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Interview with

## Marie-Pierre Simard, puppeteer

Hello, my name is Marie-Pierre Simard and I'm a puppeteer. I manipulate and perform with Théâtre de l'œil, a Montreal company. We tour a lot, although our home base is in Montreal. I've been with the company for a few years.

### ***What made you decide to become a puppeteer?***

I decided to become a puppeteer because I felt it encompassed all of the plastic arts: sculpting, painting, even sewing. We work with all kinds of materials and, as a bonus, there's movement with puppets, which you don't otherwise find in the plastic arts. So, that's what led me to want to do puppet theatre; I was really drawn to plastic arts.

### ***How do puppeteers learn to transfer their expressiveness onto a puppet?***

I would say that there are three tools that help us transmit our expressiveness onto puppets, and they are all contained in the puppet. First, there's its physical appearance, what the puppet looks like. That tells us about its character, its personality. Next, there are the movements it can make. Lastly, there's often a text that comes with the puppet with a description of what it must say or do. All this helps us get to know the character. That's the most important thing, getting to know the character. Once we master that, we can forget about ourselves and transfer what we've learned onto the object, onto the puppet.

### ***What are the various steps involved in creating a puppet?***

The first thing to do is find out what the character's role is in the story: that tells us what the character has to do. Next, we draw it. We often do several drawings to determine the character's personality and appearance. Then, we'll often make prototypes, using objects and materials which are easily found, and try various things. This is a first step to see what works. After that, we can move on to making moulds, sculpting, and so on; there's a variety of things we can do at this point. In the end, the puppet is ready to begin its life.

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## The Hidden Side of Puppets

As manipulated by Marie-Pierre Simard

## **Vegetarian**

With Vegetarian, the hand is in the head, however, it's only in the mouth. We can call this a moving mouth puppet because one hand becomes the character's mouth while my other hand can move from one leaf to another, from one end of the puppet to the other, and move the various parts. So, the part that is really lifelike – and this is the same for all puppets – is the head, which leads the puppet. There's one hand in the head and one hand for all the other movements.

## **Object Puppet**

We call characters that are created using things such as dish gloves, object puppets. By using various objects, you can create amusing characters with highly recognizable features.

## **Loulou**

Loulou is manipulated differently: instead of being behind the puppet, we're above it. Therefore, our perspective, our view of the character is very different. One hand controls the main rod which is attached to the head. Loulou is a rod and string puppet: there's a rod attached to the head which supports the character. The other strings, manipulated by the free hand, control the hands, the feet, and, in Loulou's case, the tail.

## **Félix**

In Félix's case, one hand goes into his head and the other goes into his hand. He's called a Bunraku-type puppet (worked from behind) because, in fact, my hand will be this puppet's hand. So, with one hand we can animate the character using its eyes and head movements while using the other hand to grasp objects or make gestures.