

After many long months of waiting and of omicron madness, springtime at Des mots d'la dynamite has been very active and delightful. What a pleasure!

A new work, *Biblibum*, was officially launched last March.

This show pays tribute to books and the solitary adventures provided by reading.

It comes out of a collaboration between Theatre De Spiegel, Casteliers and the Le Vivier Group. Titled *Prêt-à-porter* (pret means « joy » in Flemish), this project paired three Quebecois artists with three Flemish ones from different backgrounds, who were asked to create a solo whose entire set and accessories could fit into a backpack.

Postponed several times, *Biblibum* finally crossed the Atlantic and was presented six times at the Boze Wolf Festival in Aarschott and in Anvers, for 0- to 4-year-old children and their parents.

The show was performed in Flemish thanks to Dutch actor and performer Jacqueline van de Geer's help. What a great pleasure to be able to speak to the children in their mother tongue and not to have to censor words that have been an intrinsic part of our practice for almost 40 years now. *ALSTUBLIEFT!*



Biblibum joyfully received help from dramaturge and children's author Amélie Dumoulin. Next fall, we will revise and refine the show's dramaturgical framework so as to create an in situ theatrical version of this work.

We sincerely believe that the little ones deserve a visually controlled theatrical setting, despite the fact that their capacity for abstraction and concentration is remarkable.

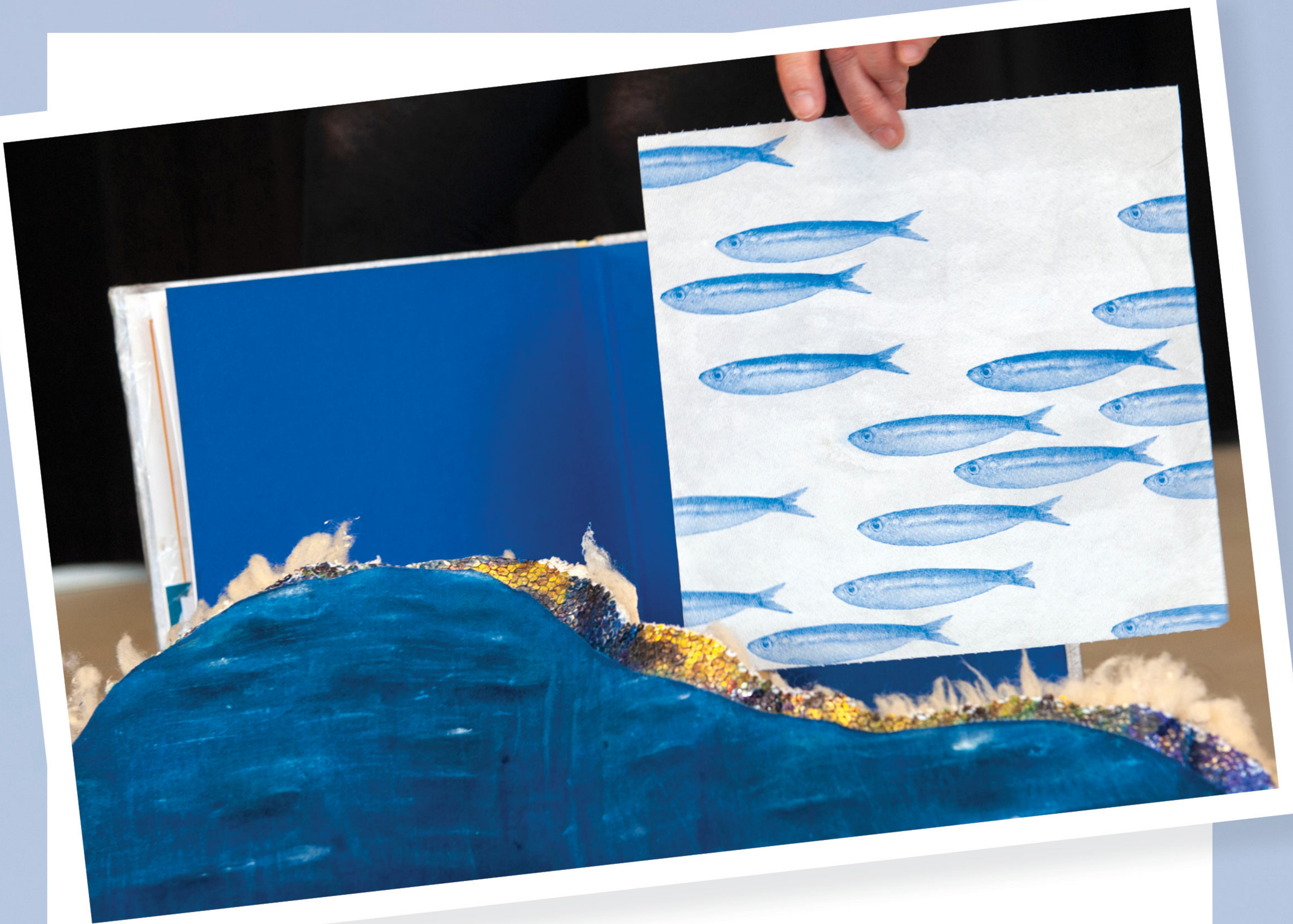
This new version will be produced in collaboration with puppeteer Noë Cropsal (our object manipulation consultant), musician Jean Derome (our a cappella sound environment consultant), and with the expertise of a lighting designer working with warm colors.

Cultural mediation = 100 children aged 3 to 7.

Biblibum pursued its in situ dissemination trail in Montréal, with 6 shows in March and April 2022, in the context of our cultural mediation activities, with children aged 3 to 7, including four Grade one groups and four Parc-Extension daycare groups = 100 children... kidnapped for a month with the consent and support of educators and teachers from the Autour du monde daycare and Barclay school.

As well, the show was presented in-class to 5 pre-kindergarten and first grade groups, to «different» children, in the context of the Notre-Dame-de-la-Défense school's library on wheels, in the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood.





In a class, pre-kindergarten kids are mixed with «different» children. These children come up to my shoulders. They seem VERY tall, but I don't have time to understand how they aren't like the others, and everything goes well. At the end of the session, I put my props away into my bag and place it on my back, because I need to leave to go perform in another class.

A « different » child asks me:

- *Are you Muslim?*
- *No, I'm a « pure laine » Quebecer. My name is Derome, but you know, before being a Derome, I was maybe a Roma. As you can see, I have to pack everything into my bag and continue my journey.*

Winking, he let's me know he totally understands. I assume he's a Berber!

Cultural mediation = performance – decor – puppet – show

Choosing and wasting... a bit!

My father was a visual artist, a ceramist, an author and a director. He often said that to make ART, you had to know how to choose and waste! This affirmation guided the season's cultural mediation activities.

1st week = *Biblibum* (the show)

After the performance, the children were invited to draw a magical place where a character of their choice lives.

- *Oh! your drawing is beautiful, it's dynamic!*
But what is it?
- *Come on, Nathalie, it's Spiderman!*
- *Oh! Of course! Sorry, it's obvious...*



2nd week = a decorative book

With pieces of cloth, cardboard, lace, recycled materials and glue, the children made a decorative set design book.

A young Caribbean youth said to me:

–Nathalie, I like you a lot, can you be my grandmother?

Je baisse mon masque pour l’embrasser, mais une petite voix me dit: ... Euh ?

3rd week = a rudimentary puppet

With the same materials, the children made a puppet. For the youngest ones, the head was made out of foam. But the older ones built and painted a head that hardens as it dries.

At the daycare, a very young girl from either Punjab or Bangladesh(?) wanted to tell me something. She spoke to me in English and immediately translated to French, apologizing, but I saw in her eyes that she’d taken a long journey to go all the way from Punjab or Bangladesh to English and then to French, in such little time. I was touched by her delicacy and quick thinking.

I often find myself saluting the resilience of the little ones and their know-how, not to mention the older 6-year-olds who roll balls of dirt to make their puppet heads, as if they were making Indian candy. Watching them makes me want to go back to the holiday season and do with them what we used to do with my mom, make a batch of sugar-powdered donuts = 12 dozen!



4th week = the show!

After a vocal and physical warm-up and some free workshop time, the children presented a short show with their set and puppets and on a REAL stage, lit by an experienced professional (at the Parc-Extension theatre venue)! !!

During the warm-up, I explain to the children what it means to have stage fright and we greet our body: our feet, our ankles, our knees, our hips, our thorax, our arms, our neck, our tongue, our eyes... Hello!

I ask:

–Do you know what I also do to stop feeling so nervous?

A kid responds:

–You sing?

–Yes ! it's true, I sing. You, what do you sing when you feel nervous?

–The spider song.

*–Oh ! I don't know it. And they all sing the **SPIDERMAN** tune*

– Oh! Well, yeah, of course ... I'm so dumb!

I'm so proud that we're all unique and Québécois. We are so Alive when we can make choices and work on our crafts in peace!

The project received support from the Autour du monde daycare, Barclay primary school, the Parc-Extension venue, from light and sound technician, Bruno Lavoie, visual artist and mediator Tanha Gomes and from the City of Montréal's cultural mediation program.

A big thank you to all!

