

**35**  
YEARS

Théâtre de l'œil

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Montréal (Québec)  
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Artistic Director: André Laliberté

# Ah, la vache ! Holy Cow !

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A production by Théâtre de l'Œil which premiered in September 2007 at the Maison Théâtre in Montreal.

Script and Stage Direction  
Javier Swedzky

English Translation  
Script  
Maureen LaBonté  
Lyrics  
Jean Elliot Manning

Dramaturgy Consultant  
André Laliberté

Puppet and Set Design  
Marc-André Coulombe  
Javier Swedzky

Music  
Libert Subirana

Lighting  
Gilles Perron

Translation Dramaturge  
Éloi Archambaudoin

Cast  
Éloi Archambaudoin  
Joël Melançon  
Christian Perrault  
Catherine Vidal



Photo: L. Gniwesch

A zany mystery with a musical comic-strip twist.

For children ages 5 and older, and those who think they've grown up.

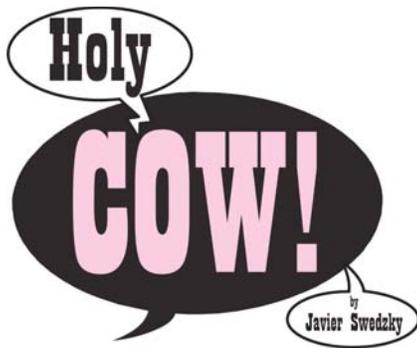
National and International Marketing: Jocelyne Losier, [losier@theatredeloil.qc.ca](mailto:losier@theatredeloil.qc.ca).

Ah, la vache ! / Holy Cow!, on tour in 2009-2010.

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DE MONTRÉAL



## A “Cow”mical Musical Comic-Strip for Actors, Puppets, and Objects

Henrietta Alformi is in a tizzy because someone has stolen her stuffed teddy-bear and she cannot sleep anymore! The famous detectives Tom and Bob quickly get down to business – the case is quite mysterious, one must admit. No one is able to get to sleep since the city has been invaded by stuffed-toy alarm clocks. After a crazy hullabaloo involving a cow disguised as a bee then

a ballerina, Tom and Bob get their hands on Theodore Snare, a notorious insomniac, diabolical inventor and stuffed-toy thief. But a revelation by Henrietta calls into question the following: to whom does this teddy-bear really belong?



Photo: L. Gniwesch

*Ah, la vache ! / Holy Cow !* is a “cow”mical show which deals with serious issues: managing conflict, negotiation, the meaning of ownership, questions without clear answers. However, with artful storytelling skill, playwright and Argentinean puppeteer, Javier Swedzky, has chosen a joyous approach which is exuberant and colourful. With a set in the form of a fairground stall which can be transformed at will, the actors and puppets, giant or tiny, try to outwit each other as they act, sing and dance their way through this zany yet tender story. Inspired as much by comic-strips as the circus or musicals, *Holy Cow !* is an outrageous and endearing comedy.

## Excerpts from the Press - *Ah, la vache !*

“*Ah, la vache !* (...) is reminiscent of old-fashioned travelling circuses. The characters are curious, sometimes malicious and play with the text which does not hesitate to underline human folly”.

Le Droit, Ottawa, Friday, 8 February 2008.

“(…) The stage direction, as carried away as it is imaginative, by the Argentinean, Javier Swedzky, manages to surprise us constantly. From one audacious moment to another, playing as much with words as with contrast, *Ah, la vache !* arrives like a breath of fresh air from the pampas, which renews Théâtre de l’Œil’s scenic vocabulary.”

Michel Bélair, Le Devoir, September 2007.

“It is often said that theatre for young audiences is one of the most inventive and creative of arts, a question of capturing and, above all, holding the attention of the young people as well as the adults. *Ah, la vache !* definitely honours this reputation.”

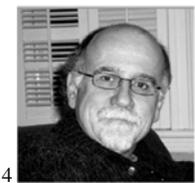
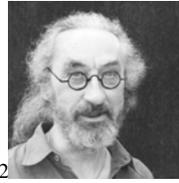
David Lefèbvre, montheatre.qc.ca

“An ode to creativity, the play by Javier Swedzky conveys to children the pleasure of inventing stories by celebrating the infinite possibilities of the imagination. With delight, one recognizes in his writing the fantasy, even the surrealist journeys the Argentinean artists are fond of (for example, Eliseo Subiela in cinema or Borges and Cortázar in literature).”

Patricia Belzil, Cahiers de théâtre Jeu, January 2008

Excerpts translated by Graham Soul

# The Creative Team



## ❶ Script, Stage Direction and Collaboration on the Puppet Design: Javier Swedzky

Playwright, actor, stage director, puppeteer, teacher, translator... It is not surprising that Javier Swedzky's curriculum-vitae, even with small print, is three pages long! Argentinean citizen of the world, Javier began his studies in cinema and television at the University of Cordoba from 1985 to 1992. At the same time, he was performing with *Avevals Taller de Teatro*, "a theatre company for children where I learned the basics". In 1992 he put together a solo show "for adults" (to be precise, he says), and began travelling. In 1993, he enrolled at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette* in Charleville-Mézières, France: "during three years, we were in contact with artists from the entire planet! And, I learned French," adds Javier. From 1992 to 2003, three of his solo plays toured Europe and Argentina; in 1997 he was the actor-manipulator for the object theatre company from Argentina, *El Periférico de Objetos*, where he toured... and worked in Quebec for the first time.

Javier Swedzky, is a whirlwind of creativity. As a playwright, he has written for children and adults. As an actor, he sometimes performs in his own shows and for others in theatre and cinema. With Marie Vayssière, actress with Tadeusz Kantor, he wrote and directed a show in 2005. In 2006, he obtained a teaching licence in theatre in France, at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, no less!

## ❷ Dramaturgy Consultant and Artistic Director of Théâtre de l'Œil: André Laliberté

André Laliberté developed a passion for puppetry during a stay in a children's hospital where he saw a performance by Micheline Legendre's *Les Marionnettes de Montréal*. He was then trained by this company for about ten years, before founding his own, the *Théâtre de l'Œil*, with Francine Saint-Aubin in 1973.

For thirty-five years at the helm of his boat as general manager and artistic director, he has performed, manipulated, written and directed a good number of Théâtre de l'Œil's twenty-three productions. A savvy artist, he surrounds himself with designers and playwrights known for their ability to create demanding and refined theatre, building a veritable repertoire for puppetry seen throughout the globe. A creative force in his field, he was one of the three founding members of the Maison Théâtre in Montreal in 1982. Recognised by his peers, an expert in his discipline, he enjoys passing on techniques of the trade, which is for him much more than a profession: it is a genuine passion. Furthermore, he shares his office with the puppets from the shows by Théâtre de l'Œil. Their silent presence inspires him, he says.

A man of refinement, among his many qualities André Laliberté is a tea lover and chocolate gourmet. He is also a loyal client and fine connoisseur of the Jean-Talon Market which he visits faithfully.

### ⑧ Puppet and Set Design: Marc-André Coulombe

Even though he says he became a puppet designer by accident, it was clearly meant to be. “I have always been in the arts, fascinated at an early age by drawing and painting,” suggests Marc-André Coulombe, by way of an excuse. After a CEGEP diploma in visual arts, a bachelor's degree in painting and illustration, and scenography training at the École nationale de théâtre du Canada, his first contract (puppet design for Théâtre de l'Avant-Pays) got him hooked. He decided to specialize and has developed an expertise in puppet mechanisms, a specialty he would later teach at UQÀM university and with the Quebec puppetry association. Concurrently, he has worked as an art director in cinema, as a scenographer in theatre with André Brassard, Brigitte Haentjens and Claude Poissant, and has made costumes for Théâtre de la Dame de Cœur, “costumes which were practically sculptures,” clarifies Marc-André Coulombe. Since then, he utilizes his multiple talents with Cirque du Soleil: “at fifty years-old, one is tired of working freelance. The Cirque is the only employer who offers permanent employment...”

#### ④ Music: Libert Subirana

Flautist, saxophonist, clarinetist, he has performed with Diane Dufresne, Yvon Deschamps, Harmonium and has written and made arrangements for Richard Séguin, Jim Corcoran... If he still makes recordings, he has dropped show business – “it is show business that dropped me!” corrects Libert, modestly. He has also composed music for film and television series. Théâtre de l’Œil called him twenty years ago (proof that there are love stories which endure!) to write music for *Bonne fête Willy*. After followed *Jules Tempête* in 1991, *Qui a peur de Loulou ?* in 1993, *Le Porteur / The Star Keeper* in 1997, *Le jardin de Babel* in 1999 and *La Félicité / Dear Fizzy* in 2003. *Ah, la vache ! / Holy Cow !* is his seventh musical score for the company.

#### ⑤ Lighting: Gilles Perron

Gilles Perron began in theatre, working for companies in the Gaspé region before seeking professional training in theatre production at the CEGEP of Saint-Hyacinthe. Working as a props person, scenographer or technical director for various productions in theatre (Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Théâtre du Rideau Vert, Théâtre Denise-Pelletier), cinema and television, he met with Théâtre de l’Œil ten years ago and has never left. Able to build or repair the sets, puppets and props of the productions, he is also the touring coordinator (he has toured the globe!) and designed the lighting for *La Félicité / Dear Fizzy* and for the revival of *Un Autre Monde / A New World*. *Ah, la vache ! / Holy Cow !* is his third lighting design for Théâtre de l’Œil.



Photos : L. Gniwesh

## The Cast



❶ If **Joël Melançon** is not visible in *Ah, la vache ! / Holy Cow !* it is because he is doing such a good job as a performer-in-the-shadows. For his debut as a puppeteer, he is the one hidden inside the big pink rabbit and who brings the tiny Theodore Snare to life. As an actor, Joël Melançon has toured with Théâtre Parminou, performed with Jean-Guy Legault for the Montreal premiere of *Scrooge* and in a few television productions. And, because he has many secret talents, Joël Melançon is also a sound designer and a director of hilarious short video clips.

❷ Graduate of the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique in 1999, **Catherine Vidal** lends her lovely voice to the giant Henrietta Alformi, and also manipulates many props. As an actor, she has performed with directors such as Daniel Brière, Benoît Vermeulen, Benoit Brière, René-Richard Cyr and many others. After numerous noteworthy projects as a director, she will direct *Grand Cahier*, d'Agota Kristof at the Prospero Theatre in Montreal in January 2009.

❸ **Christian Perrault** is an actor, singer, puppeteer and dancer. His talents as an acrobat were appreciated in *Lili*, by Dynamo Théâtre, with whom he toured internationally; his velvety voice made it possible for him to play Gainsbourg in the show *Sea, sex and sun* and Bourvil, the comical foil to Luis Mariano. He was a singer and dancer in *Mutantès*, the show with Pierre Lapointe at the Francfolies in Montreal 2008.

❹ **Éloi Archambaudoin** makes his debut as a puppeteer in *Ah, la vache !* As an actor, he has performed under the stage direction of René Richard Cyr, Éric Jean, Jean-Louis Roux, Robert Bellefeuille... In addition to some work in cinema and television, Éloi Archambaudoin also sings, dances and dubs animated cartoons in English and French.



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For 35 years, promoting the art of puppetry has been Théâtre de l'Œil's "raison d'être". As a company focused on research and new productions, the spirit of innovation which it embodies is expressed in its productions for young audiences, in its capacity to promote them, and in its professional training activities.

The objectives of the company are to seek contact with young spectators through passion and intelligence, to propose and instill the appreciation of a variety of worlds by relying on the force of theatrical images, to tell stories which find resonance in the imagination of children, making them laugh, dream and reflect. With a desire to diversify and enrich the art of puppetry, Théâtre de l'Œil favours alternating or mixing diverse type of puppets. Thanks to its scenography designs, the ingenuity of its puppets and the originality of the proposed themes, Théâtre de l'Œil has built up a solid reputation in Quebec, Canada and internationally.

Founded in 1973 by Francine Saint-Aubin and André Laliberté, the current artistic director, Théâtre de l'Œil has created twenty-three original productions. Among these, *Le Porteur / The Star Keeper*, which premiered in 1997, is without question an immense success, having been performed more than 600 times in Europe, Asia and North America, winning numerous awards in Quebec, Canada and the United States.

With 35 touring seasons and more than 4500 performances in Quebec, Canada and abroad, Théâtre de l'Œil has reached more than a million spectators in a dozen countries.

## 23 Original Productions:

- 2007 - Ah, la vache !, Javier Swedzky  
2005 - La Cité des Loups, Louise Bombardier  
2002 - La Félicité / Dear Fizzy, Simon Boudreault  
1999 - Le jardin de Babel, Marie-Louise Gay  
1997 - Le Porteur / The Star Keeper, Richard Lacroix, André Laliberté, Richard Morin  
1995 - Zoé perd son temps, Michelle Allen  
1994 - Un secret de Polichinelle, André Laliberté  
1993 - Qui a peur de Loulou ?, Marie-Louise Gay  
1991 - Jules Tempête, Cécile Gagnon  
1990 - Un Autre Monde / A New World, Réjane Charpentier  
1988 - Bonne fête Willy, Marie-Louise Gay  
1986 - Cœur à Cœur, Réjane Charpentier  
1986 - Chouinard et Cie 2, André Laliberté, Josée Plourde  
1984 - Le Soldat et la Mort, Irina Niculescu  
1984 - Chouinard et Cie 1, André Laliberté  
1982 - Ombrelle, tu dors, Suzanne Aubry  
1981 - Les grandes vacances, Michel Tremblay  
1979 - À dos de soleil, Jocelyn Desjarlais, Lise Gascon, Marjolaine Jacob, André Laliberté, Pierre Tremblay  
1979 - Regarde pour voir, Jocelyn Desjarlais, Lise Gascon, Marjolaine Jacob, André Laliberté, Pierre Tremblay  
1977 - Le toutatous, Jocelyn Desjarlais, Marjolaine Jacob, André Laliberté, Pierre Tremblay  
1976 - Tohu-Bohu, Jocelyn Desjarlais, André Laliberté  
1974 - Une fable au chou, Jocelyn Desjarlais, André Laliberté  
1973 - Les mésaventures de la perdrix blanche, Francine Saint-Aubin, André Laliberté

## Awards

- Prix Hommage RIDEAU given to Théâtre de l'Œil by the Réseau indépendant des diffuseurs d'événements artistiques unis, 2005.

### The Star Keeper / Le Porteur

- Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-USA, 2005
- Chalmers Canadian Play Award: Theatre for Young Audiences, 2001
- "Masque" for the Young Audiences Production, "Masque" for the Set Design, "Masque" for the Special Contribution for the Puppet Design, from the Académie québécoise du théâtre, 1999.

### Other Shows

- Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-USA for *Zoé perd son temps*, 1997.
- Best production for Young Audiences, from the Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre for *Un Autre Monde / A New World*, 1990.