AINA

(Toujours)

Contemporary Puppetry and Circus

Québec–Finland Co-production



THÉÂTRE INCLINÉ + R I S A + WHS

AN ARTISTIC ENCOUNTER

This project was born from the meeting of two companies: one from Québec, the other from Finland.

THÉÂTRE INCLINÉ

Founded in 1991 and led by José Babin - director, playwright, performer and puppeteer - Théâtre Incliné has established itself as a leading company in visual theatre and contemporary puppetry. Babin has developed a “theatre of matter” in which objects, bodies, light, text and music come together to create a shifting, poetic and fragmented stage landscape. An avid traveller, she draws inspiration from the diversity of territories and cultures — from France to Japan, from Norway to Nunavik. The company creates distinctive visual works that have toured across three continents. Recognized for its stage innovation and its distinctive technique using fragmented puppets, Théâtre Incliné occupies a unique place within both the Québec and international theatre landscapes.



RISA

RISA is the artistic collaboration of Finnish performers Riia Kivimäki and Saku Mäkelä, whose language emerges from the meeting of contemporary dance and acrobatics. Since 2018, they have been developing a hybrid and instinctive physicality shaped by tension, friction and raw poetry. Their work as a duo blurs the boundaries between circus and dance, favouring a sensitive, introspective and visceral approach. The name RISA — combining their first names with the Finnish word risaisesti (“in a wild, dishevelled way”) — reflects their artistic approach: seeking truth through impulse and imperfection.



A NATURAL ALLIANCE

Our artistic worlds meet in a shared exploration of the symbolic, the fragmented and the organic. Together, we aim to create a form of visual theatre at the crossroads of puppetry and poetic acrobatic movement.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE

Three humans emerge from the ruins. At the crossroads of circus, puppetry and visual theatre, they celebrate life in the face of destruction. Around them, bones come back to life in a joyful exuberance. Death hovers nearby, but they playfully defy it. The performance unfolds as a succession of physical and visual tableaux — “bubbles of humanity” in which each of us might recognize something of ourselves.These poetic, non-narrative scenes awaken forgotten archetypes and question our relationship with the living world. At its heart is the idea of poetry as an act of resistance in the face of the destruction unfolding around us.



PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

A two-week residency in Helsinki in May 2026 allowed our two disciplines to meet for the first time.This initial stage gave rise to powerful images that will continue to feed the creation. We also explored several approaches to puppetry: fragmented puppets coexist beautifully with the bodies of the acrobat-dancers. The residency also allowed us to lay the foundations for the scenographic concept and to establish the first dramaturgical directions of the project.



NEXT STEPS

June 2027 – Creation residency at DYNAMO, Denmark

August 2027 – Residency at Subtopia, Sweden

November 2027 – Residency at ROCAL, Laval

February 2028 – Final residency at ROCAL, Laval

March 2028 – World premiere in Montréal,

followed by additional performances in Québec, to be confirmed

Summer / Fall 2028 – Premieres in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, to be confirmed

INSPIRATIONS

We have drawn on a range of inspirational material from Nordic and Indigenous American mythologies, where memory, transformation and the power of the living world intersect.

The Kalevala
The great Finnish epic, compiled in the 19th century from traditional songs.
Among the elements that inspire us are the kantele, whose music can soothe animals, move humans and even touch the gods; Aino, a figure who embodies a free and untamed femininity; and Luonnotar, the goddess at the origin of life..

La Loba — The Bone Woman
La Loba gathers and preserves what is most at risk of disappearing from the world. A mythical figure from the Americas popularized by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, she gathers the bones of vanished creatures, reassembles them and brings them back to life through her song. She embodies ancestral memory, resilience and the regenerative power of the wild feminine, transforming loss into rebirth.

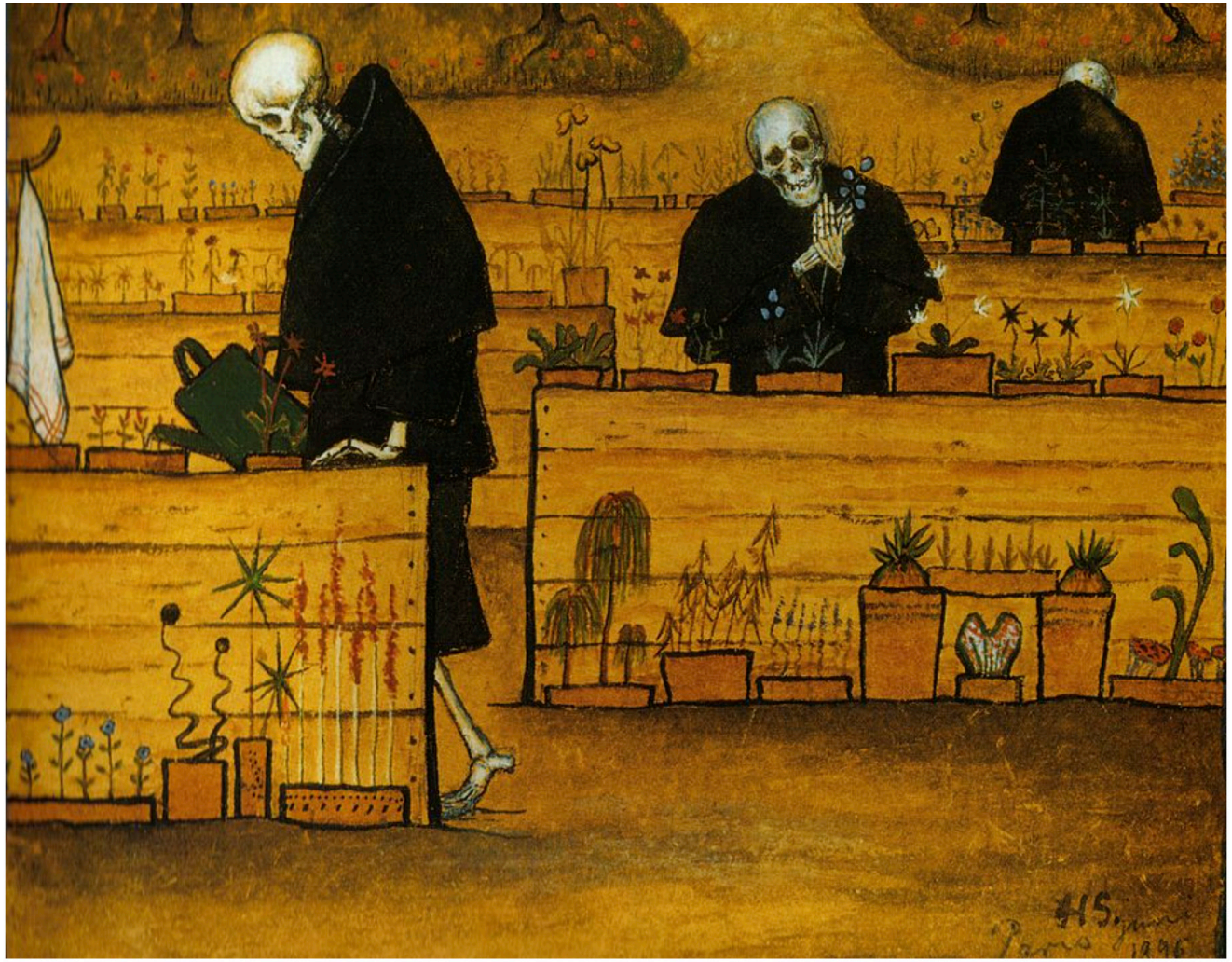


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A KEY VISUAL INSPIRATION



THE GARDEN OF DEATH by Finnish painter HUGO SIMBERG

What moves us in this work is the reversal it proposes: death is not portrayed as a threatening or destructive force, but as an attentive, almost benevolent presence that cares for what is alive.
The skeletons become gardeners, gently and patiently tending fragile plants.

This image deeply nourishes our research. It invites us to imagine figures of death as guardians of life — capable of preserving, repairing and bringing things back to life. In this way, it connects directly to one of the central questions of the performance:
How do we care for what deserves to be saved?

PARTNERS

Finland - WHS / Co-producer
Teatteri Union, Helsinki

Denmark - DYNAMO
Workspace for circus and performing art, Odense

Sweden - Subtopia
Circus research centre, Norsborg

Québec - ROCAL
Lysane Gendron Centre for Creation, Laval

CALQ Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec
Conseil des Arts du Canada Canada Council for the Arts
LAVAL