

BaObab



PRESS COVERAGE



MOTUS
Marionnettes & Théâtre

www.theatremotus.com

Photo: Robert Etcheverry

Baobab a delight for children of all ages

By: Randall King

Posted: 03/18/2017 4:00 AM | Last Modified: 03/18/2017 8:52 AM



The program for Montreal playwright H el ene Ducharme's one-hour children's play, *Baobab*, says it is recommended for ages four to 10. But older kids or adults who pay too much attention to the age advisory would only be depriving themselves of a little gem of international theatre, tight and economic in its execution, yet dazzling in its scope.

Yes, it's a play geared toward children, wherein Ducharme cherrypicks from West African storytelling tradition — the mythology that gave us the stories of Anasi the spider.

It establishes its regional parameters quickly, with music performed by Aboulaye Kon e and Nathalie Cora on beautiful traditional instruments. Sharon James takes the spotlight as a "griot" (storyteller) weaving the tale of a child hatched from an egg that rolls from within a giant baobab tree.

Amondo (a lovely boy puppet sensitively manipulated by Philippe Racine) is taken under the care of the entire village, even as its denizens are suffering under a drought caused by a sun that "refuses to go to sleep."



Amondo soon realizes he is the one who has been born to rescue the world. He is assigned four tasks that will bring water back to the world, including stealing the hump of a witch and diverting the attention of a baboon that ferociously guards the location of the heart of the sun.

Ducharme, artistic director of the play's Montreal-based producer Theatre Motus, has created a formidable piece of mythic storytelling. But she also knows a thing or two about how to win over an audience of children. The baboon is played by James with a mask on either of her ends. Whenever the simian exposes its bright red backside to the audience, the exposure is met with peals of delighted laughter.



But that's not to say Ducharme is patronizing. In fact, the work is rich and sophisticated in its themes. And the costumes and puppetry are flat-out ingenious. Note, for example, how Nathalie Cora, who plays an elaborate stringed instrument called a kora, has only to add a puppet head and a tail feather to transform herself into a giant bird. Elsewhere, the same instrument is enlisted to play the moon, temporarily blocking the sun's rays so Amondo can carry out his mission.

Baobab was performed at MTYP back in 2011. But it's a work of sufficient beauty and elegance, it warrants a repeat viewing — even if you happen to be older than 10.

In addition to five public performances of Baobab, there will be one performance in French on Sunday, March 19, at 2 p.m.

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Read more by Randall King.



REVIEW

Charming West African folk tale *Baobab* brings light to MTYP stage 2017-18 MTYP season will feature *Charlie Brown*, *Morro* and *Jasp*, and *The Lion*, *the Witch* and *the Wardrobe*

By Joff Schmidt, CBC News Posted: Mar 23, 2017 2:00 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 23, 2017 2:00 PM CT



Théâtre Motus' production of *Baobab*, now running at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People, brings a West African folk tale to life for young audiences with style and charm. (Robert Etcheverry)

As the snow melts (and freezes, and melts again, and freezes again) here in Manitoba, a sun-baked, drought-stricken region of West Africa may seem very far away and foreign indeed.

But *Baobab*, the latest show at Manitoba Theatre for Young People, brings a West African folk tale to life for young audiences here with intimacy and charm.

The production from Montreal's Théâtre Motus tells the story of Amondo, a boy hatched from an egg in a village where the water has disappeared. To reclaim it, he'll have to complete a series of tasks to find the heart of the sun and use it to release the water from the deep roots of a giant baobab tree.

That may sound complicated, and the threads of the plot do occasionally get a bit messy. But this is essentially the familiar story of the hero's journey, and it's told with winning style in this production.



Offering some great physical comedy, MTYP's *Baobab* treats its timeless subject matter with respect, but not over-earnestly. (Robert Etcheverry)

Writer/director H  l  ne Ducharme blends joyous and mesmerizing West African music (from Aboulaye Kon  , a fabulous marimba player, and Nathalie Cora playing the kora, a stringed African instrument) with clever shadow puppetry, traditional puppetry, song and storytelling in a package that consistently engages.

It treats its timeless subject matter with respect, but not over-earnestly. There are some lovely bits of physical comedy, especially as Amondo — represented by a puppet skillfully manipulated by Philippe Racine — faces off against the baobab tree's guardian monkey, played with silly charm and great energy by Sharon James.

There are a few spots where the 55-minute production lags slightly, but for the most part, it offers up enough laughs and surprises, and propels the story along smartly enough, to engage the elementary school-aged crowd it's aimed at.

Baobab is a welcome trip to a sunny place.

Baobab has public performances at MTYP March 24-26.



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LINCOLN CENTER'S LC KIDS ANNOUNCES 2016-17 SEASON

Lincoln Center Presents Theater, Music, and Dance Performances From Around the World for Children and Families

Popular Free Events Continue, Including the Annual LC Trick-or-Treat and Spring Fling, And Monthly Music and Storytime Events at the David Rubenstein Atrium

NEW YORK, NY (July 21, 2016) — Lincoln Center's LC Kids program—which welcomes children and families to the world's leading performing arts center with world-class performances and free events—announces its 2016–17 season, including 10 ticketed productions from five different countries. Following the success of its inaugural season last year, LC Kids expands its offerings with a wide-ranging line up, filled with theater, dance, stories, music, and free parties on the plaza.

“On any given night, the arts are alive as audiences head to Lincoln Center for an amazing performance,” said Jonathan Shmidt Chapman, Associate Director, Programming and Production. “Now, even the youngest of audiences get to experience a wide range of world-class performance just for them on our campus. We have significantly expanded our 2016-17 season to offer more presentations to families and children of all ages, sure to amaze and inspire the next generations of arts lovers and continue to make Lincoln Center an exciting destination for all.”

Ticketed events from September through May offer presentations for children of all ages (recommendations on shows below). Major highlights include the expansion of programs for ages 2–5; the return of the sold-out *Meet Me at the Fountain* interactive promenade adventure, commissioned by Lincoln Center and premiered last spring; as well as the second original commission for Trusty Sidekick Theater Company for young audiences on the autism spectrum. In addition, LC Kids will engage in an unprecedented collaboration with BAMkids to present *In a Pickle*, an original work by Oily Cart and the Royal Shakespeare Company inspired by Shakespeare for young audiences and those with special needs. LC Kids will also host productions from five different countries to delight, entertain and inspire.

LC Kids will present more than 20 free events over the next year, highlighted by the continuing monthly series at the David Rubenstein Atrium with up close performances with leading musicians for young audiences from across the country, and story times with acclaimed children's book authors in partnership with Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. This year also marks the expansion of LC Kids Artists at the Atrium, which adds a second performance on the first Saturday of each month. Both series will kick off with a joint event on

September 17, featuring the Grammy Award–winning Tim Kubart and the Space Cadets, joined by astronaut Chris Hadfield reading his children’s book *The Darkest Dark*. Other notable artists this season include The Verve Pipe, Gustafer Yellowgold, and Sonia de los Santos. The popular LC Trick-or-Treat and LC Kids Spring Fling events return, letting kids party on Lincoln Center’s plazas.

Complete details for the 2016–17 LC Kids season follow below.

TICKETED PERFORMANCES

Meet Me at the Fountain

LC Kids original production

September 17 and 18

Across the plazas of Lincoln Center

Ages 7+

Tickets on sale August 15 to the general public. Tickets from \$25

Back by popular demand! LC Kids will open its theater season with an encore presentation of the original, immersive theater adventure that had kid detectives running all across Lincoln Center last spring. So, do you have what it takes to join the ranks of *The Eyes of the Fountain*, an underground league of cultural crime fighters who keep Lincoln Center’s stages safe from sabotage? Your case file awaits.

This World Made Itself

Miwa Matreyek – Los Angeles, CA

October 22 and 23, at 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 7+

Tickets from \$25

*Presented in collaboration with Lincoln Center’s White Light Festival

In this beautiful blend of film and theater, performance artist Miwa Matreyek’s shadow silhouette interacts with visually stunning landscapes created by animated projections. Follow Matreyek on a rich journey of the senses through the history of the earth, from the universe’s epic beginnings to the complex world of humans.

Mariko’s Magical Mix

Hubbard Street 2 / Manual Cinema – Chicago, IL

December 10, at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 6+

Tickets from \$25

The tedium of everyday life in the not-too-distant future makes a girl restless until one day she discovers a crate in her attic, filled with her mother’s vinyl records. Armed only with headphones, our young hero is transported to a world of music and shadow, where she makes friends, builds impossible machines, escapes entrapment, and slays her own demons. This visually surprising show bursts to life on stage in a collaboration between a critically acclaimed dance company and a masterful shadow puppet ensemble.

Argus

Dead Puppet Society – Brisbane, Australia

January 14, at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 6+

Tickets from \$25

Step into a whimsical wonderland where table tops grow grass and water bottles become the depths of the ocean. Using nothing but household objects and the performers' hands, *Argus* tells the story of an endearing little creature trying to find a home in a world where he just doesn't fit in, brought to life with stunning creativity by one of Australia's premiere puppet companies.

Shadow Play

Trusty Sidekick Theater Company – New York, NY

January 29 and February 4, at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 2–5

Tickets from \$25

Have you ever wondered what happens to your shadow while you sleep? Well, it turns out that some shadows are more mischievous than others. Soon after moving to his new home, Flash discovers that his shadow has moving plans of its own! *Shadow Play* is an early-years, multimedia performance that enchants and engages.

Baobab

Théâtre Motus – Longueuil, Quebec, Canada

February 11, at 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 6+

Tickets from \$25

Théâtre Motus tells the story of a hero's quest in West Africa, where there is a serious drought. There stands an ancient baobab tree. One day, the tree brings forth an egg, from which a boy is born. The villagers discover that he is the only one who can free the water! *Baobab* shows that a child's courage can save the world.

The Bookbinder

Trick of the Light Theater Company – Wellington, New Zealand

March 4, at 2:00 pm

Clark Studio Theater, Lincoln Center

Ages 7+

Tickets from \$25

They say you can get lost in a good book, but it's worse getting lost in a bad one. Award-winning Trick of the Light Theater tells a story of mystery, magic, and mayhem. *The Bookbinder* is a one-man show that weaves shadowplay, paper art, puppetry, and music into an original, spooky fairy tale in the vein of *Coraline* and *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*.

(...)

(Note: Pages 1 to 4 from original 9 page document)

The Quotable Sayak: "If you can snag tickets...do so IMMEDIATELY!" ~ Sayak S-G

Posted on October 20, 2015 by Arpita Ghosal



Reviews by Sayak

***Baobab* May Just Be YOUR Ticket to Everything!**

Today on Sunday, October 18th, 2015, my family and I travelled downtown to see a show that featured MORE than you could ever imagine: *Baobab*. To be completely honest, I went in thinking it was going to be just ok (I don't know why, judging by the fact that I find ALL of



Sharon James, Widemir Normil and Nathalie Cora in a scene from *Baobab*; photo by Robert Etcheverry

Young People's Theatre's (YPT) shows interesting), but I was speechless after seeing this show which features traditional music, African legends, puppets, shadowplay, singing and dancing. I'm sure you're probably thinking, "sounds good, but LONG!" Actually, it was only 55 minutes! I was never bored for a millisecond of this show, which was also filled with small jokes and interactive

played, for example, the Humpback Witch and the Monkey. They were great! I just wish there was a chance to learn about *them* . . . not just what Amando needed from them to complete his 4 tasks in order to release the water. There was not a Q&A session at the end (like there usually is at YPT), but you could talk to the performers, learn about the instruments, and find out how the sound effects were made. *Baobab* closes **Friday**, so if you can snag tickets to this gem, do so IMMEDIATELY!

***Hana's Suitcase* Left NO Eyes Dry!**

Also today, I went to see *Hana's Suitcase*, a show that made everyone shed at LEAST a few tears. This show was 95 minutes, including a 10 minute intermission between act I and act II. Whereas *Baobab* is for people who want a short and sweet show with literally EVERYTHING, *Hana's Suitcase* is for someone who is prepared to think, with a box of tissues, and likes an in-depth, serious and thought-provoking dose of reality. A child's suitcase arrives at the Children's Holocaust Centre in Tokyo and creates lots of questions with the children there. The curator sets out on an adventure, with many ups and downs to find the incredible and devastating truth about the owner, Hana. Unfortunately, Hana isn't alive, but her brother is



Noah Spitzer and Caroline Toal with the ensemble in *Hana's Suitcase*; photo by Cylla von Tiedemann



Caroline Toal in a scene from *Hana's Suitcase*; photo by Cylla von Tiedemann

Hana's Suitcase is anything but your average play. This play makes you reflect on things like not sweating the small things in life because people just like Hana had it MUCH worse. And I felt that the suitcase, which Hana carries to Auschwitz and which makes the Japanese children curious to learn her story, is filled with hope that she and we all need to hang onto. I'd be lying if I said we aren't lucky now, but I'd also be lying if I said our world is perfect, because there are still racists and people who are close-minded and intolerant out there. Get a ticket to *Hana's Suitcase* because you can neve

because it's a heck of a good reminder, a very touching story, and incredibly staged and acted. *Hana's Suitcase* has now been shown 4 times at Young People's Theatre (the first time being 2006)–and I don't know why this isn't their 100th time. It's that outstanding!

News You Can Use

What: *Baobab*, written and directed by H  l  ne Ducharme

When: Running until October 23rd, 2015

What: *Hana's Suitcase*, written by Emil Sher, directed by Allen MacInnis

When: Running until October 30th, 2015

Where: Young People's Theatre, 165 Front Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 3Z4

For Information and Tickets:

youngpeoplestheatre.ca and 416-862-2222

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Sharon James, Widemir Normil and Nathalie Cora in *Baobab*; photo by Robert Etcheverry

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REVIEW: BAOBAB (YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE)

© OCTOBER 16, 2015 👤 ILANA LUCAS 💬 LEAVE A COMMENT



Toronto's Young People's Theatre remounts their Dora Award Winning play *Baobab*

Sometimes, there's nothing better than sitting back and watching a crowd of kids be enchanted by theatre. Of course, it helps when the show manages to be enchanting to the adults in the audience as well. [Baobab](#), a remount of the Dora Award-winning 2012 [production](#) for children 4-8, comes back to the [Young People's Theatre Studio](#) from October 13-23. Watching it, I saw an audience captivated by a combination of skillful puppetry and visuals, lovely harmonies, and a gentle myth.

Written and directed by H el ene Ducharme, with English translation by Leanna Brodie, the production was created by Montreal's Th  atre Motus in co-production with Troupe S o from Mali. The story is simple: the sun gets jealous of the Earth's children with the giant baobab tree, and refuses to set, drying out the land. A mysterious boy, Amondo, hatches from an egg that rolls, unbidden, into the centre of the village. Amondo will unite the village in his care, and will repay them by attempting to return the sun's heart by completing arduous tasks.

All the actors are at home in their (multiple) roles, with Widemir Normil, as narrator, baboon and many others, in particular clearly having a blast. Audience interaction at the beginning and a few key

moments during the show makes the kids feel special and engaged, without disrupting the flow of the narrative.

The puppetry is great, and full of surprises, whether it be characters popping out of unexpected places, a full-body bird outfit that resembles a spinning textile haystack, or the more realistic little boy at the centre of the tale, with his piercing dark eyes. My favourite puppet was ingeniously simple, a snake or lizard formed by two rattles, each displaying a large, reptilian eye. Shadow puppets and a few lighting effects are also simple yet effective, particularly when shadows appear in a wave of sand.

One of the things I really appreciated about the show was that it varied in intensity and pitch throughout. So much of children's entertainment wants to be constantly loud and hyperactive, but unending noise can easily tire the viewer. Baobab plays with rhythm and volume. For example, as the audience arrived, marimba player Aboulaye Koné played gently, but occasionally, as if taken over by the music, showed his wild, flailing side. The children shrieked with delight, but their attention didn't wane when he quieted down.

In Baobab, there are lovely Malian melodies, there is focused storytelling, riotous outbursts and fight choreography, but also moments of quiet contemplation. It's nothing too serious, but there's a valuable meditation on the value of community and not giving up. There are antagonists here, but they aren't that scary. There's a little innuendo, but nothing kids would get - they're too busy laughing at the baboon guardian's prominent red bottom.

Near the end of the play, there's one of those small, quiet moments which is quite special, where an adult, discussing the need for courage, says the three magic words adults don't say often enough.

The words are, "I don't know," and in them there is a lifetime of possibility, discovery, and hope. That quality of "I don't know" is why we come to the theatre, and from the sounds of the crowd around me, many were already eager to return.

Details:

- Baobab is playing at the Young People's Theatre Studio (165 Front Street East) until October 23, 2015
- The show is recommended for ages 4 and up
- Performances run: Tue. October 15 and Tue.-Thu. October 20-22 @ 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM, Fri. October 16 and 23 @ 10:30 AM, Sat. October 17 @ 2:30PM, Sun. October 18 @ 11:00 AM and 2:30 PM
- French language performance on Fri. October 16 at 10:30 AM
- Tickets range from \$15-\$34 + HST & service charges
- Tickets are available online at youngpeoplestheatre.ca or by calling the Box Office at 416.862.2222

Photo of Widemir Normil, Aboulaye Koné, Sharon James and Nathalie Cora by Robert Etcheverry

Stage Door

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Baobab

2015-10-15



**by H  l  ne Ducharme, translated by Leanna Brodie,
directed by H  l  ne Ducharme**

**Th   tre Motos and Troupe S   (Mali), Young People's
Theatre, Toronto**

October 13-23, 2015

“The Search for the Heart of the Sun”

Celebrating its 50th anniversary season this year, Young People’s Theatre is bringing back many of the most famous plays it has presented. One of these is Th   tre Motos’s utterly delightful show *Baobab*, written and directed by H  l  ne Ducharme. The show won the Dora Award for Outstanding Theatre Production for Young People in 2012, but it could have won the award for Outstanding Theatre Production period. Theatre, dance, music, puppetry, staging and design are thoroughly integrated and all combine to tell a compelling story that held its enthusiastic audience of four-year-olds rapt from beginning to end.

The story is based on West African legends about the importance of water. After creation the sun, who is jealous of the earth, refused to set and created a long period of drought causing the baobab tree to hide itself upside down in the earth. The sun’s meanness causes it to lose its own heart. It is foretold that a hero will come who will find the sun’s heart and when he does so will release the water that

has fled from the sun. One day an ancient baobab tree releases an egg and inside the egg is a little boy named Amondo, meaning “The One Who Unites”.

The whole village raises the boy in the belief he is its hero. And so he is. From a marabou he learns he must go on a quest and complete four tasks to find the sun’s heart and release the water. The marabou tells him only three of the tasks. The fourth he must discover himself. Amondo is at first daunted by the quest he must make and the expectations of the village, but as the journey continues he finds he has resources in himself he knew nothing about and grows in bravery and cleverness with every challenge. The story thus creates a wonderful parallel between Amondo’s journey of releasing physical resources for the village and his own journey that releases his intellectual and moral resources.

As the audience enters the theatre, it is treated to the music of the kora, a 21-stringed cross between a lute and a harp, played by Nathalie Cora, and the balophone, a type of xylophone with gourds as resonators, played by Aboulaye Koné. Against the delicate melodies of the kora, Koné periodically bursts into manic playing of the balophone that sets off fits of laughter in the children from the start and establishes the generally comic tone of the piece.

Widemir Normil as the genial griot, or village storyteller appears and the show begins. The stage design by Ismaïla Manga and Ducharme features a large painting on canvas of a baobab. The mythological background of the story of the sun and the earth is illustrated by shadow puppets behind this canvas. The characters are created in a wide range of highly inventive ways. Amondo is a wooden bunraku-style puppet manipulated and sensitively voiced by Sharon James. The wise marabou is Cora covered head to toe in a colourful shaggy costume with a puppet head manipulated from inside. The snake is a braided strand of rope with a metal head. The spider is an eight-legged wicker stool. A black-headed crane is created by sticking a head onto the neck of the kora and a fan propped behind Cora. The one character who most delighted the children was Amondo’s enemy, a mandrill, who is the guardian of the baobab. Narrator Normil plays this role himself in a clever costume that covers the head and back and ends in the mandrill’s prominent red buttocks. The very variety of means in creating these characters suggests the richness of the world of the play while it stimulates the imagination of the audience.



After seeing such an inventively staged low-tech show like this, one wonders why producers think only high-tech shows will appeal to children. The greatest effects were the simplest. The apparition of Amondo's enemy the mandrill is created by a show cast on a cascade of falling rice. The ending when the water is released and it finally starts to rain was beautifully imagined by having one actor after another pour dried beans from one basket held at a height into another, making exactly the sound of heavy rain pelting a roof or the leaves of a jungle.

The music is a constant pleasure. There is singing, some of it call-and-response where the audience joins in, thus making it part of the community of the village. Amondo accomplishes his quest but what happens to him at the end is a mystery. The Q&A session after the show found that nearly everyone had a different idea of what happened, the beauty of myth being that all these answers are right.

For many in the audience this was the first-ever play they had ever seen. I could only think how lucky they were to see such a joyous show that appeals so much to the imagination and uses such a wide array of simple theatrical means to do so. Thank you YPT for letting bringing *Baobab* back to Toronto!

For ages 4+

©Christopher Hoile

Note: This review is a *Stage Door* exclusive.

Photos: (from top) Widimir Normil, Aboulaye Koné, Sharon James and Nathalie Cora; Sharon James, Widimir Normil and Nathalie Cora as the marabou ©2015 Robert Etcheverry.

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Baobab – A Review by an 11 year old. — Razzamataz Kids Shows
<http://www.razzamataz.ca/2015/04/baobab-a-review>

A Family Entertainment Series

...for kids of all ages!

Haliburton Highlands, Ontario, Canada

info@razzamataz.ca

Baobab – A Review by an 11 year old.

April 23, 2015 By [razzie](#)

The Baobab tree was one of the most interactive shows I've ever seen in Razzmatazz. They told and showed us a story (at the same time) about a boy searching for water and the sun's heart. The show itself was amazing and fun! It was an engaging show that all of the kids (I think) loved! They had amazing art work as well! They had many different costumes and fun ideas that I personally loved! The thing I think most of the kids loved was, the Baboon suit, that actress did amazing pretending to be a monkey.

I thought it was fun, interactive, interesting and just something amazing people come up with!



Sneaking a peak before the show started.



A Welcome Message



A captivated audience.



A musical beginning.



The telling of the story.



What a great show!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, March 23, 2015

MEDIA CONTACT: Josée Duranleau | 416.652.7672 | josee@duranleau.com

**YPT proudly celebrates 50 Wonder-Filled Years
with an extraordinary line-up for the 2015/16 season!
*Only the best is good enough for children***

Young People's Theatre is thrilled to announce the playbill for its 2015/16 **50th Anniversary Season**, a milestone marked by the return of beloved audience favourites, re-imagined classics and innovative new work, each a testament to YPT founder **Susan Rubes's** statement: *Only the best is good enough for children.*

This extraordinary season will feature nine remarkable and diverse productions on two stages, including two cutting-edge world premieres, three musicals, and a theatrical exchange with YPT's renowned sister organization, **Seattle Children's Theatre**. International in scope and at the forefront of issues relevant to young people, YPT's 50th Anniversary Season promises to be a landmark year!

The theme of our anniversary season is inspired by the words of YPT's founder, Susan Rubes: Only the best is good enough for children. For me that means encouraging them to delight in the joys of life, empowering them to handle the small and large challenges of existence, teaching them genuine respect for others, and finally, giving them freedom to make choices for which they will be responsible. Our anniversary program highlights that the best for children is what gives them the optimal chance to thrive... now and into their futures. - Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director

50th Anniversary Season Playbill

Hana's Suitcase

Written by Emil Sher

Based on the book *Hana's Suitcase* by Karen Levine, published by Second Story Press

Directed by Allen MacInnis

Recommended for ages 10 & up

Oct. 5 to 30, 2015

At some point, it is best that children be told the truth.

When a child's suitcase arrives at the tiny Children's Holocaust Centre in Tokyo, the curator embarks on an extraordinary journey to uncover the story of Hana and her fate at the hands of the Nazis. This true story, originally a radio documentary and then an international best-selling book, premiered at YPT in 2006 with two of its real-life protagonists in attendance, George Brady and Fumiko Ishioka. YPT's successful production toured to Winnipeg, Edmonton, Montreal, and Vancouver and in 2015/16 will revisit Geordie Productions in Montreal and premiere at the Seattle Children's Theatre.

Cont'd.

Baobab

Written and Directed by H el ene Ducharme

English translation by Leanna Brodie

A Th eatre Motus production created in co-production with Troupe S o (Mali)

Recommended for ages 4 & up

Oct. 13 to 23, 2015

Sometimes, children need to find their own path, allowing them the wisdom of their innocence. An epic West African story comes to life in this award-winning production about a mystical young boy's quest to return water to the land amidst a relentless drought. YPT brings back this audience favourite, which won the Dora Award for Outstanding TYA Production in 2012.

Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang

Written by Mordecai Richler

New Music and Lyrics by Britta and Anika Johnson

Co-Directed by Allen MacInnis and Jen Shuber

Recommended for ages 7 & up

Nov. 16 to Dec. 20, 2015

Truly a signature production in YPT's history, this play is the company's most-produced and amongst its most beloved. It is particularly fitting that *Jacob Two-Two* returns for this, the 40th anniversary of the book by renowned Canadian author Mordecai Richler. An action-packed musical filled with suspense, comedy and adventure featuring new music and lyrics by talented young song-writing duo Britta and Anika Johnson.

P@ndora

Written by Sarah Berthiaume

Translated by Nadine Desrochers

Commissioned and produced by Youtheatre

Directed by Michel Lefebvre

Recommended for ages 15 & up

Nov. 30 to Dec. 11, 2015

An innocent online foray reveals the disturbing and surreal world of cyber-porn and exacerbates a 16 year-old girl's self-image issues by complicating her relationship with a boy she likes. In the best interest of protecting young people from predators, we must instill our children with ownership of their feelings and their bodies. Youtheatre of Montreal is a long-time partner of YPT, having produced such topical teen works as *The Other Side of the Closet*.

Mistatim

By Erin Shields, based on a concept by Sandra Laronde

Produced by Red Sky Performance

Directed by Andrea Donaldson

Recommended for ages 6 & up

Feb. 9 to 19, 2016

Two young neighbours discover they live in worlds that are very far apart in this moving coming of age story about how Mistatim – the Cree word for *horse* – brings them together to form the truest of friendships. Red Sky Performance offers dynamic, movement-based Aboriginal stories for audiences young and old.

One Thing Leads to Another - WORLD PREMIERE

Created by Maja Ardal

Directed by Mary Francis Moore

Recommended for ages 3 to 12 months, but suitable for up to 24 months

Feb. 8 to 21, 2016

Former YPT Artistic Director Maja Ardal returns with an innovative new work of theatre commissioned by YPT and created specifically for infants! As they develop and thrive, babies use all of their senses to learn about the world – therefore, our performers will engage with YPT’s youngest-ever audience using music, enticing visuals, and tactile experiences.

Goodnight Moon

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Chad Henry

Adapted from *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd

Produced by Seattle Children’s Theatre, Seattle, WA, USA

Directed by Linda Hartzell with additional Direction by Rita Giomi

GOODNIGHT MOON copyright © 1947, 1975 A Clark III and JT Hurd

Recommended for ages 4 & up

Feb. 29 to Mar. 19, 2016

YPT is delighted to bring Seattle Children’s Theatre to Canada for the first time with a special treat for young ones over the March Break. The Great Green Room comes to life before your eyes in this delightful family musical that stays true to the beloved book. One of the best ways for children to feel cherished and loved is to cozy up with a children’s classic!

***Scarberia* - WORLD PREMIERE**

By Evan Placey

Directed by Nina Lee Aquino

Recommended for ages 14 & up

Apr. 18 to May 1, 2016

YPT is proud to premiere a play that connects both sides of the Atlantic. The fate of two sets of boys in Scarborough, Ontario and Scarborough, England are linked by one body found washed up on a beach. This riveting mystery was commissioned by YPT, workshopped at the Banff Centre Playwrights Colony, and comes from the pen of award-winning expat Canadian, Evan Placey.

The Wizard of Oz

By L. Frank Baum

With Music and Lyrics by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg

Background Music by Herbert Stothart

Dance and Vocal Arrangements by Peter Howard, Orchestration by Larry Wilcox, Adapted by John Kane for the Royal Shakespeare Company

Based upon the Classic Motion Picture owned by Turner Entertainment Co. and distributed in all media by Warner Bros.

Directed by Joey Tremblay

Recommended for ages 5 & up

Apr. 4 to May 15, 2016

YPT closes its season with a whimsical look at one of its most popular shows. In this refreshing new take on the family musical classic, Dorothy once again tries to find her way back home, only to learn she must find ‘home’ within herself.

The 50th Anniversary Season will feature a variety of events that honour YPT’s storied past while looking ahead to a big, bright future. **YPT’s 50th Anniversary Gala**, co-chaired by three couples (Sheila Brown & Doug Guzman, Holly Coll-Black & Rupert Duchesne, and Susan & Arthur Scace) is scheduled for Thursday, October 29th at the Arcadian Court. The event will celebrate the past, present and future of Canada’s largest and oldest professional theatre for young people, featuring performances from celebrated Alumni artists and videos documenting YPT’s innovative community programs. This once-in-50-years event is not to be missed. Stay tuned for more information.

YPT's renowned **Drama School** turns 46 this year and features year-round classes and programs, led by professional artist-educators, at three locations in the GTA (with a fourth location to be announced soon!). **Summer Drama Camp** registration is currently underway. For more information, visit youngpeoplestheatre.ca or call 416.862.2222.

It is with sincere gratitude that Young People's Theatre recognizes the extraordinary contribution of the **Slaight family**, whose dedicated, long-standing support has been vital to the success of the company. Of particular note is their remarkable gift of \$3 million, just announced, for the creation of the **Ada Slaight Education Centre at YPT**.

YPT is very grateful for the support provided by its Government Partners - **Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council** and **Canadian Heritage**. As well, YPT wishes to thank lead Education Partner **BMO Financial Group**, Emerging Artists Partner **RBC Foundation**, lead *Seats for Every Kid* Partner **TD Bank Group**, Community Education Sponsor **Barrick Gold**, and Production Sponsors **Bell Canada** and **Scotiabank**.

Young People's Theatre is also very grateful for the contribution of our Accessibility Partners **Great West Life, London Life, Canada Life; Industrial Alliance & IA Clarington Investments**; and the **Tippet Foundation**.

And Young People's Theatre is especially thankful for the support of the people of Toronto over these past 50 years, who have embraced this very special company like one of the family.

* * * * *

YPT officially kicks off this momentous year on July 1st, 2015. But the outpouring of excitement already coming in from members of the public and the theatre community has been truly heart-warming:

Over the past 50 years, Young People's Theatre has made an indelible mark on the City of Toronto. My mother was a volunteer in the early days, working alongside founder Susan Rubes. Even then, this unique company's value to our City was clear. Through its professional productions and educational programming, YPT has introduced the performing arts to millions of children. Thank you, YPT. You are vital to Toronto's cultural make-up. Here's to the next 50 years!

- **Mayor John Tory**

Live theatre, especially for family audiences, is one of the most exciting ways of introducing young people to the experience of drama, spurring their creativity and instilling in them a lifelong sense of the importance of the arts... Young People's Theatre has been at the forefront of this important work for as long as I can remember. Happy 50th anniversary YPT, and may you continue for many years to come!

- **Karen Kain, C.C., Artistic Director, The National Ballet of Canada**

I had the great good fortune to work at YPT early in my career. From the excellence of the artists and artisans, to the clear sense of mission in bringing quality theatre to young people – it was a wonderful experience in every way. I say to YPT: "long may you run!"

- **Antoni Cimolino, Artistic Director, Stratford Festival**

Thanks to specialists like YPT, who focus on professional performing arts experiences for young audiences, Canadian Opera Company and many other companies can have confidence there will be future, eager audiences in Canada. Congratulations YPT on the accomplishments of your last 50 years. May you enjoy another 50 years of great theatre for young people.

- **Alexander Neef, General Director, Canadian Opera Company**

My very first professional performance was at YPT in Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang. I loved the theatre then and I love it now. Thank you, YPT, for introducing thousands of young people (myself included) to the glory of theatre!

- Albert Schultz, Artistic Director, Soulpepper Theatre Company

Thank you YPT for being the first. The first professional theatre specifically dedicated to young people in Toronto, in Canada, and one of the first on the continent. You have blazed a trail. More importantly, you continue to lead. Bravo. Here's to the next 50 years.

- Vanessa Porteous, Artistic Director, Alberta Theatre Projects, Calgary

Young People's Theatre inspired a sea-change in theatre in Canada and the world. Susan Rubes and Young People's Theatre also inspired a global shift in how we value the experiences, stories and cultural lives of children and young people. Happy Birthday, YPT.

- Ruth Smillie, Artistic Director, Globe Theatre, Regina

Thank you YPT for bringing such beautiful stories to life on the stage in an inspired and thoughtful way; and for nurturing our children's imaginations, and in a fun way teaching them about people, places, ideas and problem solving...oh yeah, and for helping to making culture an option!

- Amy House, Artistic Animateur, Resource Centre for the Arts, St. John's

Read more at youngpeoplestheatre.ca/50 and share your own memories there.

For a limited time, subscribers can save on already low ticket prices and receive priority seating with YPT's **Show Combos, offering discounts of up to 25%. NEW 50th Season Launch Special:** Purchase all eight regular shows (excluding *One Thing Leads to Another*) and receive 50% off for the first 50 days Combos are on sale! (Mar. 23 to May 12)

With the generous assistance of **Sun Life Financial**, YPT is once again offering **First Saturdays** and **Pay-What-You-Can** (PWYC) performances this season. **First Saturdays** provide families with reduced ticket prices to the first Saturday performance of selected Mainstage productions. **PWYC** tickets are available for designated weekend family shows on the day of performance only.

Weekday school group prices remain unchanged (for over ten years) with tickets just \$15 for students and teachers including HST, and one **FREE teacher/chaperone ticket** for every 20 tickets purchased. **NEW 50th Season Launch Special – Save 20%:** Tickets just \$12 each for the first 50 days they're on sale (in effect from March 23 to May 12).

TICKETS ON SALE TODAY!

Be the first to access tickets to YPT's 50th Anniversary Season by purchasing Show Combos beginning today – March 23. Student group tickets are also on sale now to schools.

Single tickets go on sale to the general public May 13.

For more information, please visit youngpeoplestheatre.ca or call 416.862.2222.

For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact **Josée Duranleau** of Duranleau Communications: **416.652.7672**, josee@duranleau.com.

Holiday theatre for kids: Baobab inspiring at any time of the year



PAT DONNELLY, MONTREAL GAZETTE

More from Pat Donnelly, Montreal Gazette ([HTTP://MONTREALGAZETTE.COM/AUTHOR/PDONNELL](http://montrealgazette.com/author/pdonnell))

Published on: December 2, 2014 | Last Updated: December 2, 2014 6:27 PM EST



While it's not directly linked to traditional holidays celebrated at this time of year, Baobab is inspiring to all at any time.

Robert Etcheverry

Maison Théâtre is a godsend to parents. Especially during the holiday season.

This year it's presenting three live theatre shows for children, one at its home venue (Baobab) and two others at Théâtre Prospero (Pomme, Les Mécaniques célestes)

Baobab is a thoroughly entertaining show based on a West African fable about a little boy born out of an egg found in an upside-down baobab tree during a time of drought and famine. The boy is sent on a quest to find the heart of the sun, which was stolen away by a witch, in order to restore normal climate conditions to the land.

While it's not directly linked to traditional holidays celebrated at this time of year (but just right for Kwanzaa), this story of a young foundling raised by a village who goes on to do great things is inspiring to all at any time.

The performers are engaging and authentic, especially the narrator/witch/baboon (Widemir Normil). The live music, played on an array of African instruments, is dance-inducing. The set and costumes are gorgeous. The puppets, which range from the little boy (with voice and manipulation by Philippe Racine) to a large bird with a straw-thatched back, are ingeniously fashioned, as are the masks. Both are used in inventive ways.

Baobab is the next best thing to The Lion King, only smaller-scale and far better tailored (at 55 minutes) to young attention spans.

One of the parents I spoke with at the show said she had brought her two children back a second time. And it sounded like they were ready for a third round.

A seven-year-old girl named Isabelle who was there with her Australia-raised mom, Rebecca, said her favourite moment was when the little boy kicked the evil baboon's behind.

The gambit of collecting children's first names and incorporating them into the opening song works like a charm.

Baobab, written and directed by Quebec playwright H el ene Ducharme and produced by Th eatre Motus in collaboration with Troupe S o of Mali, premiered in Montreal in January 2009. Since then it has toured to Mali as well as across North America (including Mexico), in Spanish, English or French, according to demand. It has won several prizes, including a 2012 Dora Award in Toronto for Outstanding Production in the Theatre for Young Audiences Division.

Review: Baobab (Young People's Theatre)

By [Heather Bellingham](#)



Young People's Theatre welcomes Montreal's Théâtre Motus in a co-production with the SÔ Company of Mali for Baobab, presented in the Studio from May 8 to 17, 2012. Baobab is recommended for children ages four to eight. Baobab features Ralph Prosper, Mireille Tawfik, Nathalie Cora and Aboulaye Koné, and is written and directed by Hélène Ducharme.

The story, inspired by West African legends, is about an ancient baobab tree during a drought. One day the tree produces an egg, from which a little boy, Amondo, hatches. The villagers recognize that Amondo is the only one who can undertake the quest to bring water back to the land, completing three tasks that will lead him to the heart of the sun.

Baobab makes use of puppetry, masks, and percussive rhythms to bring the fairy tale to life, with delightful results. The puppetry was inventive and effective: sometimes characters were fully-realized creatures (like Amondo), sometimes they would be pieces added to the performers and their instruments (for instance, a bird's head and tail added to a kora), and sometimes shadow puppetry would be used (as in the photo above, where images were projected into sand). Puppets would appear out of objects already on stage, and it was wonderful to watch where things would come from next.

The masks, which were predominantly saved for the larger, scarier villains of the piece, were also quite effective. I was particularly impressed with the monkey costume (as were the children in the audience, as most are generally amused with bum-humour).

The music was entertaining. The opening song was very casually performed, while audience members were still filtering in, and the performers would go up to individual children and introduce themselves. They would then introduce the child to the rest of the audience. (If your child is particularly shy, I would suggest sitting where they cannot be easily reached.) It was an excellent way to get the kids involved with the play, and allowed them to build up to the story.

Baobab was an excellent play. I highly recommend it for children both young and old.

EMBARGO UNTIL June 25, 2012 at 11PM, EST.

Media Refer: Dianne Weinrib/Sarah Mackie, DW Communications
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News Release

33rd Annual DORA MAJOR MOORE AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence in Toronto's Performing Arts

AND THE DORA GOES TO ...

Crash (General Theatre) and *Caroline, or Change* (Musical Theatre) Tie for Top Spot with **4 Awards** each.

Topdog Underdog (General Theatre) Earns **3 Awards**.

The Ugly One Leads Independent Theatre with **2 Awards**.

Iphigenia in Tauris Takes **2 Opera Awards**.

Soupe du Jour Nabs **2 Dance Awards**.

In the General Theatre Production Division:

Theatre Passe Muraille leads with **5 Awards**, 4 of them for *Crash* including Outstanding New Play and Performance by a Female in a Principal Role (Pamela Sinha)

Obsidian Theatre Company earns **3 Awards**: Outstanding Production, Outstanding Direction of a Play / Musical (Philip Akin) and Outstanding Performance by a Male in a Principal Role (Nigel Shawn Williams)

In the Musical Theatre Division

Caroline, or Change from Acting Up Stage Company Leads with **3 Wins**: Outstanding Production, Outstanding Performance by a Male in a Principal Role (Sterling Jarvis) and Outstanding Performance by a Female in a Principal Role (Arlene Duncan). (Outstanding Musical Direction in the General Division for Reza Jacobs and Outstanding Touring Production – with Theatre Passe Muraille - for *Ride the Cyclone* brings its total to 5.)

Queen of Puddings Music Theatre's *SVADBA - Wedding* nabs Outstanding New Musical/Opera.

In the Opera Division:

Canadian Opera Company's *Iphigenia in Tauris* earns Outstanding Production and Outstanding Performance for Susan Graham.

In the Independent Theatre Production Division:

Theatre Smash's *The Ugly One* scores **2 awards** including Outstanding Production.

In the Dance Division:

Soupe du Jour (presented by princess productions) leads with **2 wins**

In Theatre for Young Audiences Division:

Outstanding Production goes to [redacted] (Young People's Theatre presents Théâtre Motus and Sô Company).

THE CHARLEBOIS POST - CANADA

All Canadian theatre...all the time.

Saturday, April 21, 2012

Review: (Calgary) Baobab

The Real Jungle

Baobab will please parents as much as their children

by Ryan Hurl

In the heart of the urban jungle, at the base of the Calgary tower, an ancient tale pushes up toward the sky in the form of a Baobab tree. Y stage has arranged for Theatre Motus and Troip So (Mali) to present their beautifully crafted children's show about "How to make it rain" – Baobab.

The show is an eclectic mix of shadow, puppetry, music and storytelling, used to weave a shamanistic imagining of a chosen boy who brings water back to the scorched earth. Ralph Propser, Mireille Tawfik, Nathalie Cora and Aboulay Kone vibrate across a simple set that mimics a barren desert littered with Baobab trees, harnessing instruments, ears, and childrens' attention.

"Baobab" whispers to a dry spot in us all, like any creation story, that tickles and prods the attention back to a place where our connection with the earth was pulsating and unanimous; where the sun was a character, and the animals were part of the village.

The company create a tiny little boy in the form of a beautifully constructed puppet who must embark on a hero's journey to find the heart of the sun, and re-unite it with the Baobab tree, which like the rest of the land, has dried up when the sun grew angry when the Earth grew children, but now holds and protects the missing water.

Told with a lighthearted sense of adventure, this story captivates its young audience. The exposure to the mystical African continent with its treasures of secret tales and a way of life we have never known, keeps the kids transfixed. The authentic African music, and gorgeous visuals that stimulate the imagination, move us toward a climactic state where our hero must confront the monkey, to enter the Baobab tree, an act of bravery he discovers will involve all of his ancestry, all of his mothers, and his fathers - his village - who always live inside him.

The story ends with a prismatic release of color and unification, and many a smiling young person and young at heart adult. Because as it turns out there is a baobab tree inside each of us - a whole village, and a little act of courage can go a long way.

This is a special show and it won't be here long. Baobab runs until the 22nd. Grab a young person, bound across the planes, to catch this innovative beautiful tale that is both heartwarming and a pleasure to partake in.

Baobab runs to April 22

Posted by THE CHARLEBOIS POST at 2:56 PM



Family Series - 2010/11 Season

Baobab

My favorite part was when he dove into the tree.

– *Emily, Orange, age 5*

I liked when he hatched the egg.

– *Whitney, Trabuco Canyon, age 6*

It was amazing. I have been to Africa and I love the music!

– *Madison, Mission Viejo, age 5*

I liked the buns on the monkey. I liked the music.

– *Kate, Costa Mesa, age 4*

The music was great and I liked the shadow play.

– *Julien, Montreal, age 9*

I really enjoyed the instruments and the colors on the costumes.

– *Mia, Laguna Niguel, age 7*

The funny monkey was my favorite!

– *Sophie, Orange, age 5*

It was neat when the sun became bright.

– *Lizbeth, Irvine, age 11*

I liked it all.

– *Claire, Costa Mesa, age 6*

When the girl sang and pretended to be the boy. Also when they said my name in the opening song.

– *Delaney, Trabuco Canyon, age 3*

My favorite part of the show was when the monkey shook his bum at the sun.

– *Charlotte, Orange, 5*

I thought that the dancing was pretty cool.

– *Olivia, Orange, age 8*

I didn't like the dark part. I liked the rainbow part the best.

– *Bella, Santa Ana, age 3*

Children's fest branches out with tree tales Two shows enthrall kids with fresh storytelling

BY STEPHEN HUNT, CALGARY HERALD MAY 27, 2010



Sharon James and Widemir Normil of the Quebec group Theatre Motus perform their play Baobab at the International Children's Festival.

Photograph by: Grant Black, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

Children's Festival Spotlight

The Calgary International Children's Festival runs through Saturday at Olympic Plaza and the Epcor Centre. Information: calgarychildfest.org

At first glance, there's nothing inherently dramatic about a tree.

It sprouts out of the ground. In spring, it grows leaves. In autumn, it sheds them. And then, after a winter interval, grows them again.

Not exactly the stuff of Shakespearean tragedy, you say?

Two quite different, but both compelling shows at the Calgary International Children's Festival dispelled that notion, however. After seeing *The Man Who Planted Trees*, a wonderful Scottish show that retells a legendary French children's story about a lonely,

tree-planting shepherd, and Baobab, a West Africa-Quebec production about the regenerative powers of an African tree, on Wednesday, I will never look at trees the same way again. Neither, I suspect, will the hundreds of kids who attended both shows.

The Man Who Planted Trees is a production by Scotland's Puppet State Theatre, featuring Brit Richard Medrington and expat American Rick Conte. The pair of ordinary-looking, middle-aged men, along with a wisecracking dog puppet that Conte operates named Dog, amble onstage at the start of the show and proceed to do none of the things kids performers usually do: No mugging; no big, phoney grins; and no ending every sentence with (!) exclamation (!) marks (!).

They just tell the story (with a brief prologue featuring Dog), of The Man Who Planted Trees.

The story that Medrington relates is based on a popular children's book by Jean Giono by the same name that tells the story of a lonely French shepherd who planted trees in the early part of the 20th century, and how, over the next four decades, those trees transformed the area in which Giono lived and brought villages in the area back to life.

It's not a terribly complicated story, and Medrington and Conte don't try to make it any more complicated than it needs to be. Instead, they just tell the story, with a few interludes for journeys into the audience, where they waft lavender or spritz eager children with misty water to illustrate the story they're telling.

The wonder of it all is that the less Medrington tries, the closer the audience listens, almost as if they are determined to rewrite the Children's Performers' Rulebook for Engaging Young Audiences. (The duo also performed the same show for sick kids Wednesday at the Dr. Gordon Townsend School of the Alberta Children's Hospital.)

Meanwhile, Conte, as Dog, gives a hilariously mischievous performance that is the perfect counterpoint to Medrington's deadpan storytelling.

Down the hall and up the steps at the Big Secret Theatre, Quebec and West Africa's Theatre Motus tells the story of a young African boy's adventures with an ancient Baobab, an old tree in the middle of an African forest.

Searching for his own roots, the boy discovers, through a series of encounters with various mysterious, sometimes comic animals, that only he possesses the secret to releasing the water that is the source of life in both the forest and his village.

Featuring performers from Senegal, Mali and Quebec, and making wonderful use of puppets, costumes and music onstage (including a cora, a kind of West African oversized banjo, and various drums), Theatre Motus beautifully creates a mythic world where a single kid has all the power, and the village's adults can only guide him to use it wisely.

Kids were able to easily follow the story of Baobab at Wednesday's performance -- and judging from the lineup waiting to high five the performers after the show, had no trouble locating the drama in a tree's life story.

shunt@theherald.canwest.com

© The Calgary Herald

Review: Maison Théâtre's Baobab

Children are enchanted by the story of a boy and a baobab tree

BY KATHRYN GREENAWAY, THE GAZETTE DECEMBER 4, 2009



A scene from the Maison Theatre holiday-theme presentation Baobab.

Photograph by: Maison Theatre,

Maison Théâtre is celebrating the holiday season with the play Baobab.

The play actually has nothing to do with the holidays, but consider it a great, big, beautiful gift, nonetheless.

As a theatre-full of children settled into their seats Wednesday morning, charismatic cast members Widemir Normil and Philippe Racine wandered the room welcoming them and calling out individual children's names to onstage musicians Aboulaye Koné, playing the balafon, and Nathalie Cora, playing the kora. To the delight of the children, Koné would then incorporate a different child's name in each verse.

With the welcome over, the story-telling began. Against a delicately painted backdrop of African sky and baobab trees bathed in golden light reminiscent of the hot African sun, Normil told the audience about the ungainly baobab tree and why it looks like it has been yanked out of the ground and then shoved back into the earth upside down.

Important background information that, because the main story revolves around the bravery of a little boy, born of an egg from a baobab tree, who must overcome great obstacles to find the sun's lost heart and plunge it down through a baobab trunk to pierce the centre of the earth and release precious water needed to hydrate the earth.

Hélène Ducharme's text and direction are clear, concise and playful, and the manipulation of props fresh and innovative. But what elevates the whole experience is the superb quality of the musical

performance (both musicians also participate in the puppeteering), and the charming portrayal of multiple characters by Normil and Racine. The children could not tear their eyes away. When they were called upon to help out, the response was swift, enthusiastic and entirely engaged in the moment.

The French play is a co-production by Théâtre Motus and La Troupe Sô (Mali) in collaboration with artists Hamadoun Kassogu  of Mali and Isma la Manga of Senegal. It is suitable for 3- to 8-year-olds and plays until Jan. 3, but more than half of the shows are sold out.

Move fast. It's an absolute gem.

Baobab is playing at Maison Th  tre, 245 Ontario St. E., until Jan. 3. Tickets remain for Dec. 21 at 3 p.m.; Dec. 27 at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.; Dec. 28 at 11 a.m.; Dec. 29 at 3 p.m.; Dec. 30 at 11 a.m. and Jan. 3 at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. For reservations, call 514-288-7211, Local 1 or go to www.maisontheatre.qc.ca.

kgreenaway@thegazette.canwest.com

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BAOBAB REVIEWS

From Chicago, IL, USA: Annual Stages, Sights & Sounds festival A world of fun for families, by Jennifer Burklow, Kid Zone - April 28, 2011

“...Canada’s Theatre Motus offers “Baobab,” about an ancient West African tree that produces an egg from which a little boy hatches. The boy holds the key to finding water and ending the region’s drought.

“I love this story because it’s about a young boy and I think kids really respond to seeing themselves onstage,” Barley-Jenkins said. “They get to follow this young boy’s journey. It’s filled with traditional African music and instruments, some beautiful puppetry. It’s quite wonderful, quite touching.”

From St. Albert, AB, Canada: June 4, 2011, by Anna Borowiecki, St. Albert Gazette

“Stars 4.5/5

Baobab is a spellbinding puppet show that ends leaving you with a hopeful feeling that, despite all the adversity on earth, anyone even a small child can change the world.

(...) There is never a boring moment whether it was the witch's frantic dance, an eclipse of the sun or the sudden appearance of a firefly cluster. (...)

Tying all the elements together (...) they played assorted African instruments including a cora (African harp), peule (flute), balafon (keys), doumdoum and djembe (drums). Kudos to the African inspired geometric patterned costumes and a set that evokes the sands of time.

Baobab is storytelling theatre at its best, a wonderful way to discover the tree of life.”

From Calgary, AB, Canada: May 27, 2010, by Stephen Hunt, The Calgary Herald

“(...) making wonderful use of puppets, costumes and music onstage (including a cora, a kind of West African oversized banjo, and various drums), Theatre Motus beautifully creates a mythic world where a single kid has all the power, and the village’s adults can only guide him to use it wisely.

Kids were able to easily follow the story of Baobab at Wednesday’s performance – and judging from the lineup waiting to high five the performers after the show, had no trouble locating the drama in a tree’s life story.”