



LA VRAIE FAUSSE CONFÉRENCE
Collectif de La vraie fausse conférence (France)
Crédit photo : Laurène Thébaud



Embargoed until January 21, 2026, at 5 p.m.

21st FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE CASTELIERS

March 2 to 8, 2026

Montréal, January 21, 2026 – Puppeteers, theatre fans, and specialists from around the world will come together to celebrate the 21st edition of Festival international de Casteliers, March 2 to 8, 2026.

The festival lineup features outstanding works from Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Québec, and Canada. Live performances, documentary films, exhibitions, professional networking events, workshops and the now-classic *Marionnettes en vitrines!* walkabout exhibition all make for a festive, artistic, and engaging annual spring break event.

This 21st edition of Festival international de Casteliers, festival founder Louise Lapointe's final opus before passing the torch to Myriame Larose, celebrates object theatre by showcasing its pioneers, those who are currently reinventing the art form, as well as the next generation of innovative artists. Other puppetry forms, both experimental and traditional, round out this selection of works, reflecting the vitality of the 11th art, at home and abroad.

LA VRAIE FAUSSE CONFÉRENCE (Artist Collective, France/Belgium/Italy) In 1979, eight artists met at the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières (France), where they created object theatre, a self-proclaimed genre that has since gained worldwide recognition! In 2017, the festival gave them *carte blanche* and they presented *Une vraie fausse conférence* (A Real Fake Conference). The group revisited the work in 2024, exploring their earlier discoveries with their audience. Beyond the theatrical form, it is also a celebration of 40 years of a lasting friendship. **12 years +**

VIVA! (La Loquace cie, France/Spain) is the moving story of a Spanish family torn apart by civil war and the Franco dictatorship. On stage, a nondescript desk. In its drawers, everyday objects—chalk, adhesive tape, stapler, pencil sharpener—become the unlikely witnesses to a

profoundly human story. They come together, are transformed, and gradually piece together a shattered past. **12 years +**

L'ENLÈVEMENT DU PRINCE CHARLES (Teatro del Drago, Italy), tells the tale of an old king who witnesses his son's disappearance and orders all his servants and soldiers to search for him throughout the kingdom. Fagiolino, courageous and mischievous, and an emblematic character from the Italian commedia dell'arte tradition, also embarks on this quest, guided by the mysterious fairy Circé (Ciuciafurmighe). His adventure takes him to the Forest of Gale, where Prince Charles is held captive by the fearsome bandit Spaccatoste and his accomplice Gigolante. **4 years +**

UNE TRAVERSÉE (Compagnie Tchaïka, Belgique) was inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. It tells the story of a young girl who transforms the ruins of her home into an extraordinary playground. Along with her kitten, she invents fantastical stories that help her come to terms with the war-torn landscape, turning survival and despair into a game in which empowerment leads to growth. **10 years +**

WOODS (Puzzle Théâtre, Montréal) is presented as part of *the Lundis culturels* at BAnQ. Fruit of the imagination of a duo of artists originally from Eastern Europe, this show breathes life into fragments of wood that are manipulated with remarkable precision and sensitivity. Finely crafted object theatre, *Woods* offers a subtle and playful experience, where the unexpected emerges directly from the material at hand. Visual poetry that surprises, inspires, moves, and makes you laugh. *Woods* will be followed by puppet-handling workshops facilitated by the Casteliers' outreach team. **4 years +**

WHALEFALL (Infithéâtre, Montréal) In May 2020, Montrealers witnessed an unlikely and magical spectacle on the St. Lawrence River. Between the landmark Clock Tower and the Grande Roue de Montréal Ferris wheel, a whale fin sliced through the river's surface, announcing the arrival of a young humpback whale that had strayed more than 400 km from its usual habitat. Its presence captivated the city and the country at a time of isolation and confusion. *Whalefall* is a documentary theatre piece inspired by this event. **12 years +**

ABSENCE DES EXTRATERRESTRES (Antoine Laprise and Hubert Jégat, Montréal/France) tells the story of an 8-year-old boy caught up in the turmoil of his parents' separation, in the mid-1970s, against a counterculture backdrop, including Christ-like figures, esotericism, and speculation about the existence of aliens. **12 years +**

RÉALITÉS PARALLÈLES (Théâtre de la Pire Espèce, Montréal) features two stories that make us question our certainties. Using an inventive combination of live video, paper theatre, and object theatre, La Pire Espèce takes us on an exhilarating inner journey—where perception is distorted, the unexpected arises, and reality splits in two before our very eyes. **14 years +**

INCARNATIONS TRANSITOIRES (Céline Chevrier, Montréal) invites young and old alike to enjoy a playful and poetic experience where moods materialize, move, change... and

sometimes surprise us! This show without words combines contemporary puppetry, visual theatre, dance, and live music, creating a vibrant sensory universe accessible to all ages. Here, every gesture tells a secret, every movement reveals an emotion, and every transformation opens a door to the imagination. **7 years +**

DADDY (Puzzle Théâtre, Montréal) Moving day turns everything upside down: Daddy is clueless and can't find anything. . . not even his own child! Cardboard boxes fill the space, transforming the stage into a playground full of surprises. Using object theatre and masks, Puzzle Théâtre transforms everyday life into a comical and moving poetic journey, where anything can happen. . . and where playing is the key to rediscovering what really matters. **6 years +**

THE IMPOSSIBLE LIGHT (Surreal SoReal, Montréal) Callen lives his life through screens. A computer programmer, rock star, and YouTuber, he seems to have everything under control. But when his partner tells him she is pregnant, his world is turned upside down, plunging him into a sea of doubt, where he is confronted with a selfish mirror image of himself. A haunting and hilarious performance, at the crossroads of contemporary theatre and immersive experience, where poetry, introspection, and light come together to reveal the invisible and challenge our self-perceptions. **13 years +**

Other activities

From March 2nd to March 8th, the festival programme features a range of activities open to the general public:

Ciné-Casteliers

NOON, THE BREAD OF TEHRAN (FRANCE/IRAN), A BIRD IN PASSAGE (INDIA) AND TOUT CE QUI EST (PALESTINE) - TUESDAY, MARCH 3 – PGLO AUDITORIUM

Ciné-Casteliers returns in its original format, presenting three short documentaries from Asia and the Middle East: *Noon, The Bread of Tehran* (Iran/France), an coming-of-age film about exile; *A Bird in Passage* (India), a documentary about puppeteer Puran Bat; and *Tout ce qui est*, a documentary about life as an artist in wartime (Palestine). **12 years +**

LES FILS DES MERVEILLES - MARCH 3 TO APRIL 10 – ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTRÉAL

VERNISSAGE MARCH 3

In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Montréal, this exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the history of the Monticelli family, puppeteers for five generations, and offers a glimpse into the collections of the La Casa delle Marionette Museum, in Ravenna. Visitors can immerse themselves in a world steeped in magic, the result of years of hard work, great passion, and consummate professionalism.

MARIONNETTES SUR POCHETTES - MARCH 3 TO 7 – THÉÂTRE OUTREMONT AND FESTIVAL HQ

This unique collection combines Catalan musician Oriol Ferré's two passions: puppet theatre and vintage vinyl records. Collected over 25 years of attending festivals all over the world, it

includes record sleeves that feature puppets, objects, and animated figures. The exhibition covers a wide range of puppetry techniques and musical styles, revealing both the universal nature of puppetry and the evocative power of vinyl.

COSMOGONIE DOMESTIQUE - MARCH 5 TO 6 – OBORO

The *Cosmogonie domestique* exhibition explores how domestic life and the places that shelter us shape our imagination. Presented as an interactive installation of miniature theatres in boxes, this work invites the viewer to engage in an intimate experience, where they can manipulate miniature scenes depicting the different rooms of a house. By opening a door, moving a rocking chair, or ringing a bell, each visitor sets in motion a fragment of the universe and becomes an actor in the installation. Somewhere between object theatre and a cabinet of curiosities, Claudine Rivest's work reveals a unique perspective on how the home can be a fantastical space where memory, dreams, and nature coexist within the same inner cosmos.

UNBOXED: THE STEARN COLLECTION UNVEILED - MONDAY, MARCH 2 – McLENNAN LIBRARY

Come discover one of Montréal's best-kept secrets: Rosalynde Osborne Stearn's puppet collection in the Rare Books and Special Collections Division of McGill University's McLennan Library. Guided by Jacquelyn Sundberg, the librarian responsible for this impressive collection, you will discover vintage puppets, paper theatre elements, and other puppet-related artefacts from around the world. This open house is a unique opportunity to see these treasures up close!

MARIONNETTES EN VITRINES! - LA PIRE ESPÈCE - FEBRUARY 12 TO MARCH 12 – OUTREMONT SHOP WINDOWS

In keeping with the theme of the 21st edition, this walkabout exhibition takes over Outremont's shop windows to showcase object theatre. This year, the exhibition honours Théâtre de la Pire Espèce, a pioneering company of this discipline in Québec, with a selection of puppets, objects, and scenographic elements emblematic of the company's work. The exhibition provides a glimpse into an artistic universe where objects become powerful vehicles of meaning and storytelling.

Families can also enjoy **GUIDED TOURS** as well as **OBJECT THEATRE AND STOP-MOTION ANIMATION WORKSHOPS**.

Professional networking events such as the **CAFÉ-CAUSERIE**, a **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**, and the **MARCHÉ INTERNATIONAL DE CASTELIERS**, a performance market, will bring together artists, enthusiasts, and presenters from here and abroad, encouraging conversation and reflection on artistic practice.

Festival program and tickets: festival.casteliers.ca

Partners:

Casteliers wishes to thank REALTA Real Estate Agency, the festival's official presenter, and the Caisse des Versants du mont Royal, its major partner, as well as all its public, private, cultural, and media partners for their valued support. Together, they ensure the success of this 21st edition.

Casteliers

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FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL DE
CASTELIERS

REALTA PRÉSENTATEUR
OFFICIEL

The 21st Festival international de Casteliers

A major festival celebrating the 11th art!

... Shows at a glance

Shows for adults

LA VRAIE FAUSSE CONFÉRENCE – Artist Collective, France, 12 years +

VIVA! – La Loquace cie, France, 12 years +

WHALEFALL – Infithéâtre, Montréal, 12 years +

ABSENCE DES EXTRATERRESTRES – Antoine Laprise, Montréal, et Hubert Jégat, France, 12 years +

RÉALITÉS PARALLÈLES – Théâtre de la Pire Espèce, Montréal, 14 years +

THE IMPOSSIBLE LIGHT – Surreal SoReal, Montréal, 13 years +

Shows for young audiences

L'ENLÈVEMENT DU PRINCE CHARLES – Teatro del Drago, Italy, 4 years +

UNE TRAVERSÉE – Compagnie Tchaïka, Belgium, 10 years +

WOODS – Puzzle Théâtre, Montréal, 4 years +

INCARNATIONS TRANSITOIRES – Céline Chevrier, Montréal, 7 years +

DADDY – Puzzle Théâtre, Montréal, 6 years +

Cinema

CINÉ-CASTELIERS – *Noon, le pain de Téhéran*, France, Iran, 2024, *A Bird in Passage*, India, 2019,
Tout ce qui est, Palestine, 12 years +

Exhibitions/Installations

LES FILS DES MERVEILLES – Monticelli Family, Italy, in collaboration the Italian Cultural Institut of Montréal

MARIONNETTES SUR POCLETTE – Oriol Ferre, Spain

COSMOGONIE DOMESTIQUE – Claudine Rivest, Trois-Rivières

UNBOXED: THE STEARN COLLECTION UNVEILED – Rosalynde Osborne Stearn Collection

MARIONNETTES EN VITRINES! – La Pire Espèce, Montréal

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