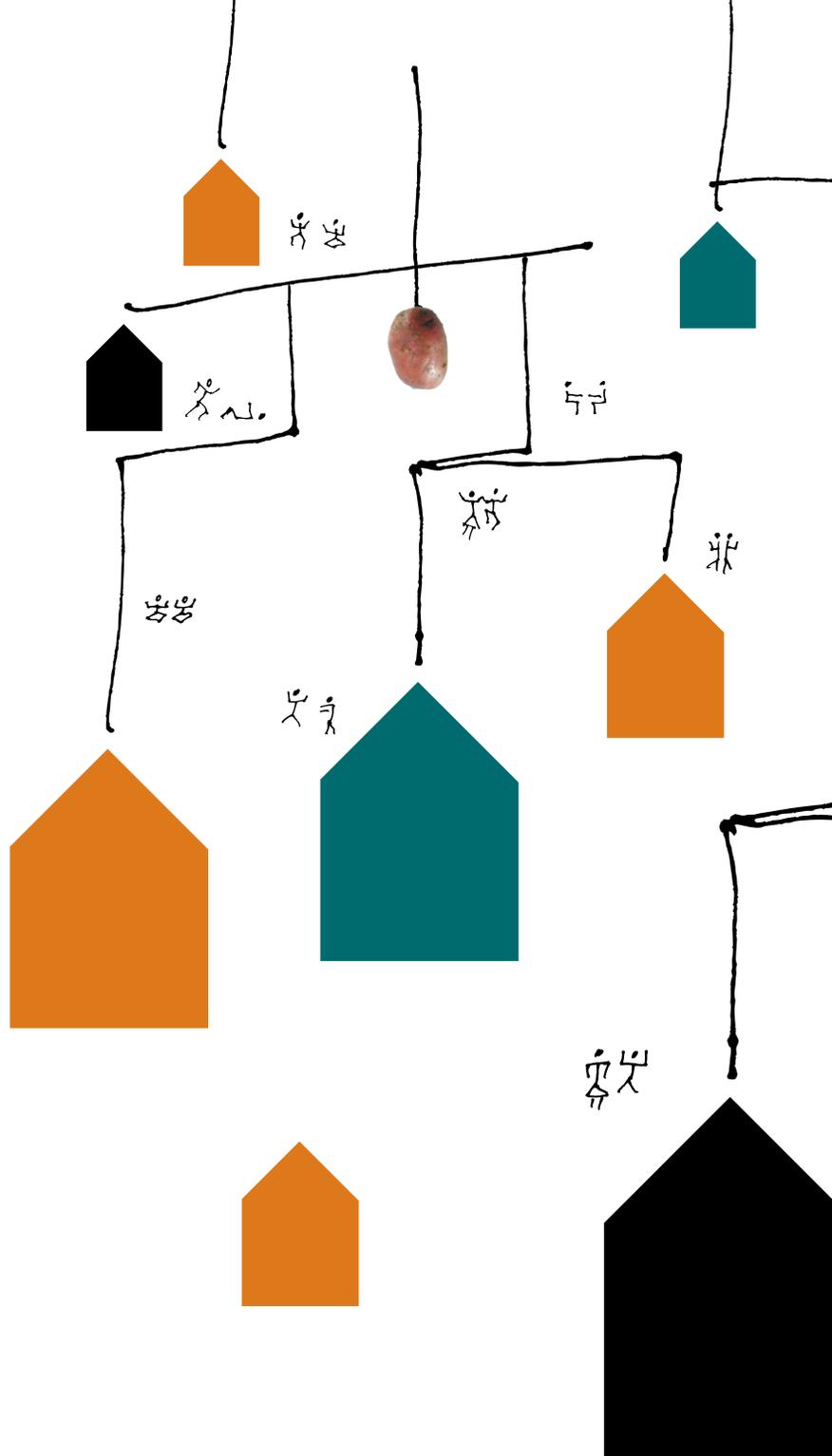


ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL
FOR PRESENTERS







des mots d'la dynamite

Brief history

Founded in 1988 by the artist Nathalie Derome, Des mots d'la dynamite is a company that seeks to provoke unusual encounters. For 30 years now, it has done this between the disciplines it ceaselessly questions, the audiences it reaches, and the artistic collaborations and professional spheres it brings together. By privileging the intimate encounter, often through intentionally artisanal means, it advocates for the decompartmentalization of disciplines.

Since its foundation, Des mots d'la dynamite has surprised audiences with the range and inventiveness of its proposals, juxtaposing performance, orality, theatre, music, poetry, dance, object theatre, visual and media arts. A pioneer in the interdisciplinary arts sector, Des mots d'la dynamite has contributed to the blossoming and the recognition of the discipline in Montreal, in Quebec, in Canada and abroad.

The company has produced over 50 performances and 17 interdisciplinary shows, disseminated in different contexts: theatrical venues, festivals, museums, artist centres and in situ art events.

Young audiences appeared very early in the company's artistic process. At the request of dissemination partners, three adaptations of shows originally intended for adults were produced. First, *Le Retour du refoulé* (1990) was presented for a teenage audience at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. *A collage of texts* (1995) was then adapted into episodic performances for the Festival de création de Paspébiac, under the honorary chairmanship of Nathalie Derome. With *Du Temps d'antennes* (2001), the company reached children aged 7 to 12 years at the Maison Théâtre and participated in the Les Francophonies en Limousin festival in France.

Toddlers / Very Little Ones

In 2007, Des mots d'la dynamite began a new cycle of art making and shifted towards an uncharted territory in Quebec and Canada: the very young audience of 18 months to 5 years of age. Since then, four works have seen the light of day for this particular age group: *Scenes from a Tree* (2009), *Where I Live* (2013) and *Slow Magic* (2016) as well as a wandering event, taking inspiration from *La p'tite Tombola*, called *The Alley of Little Secrets* (2017). The company's new work, *That's My Sister!* (2019), is aimed at the oldest of the young set, namely 4 to 7-year-olds. The productions have travelled throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. In 2013, the three actresses from *Scenes from a Tree* jointly won the Female Acting Award from the Katowice-Dzieciom International Puppetry Festival in Poland.

Cultural Mediation

At each stage of making the work, the creative team visits the children, not as pedagogue artists, but rather as humans going to meet other humans. The shows are written with their collaboration, based on a theme or a philosophical questioning - the origin of the world; what does growing up mean?; what is fraternity, sisterhood? - and, often, with one material favoured: clay, wool, cardboard... Through these encounters, the children become our guides, indisputable dramaturgs and the co-authors of our shows.





FOR US, THE POETRY OF DAILY LIFE
EMBRACES THE MAJOR EXISTENTIAL
AMBIGUITIES AND, JUST LIKE CHILDREN,
WE ENJOY THE SENSATIONS OF TOUCHING
AND FEELING THE WORLD AROUND US.

TO DO SO, WE HAVE TO PLACE OUR TRUST
IN BOTH THE SUBCONSCIOUS AND THE
PRIMITIVE LOGIC.

Introducing pre-schoolers to the show

To be able to meet the needs of a very young audience, we studied the theories of English pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott. According to Winnicott, an infant passes through an important stage in which he develops a separate sense of self in relation to his mother; he finds a place between the exterior and the interior world. This in-between environment, or "area of play", corresponds to a safe or imaginative place that every person has and where the cultural experience originates. Developing and nurturing this "potential space" promotes the notion of play and creativity in children and gradually eases their transition from dependence to self-reliance.

Because this is such a delicate phase, we pay special attention to how we meet and greet the children. Our performance takes place in the here and now, and a direct contact approach helps introduce the toddlers to poetry.

Our performers are not fazed when, during the show, a child stands up, needs to say something to an adult, or even starts to cry. On the contrary, young children challenge the performers to listen actively and respond openly. We are delighted to perform for these candid spectators who have yet to learn about theatre etiquette or how to behave at cultural events.

For some children, this is their first contact with the performing arts; for others, it is a whole new experience. As for the performers, parents and educators, they are exhilarated when they make eye contact with an inquisitive youngster who is surrounded by strangers in an unfamiliar place.

To help adults who have never accompanied very young children to a show, we produced "Bringing pre-schoolers to the theatre for the first time!", which is available online. We encourage you to send it to them a few weeks before they see the show.



About the show

In *Where I Live*, Téqui (Who-Are-You) and Téoù (Where-Are-You) ask all sorts of existential questions:

Why are we here?

Who are we?

Where are we going?

Why are you my friend?

And if my name weren't Téoù or Téqui,
would I still be Téoù or Téqui?

They answer all these brain-teasers like children, by playing, singing and dancing.

Where I Live explores "the state of inhabiting": inhabiting one's body, one's house, one's village and one's planet. The props and scenic elements all use materials easily available to children: cardboard and wood blocks for the houses, rags for puppets, and flashlights for light shows and shadow games.

Male-female roles

When we were conceiving this show, which deals with communication and our relationship to the world around us, it seemed important to illustrate the male-female duality in the form of a connection between a transmitter and a receiver; although interchangeable, they have different degrees of sensitivity and world views.



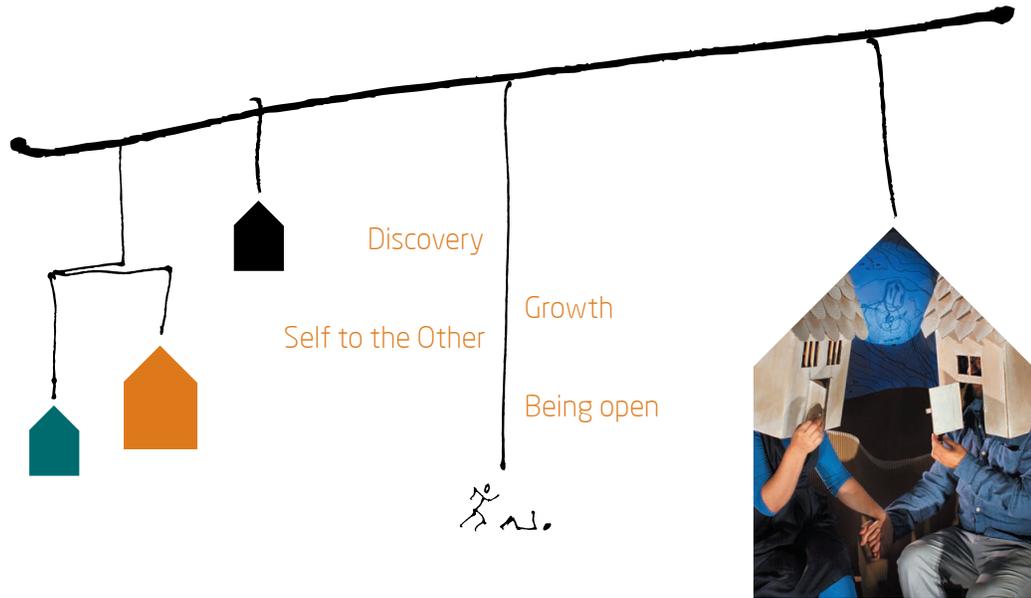
Establishing a secure emotional environment

For *Where I Live*, as the children enter the theatre, the performers greet them by shining spots of light at their feet (using flashlights) to make them feel like movie stars. Making introductions this way gives us the chance to meet each spectator and to win their trust while they look around and get settled in. The show gets underway while everyone becomes acquainted and reassurances are provided: are you all okay? Are you afraid of the dark? Shall we begin the show? We set the mood so that the children feel comfortable and in total confidence throughout the show.

Theme and insight

The overriding theme that guided the research for *Where I Live* is that of children learning to use communication tools. We believe that toddlers experience great hardships and great miracles every day as they develop their language skills and learn life's various social behaviour codes. Day by day, they get to know every sign, every word, every code of communication, as a material that can be touched, smelled, seen, heard and explored. They discover the world, with all the challenges of motor skills, diction and the conceptualization of concrete and abstract thinking that define early childhood. We are fascinated by their courage and their willingness to learn, and we become aware of their ability to use all their senses to cover their shortcomings while they acquire and store knowledge and become increasingly autonomous.

All these basic steps are indispensable and have a marked impact in our adulthood on how we relate with those around us. This insight is what influenced the show's script.



Symbolism and inspiration

Our spiritual guide for this work is the philosopher Gaston Bachelard who was interested, among many things, in the symbolism of the house. In *La poétique de l'espace* (The Poetics of Space) (1957) he describes the house as our corner of the World. It is our initial Universe, our first "outer space". The house conveys the idea of interiority and exteriority, of intimacy and public space, of the infinitely small and the infinitely big. These are the notions we developed while creating *Where I Live*.

The house symbolizes the centre of the Universe.

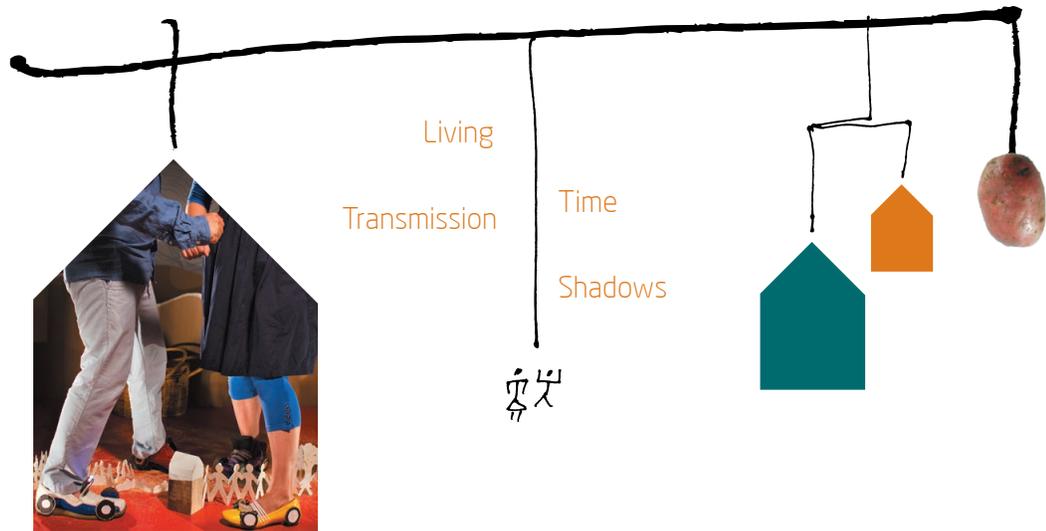
In the show, Téou and Téqui explain that their body is like a house that grows bigger with them and that their arms are like the corridors that connect one room to another, or the paths that connect the Self to the Other.

The village symbolizes the encounter with the Other.

A small town of wooden blocks gets built during the show. It is inhabited by a collection of small rudimentary puppets that gradually appear. Through the multiple and diverse realities of its inhabitants, the village conveys the idea of being open to the world and all its possibilities.

The voyage symbolizes the search for and discovery of self.

During the show, several trips and journeys are talked about and portrayed. They illustrate the discovery of the world around us and help us to grow and get to know ourselves better.



Symbolism and inspiration

The universe and the solar system symbolize the infinitely big.

In the show, a large mobile made of potatoes is a reminder that the infinitely big meets the infinitely small through the connection between Earth and outer space. Following this line of thought, a child's drawing — depicting a figure showing another figure in its belly (a mother and her child?) — is projected on a huge topographic map and gets moved around. A range of sizes are used during the show to represent the many points of view of the same reality. From micro to macro, there is but one step: one small step for man, one big step for humanity!

Paper symbolizes the transience of life and the brevity of our time on earth.

During the early stage-design research, we deliberately use this fragile material. It is easy to work with, making it possible to quickly create all sorts of worlds that can be set up and taken down in minutes. Children everywhere build paper houses, hiding places that separate them from the outside world and define their personal territory. It is therefore paradoxical that while the paper house is symbolically linked to secrecy or hiding, paper is also closely tied to the idea of transmission. Children use paper for their first drawings and their first attempts at writing: in other words, the first messages conveyed to the Other in a public way.



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