



By José Babin

Translated by
Nadine Desrochers and Dominique Allard

Based on *The Tale of the Mountain-Woman*
by Francine Alepin, José Babin and Nadine Walsh

Directed by José Babin

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What kind of humanity can be born of such a world?

Listen, my love. Listen my child. Listen to the river:

May the hot wind carry the thread of life beyond the wild pastures,
beyond the river's throat singing, beyond the minefields,
beyond your memory, my wind-hoofed daughter:

May it run and flow, this water that sings upon your cascading laughter, lil'life.

Listen, my love. Listen, my child. Listen to the tale of your lineage.

There once was a Mountain-Woman, white as snow,
who washed away the woes of the world in the waters of a wide river.

One spring day, she heard the cry of wild horses
and the noise of chains forced into their noble mouths.
The next day, amidst horrible sounds of metal and fire,
the War-Ogre climbed her flanks.

This is where our story begins.

A tale of sound and fury, yet also of transmission and of humanity.
Seen through the unusual complicity between a mother and a daughter:

This is the story of that spark of life that continues to pulsate,
its heart beating despite all the horrors endured by a broken land.

This is the story of the ultimate resistance of women.
And the hope for beauty restored.

For a world in desperate need of poetry.





José Babin is Théâtre Incliné's artistic director. Both a stage director and an actress, she explores playwriting through the imagery of scenic writing, working on productions with or without words. *The Tale of The Mountain-Woman* was the inspiration behind her writing of this story whose words conjure up striking images.

A WORD FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT & STAGE DIRECTOR

Threads was built slowly, tackling a disturbing subject with great care. As a woman, the subject occupied my thoughts. I was afraid and did not dare to go there. The subject is so taboo... In the name of war, inhumane practices that devastate women's bodies rage throughout the world. Every day, the Internet, newspapers and magazines tell stories that conjure up revolting images. I am angry. What kind of humanity can be born of such a world? A larger-than-life question...

The Inhumanity.

What words can no longer express.

Eyes, way beyond tears. Gut wrenching.

In our wars, nothing is sacred. There are no longer any rules.

The human race is surely the only one that destroys the womb from which it is born with such impunity.

But how to tackle such an issue in a play?

I searched for the answer with the weapons I know best: matter, light, music and the body. And with a team of relentless and luminous creators. Working with matter as it was confronted with the news of the world revealed the very essence of the show: women as battlefield. The very essence rose from the sand, the bodies, the violin and the puppets!

This creative research also revealed that the subject matter required some distance ... a theatrical transposition.

Together with my esteemed accomplice Nadine Walsh and my advisor Francine Alepin, we took to the countryside where the sounds of a babbling brook soothe the soul. And there we wrote the starting point for the play: *The Tale of the Mountain-Woman*. I went on to add characters and develop a dramatic language that would place the narrative in a timeless setting and give voice to "all Mountain-Women."

Our own myth where we dare to oppose the ultimate resistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'José Babin'.

A PERFORMANCE

WHERE ALL SCENIC LANGUAGES CARRY THE SAME WEIGHT

A *Scenic Approach* to Writing

Threads proposes a fragmented dramaturgy.

The Tale of the Mountain-Woman is the foundation on which it is built. Layers are added, inspired by the narrative, but also by the impressions, sensations and images so familiar to our unconscious and to our collective memory.

This scenic approach to writing draws its inspiration from ancient mythology. An inspiration drawn from the Fates that weave the metaphorical thread of life, but also from First Nation mythology in its relationship to Mother Earth.

Indeed, the playwright wanted to weave a two-level story where words continuously draw parallels between Woman and Land, as both suffer the same indignities.

“And the Earth’s tired body shook and trembled.

*The Mountain-Woman hid her progeny
and offered her flanks to the Ogre’s assault for a second time.*

The quake lasted three days and three nights. Then, silence returned”.





The MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Is a bold affirmation of the image theatre Théâtre Incliné has developed. Space, music, light, time and bodies are fragmented: Each embodying a part, a “detail” from the whole canvas. Although the story is akin to an ancient tragedy, the tone is one of tenderness and beauty. An ageless narration of breath and music. Women's voices multiplied to offer a myth derived from ancient, as well as current, wars and inhumanity. The thread of the “foremothers”, dark silhouettes inspired by the Fates, weaves through the play's time frame and space. It represents the perennial lineage, the cycle of death that will nevertheless need to be cut as a gesture of ultimate resistance.



The STAGE is buried under sand.

It is revealed as separate pieces the audience must assemble. Mechanisms in the set design offer a surrealistic interpretation of the dramatic premise. Objects emerge from matter; puppets pull themselves out of the earth.

Inspired by the works of painter Artemisia Gentileschi, LIGHT cuts through the space in a dramatic illumination. A contrast between pronounced light and dark areas where characters hide or reveal only a part of themselves. Where fascinating shadows give rise to a monster:

ACTING APPROACH

The two main characters' mother-daughter relationship is embodied in a physical and fusalional dynamic. Both actresses have extensively explored the concepts of duo/dual/duality in order to refine a specific connection that permeates their bodies, their rhythm and their stage presence.

The stage, covered in sand, contains all:
Our memories, the future, and life itself.
Both performers burrow into the sand and reveal objects of war
or various parts of the puppets they manipulate
in a constant back-and-forth between puppeteer and actress.
An acting approach inspired by puppetry.

The PUPPETS

Are the actresses' doubles.
They mark both time and the storyteller's point of view
as she remembers the past.
At times human-like, and at others simply a fragmented head
or leg or arm, they clump together on the objects of war
or on the actresses' bodies.
Puppets are the substance that allows
for all these transformations.





MUSIC is a character

That engages in dialogue with the actresses' movement and the narrator's rasping voice.

The "live" violin tells of tragedy or tenderness.

Electro-acoustic ingredients blend together actual sounds as well as distortions in superimposed layers.

And as a leitmotiv, women's voices echo transmission and solidarity.

Listen, my love. Listen, my child. Listen to the river.

These words in Arabic, Tamil, Bengali, Armenian, Spanish and Cambodian, are blended, repeated and merged like a river of sound by the composer.

These women's voices become musical matter while the actresses perform in silence.

Like when we witness tragedy from afar.

But it is through their breath, their laughter and their cries that they force us to look at their flesh-and-blood reality.

Hence, they are no longer anonymous statistics.

CREATIVE team

Playwright and Stage Director: José Babin,
based on the *The Tale of the Mountain-Woman*,
by Francine Alepin, José Babin and Nadine Walsh

Performers: José Babin, Nadine Walsh and Guido Del Fabbro (violin)

Creative Accomplice: Nadine Walsh

Assistant Stage Directors: Karine Sauvé and Karina Bleau

Dramatic Narrative Accomplice: Francine Alepin

Original Music: Guido Del Fabbro

Puppet and Costume Designer: Leigh Gillam

Set Designer: Guy Fortin

Light Design and Production Management: Alain Lavallée

Seamstress: Charlotte Veillette

Stage Managers: Julie Basse and Thierry Catalayud

Voices: Kathleen Fee and Susan Glover

(with contributions from Nadine Walsh and José Babin)

Photography: Caroline Laberge

Audience and Market Development: Fanny Badey

Administration: Georgine Vaillant

Heartfelt THANKS to

Solfany Amanis, Kulwant, Saadia Faiz, Kader Alan, Sona Aghbashya,
Hilda S., Geralda Leon, Sharifa Bagum, Kadijah and Syldalin,
who lent us their voices as women, in all languages.



REAL-LIFE impact

Several activities were organized around the show's Montreal premier in order to inspire a connection with the audience and with the communities. This experience can serve as an inspiration for programmers who wish to develop similar activities.

Letters to the Sea

During the creation of *Threads*, Théâtre Incliné artists reached out and met with “people from far away who live next door”, and imagined a cultural mediation project called Letters to the Sea. This project was aimed at recently immigrated adults from 29 countries attending French immersion centres in Laval, Quebec. Guided by the company's artists, each participant slipped into the shoes of a “confined” character and wrote a letter to the sea. They first wrote their letters in their native language and then translated their words into French.



Paul Lefebvre and Marie-Louise Bibish Mumbua during the roundtable discussion “Women and War”.

This project was an exceptional experience that helped build mutual understanding. Shared memory, complicity and pride to find that these people had a voice in their host country. An exhibit chronicling the experience was presented to the public in the theatre lobby. We published a compilation that proudly delivers their raw voices in their native languages and individual handwriting. In doing so, we contributed to making the voices of these extraordinary migrants that live next door heard.

Women and War

After a performance of *Threads*, the public was invited to attend a roundtable discussion on women and war held in the show's setting. Representatives of the “Échec à la guerre” (Defeat War) collective and a Congolese author shared their insights with the audience. The discussion was extremely stimulating and the show's relevance was validated tenfold.

The COMPANY

Théâtre Incliné is a Quebec-based company founded in 1991 by José Babin, a stage director and actress specializing in corporeal mime. The company's mission is to search for new forms of theatre, to create and present theatrical shows based on visual poetry. Théâtre Incliné's performances are primarily intended for adult audiences, but their theatrical approach – characterized by the use of puppets, actors and shadow theatre – often attracts a wider audience.

José Babin explores and examines theatrical form with her colleague **Alain Lavallée**, a puppeteer and shadow player. Their research – notably their exploration of a corporeal mime and puppet alloy, as well as their work on the dramaturgy of light – has earned them recognition from their peers.

They are regularly invited to lead training workshops and master classes (Quebec, Canada, France, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Nunavut). Théâtre Incliné performs its works on North American, European and Asian stages.

International Tours

Since 2003, Théâtre Incliné has visited France, the United States, Spain, Norway, Finland, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and New Caledonia.

Among the company's best-known shows
Rosinna's Eye / Cargo / Rafales / Train, Travelling with Miyazawa

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THREADS



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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Duration : 65 minutes

Target Audience : Adult

Audience Capacity : 400

Performance Space : 9 m x 6.5 m x 4.5 m (h)

Touring Staff : 6

Please contact us for financial terms.

CONTACT

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Conseil des arts
et des lettres
Québec 



Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts



This show was developed during
successive creative residencies
at the Maison des arts de Laval (Laval)
and the Maison de la culture Frontenac (Montreal).