

Old Thomas

and the little fairy



ILLUSTRATION BY STÉPHANE POULIN

A CHOREOGRAPHIC WORK BY HÉLÈNE LANGEVIN

A bouge de là PRODUCTION



PHOTO : ROLLINE LAPORTE

The video becomes part of the scenography, giving us the sea as a backdrop and infinity for perspective. The choreographer collaborates here once more with Bernard Falaise, whose original soundtrack contributes to the nautical, emotionally-charged atmosphere of the piece. Before the wondering gaze of the young audience, three of the performers – Audrey Bergeron, Aurée Juteau, and Jean-François Légaré – rise to the challenge of re-creating the different textures and conditions of the sea, while Guillaume Chouinard plays the old man who has rediscovered his joy and Ève Boissonnault plays a tiny fairy full of life. The creative team is rounded off by some very accomplished designers: Richard Lacroix, scenography; Linda Brunelle, costume design; Martin Gagné, lighting; and Suzanne Trépanier, make-up.

Old Thomas and the Little Fairy invites us into a world of emotions where renewal is possible. Just like the story by Dominique Demers, the choreography leaves a lot to our

imagination, and gives children room for interpretation. More than an adap-

tation, the piece is a re-creation in which dance and its capacity for stimulation have been given free rein.



ILLUSTRATION : STÉPHANE POULIN

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

A tiny little girl is discovered, injured, on the beach—suddenly, Old Thomas’s life is filled with happiness. No more grumbling, anger and bitterness, no more yelling insults at the universe.

The old man rediscovers joy and wonder. Could this little girl be a fairy? Adapted from the book of the same title written by Dominique Demers and illustrated by Stéphane Poulin, **Old Thomas and the Little Fairy** takes an optimistic look at the cycles of life, and introduces children to two charming characters who take care of each other, each bringing out the best in the other.

Poetic, impressionistic, **Hélène Langevin’s** choreography transports us to the seaside. From calm and reassuring to agitated and even quite angry, the water is an echo of Old Thomas’ emotions, bringing transformation and change.

Choreography: Hélène Langevin, in collaboration with the performers, and based on a children’s book written by Dominique Demers and illustrated by Stéphane Poulin.

Performers: Audrey Bergeron, Ève Boissonnault, Guillaume Chouinard, Caroline Laurin-Beaucage, Jean-François Légaré

Substitute: Aurée Juteau

Choreographic Assistant: Sophie Michaud

Music: Bernard Falaise

Set design: Richard Lacroix

Costumes: Linda Brunelle

Lighting: Martin Gagné

Make-up: Suzanne Trépanier

Length: 50 minutes

Target audience: 5 years and up

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THE COMPANY

Founded in 2000 under the artistic direction of **Hélène Langevin, Bouge de là** is one of the rare professional dance companies in Quebec to dedicate itself entirely to the creation of choreographic works for young audiences. The company presents contemporary works that draw upon a variety of disciplines: video, acrobatics, theatre, shadow play, etc. Filled with humour and poetry, each performance seeks to create a lasting impression and show children the sheer pleasure of movement. To build new pathways to bring young people to dance, in their schools (where the company often gives workshops) and in theatres: such is the mission of **Bouge de là**.

It was the success of *Roche, Papier, Ciseaux*, created in 1996 by Hélène Langevin while she was still a member of Brouhaha Danse, that led to the foundation of Bouge de là. The choreographer discovered the joy of reaching a younger audience, and realized that it came quite naturally to her. She founded her own company, and its very first production, *La tribu Hurluberlu* (2000), was conceived specifically for the youngest members of the audience. It is a multi-disciplinary piece that recounts the adventures of three young women in the desert. Elements of dance, theatre and video projections are brought together seamlessly in a most playful setting. *La tribu Hurluberlu* was a resounding success with audiences across Quebec, where it has been performed over a hundred times.

"A mega dose of pure energy [...] This work's greatest strength is the indescribable wave of energy that starts onstage and sweeps everything up in its wake."

— Michel Bélair, *Le Devoir*, Nov. 2001

In 2003, with *Like the 5 Fingers on your Hand*, Bouge de là won the respect of its young audience, the dance community and the media. At times burlesque, with touches of athletic prowess, but resolutely dance: this creation celebrates the five senses and leads children (aged 3-9) on an adventure where music, textures, odours, flavours and all sorts of images celebrate our capacity to perceive. *Like the 5 Fingers on your Hand* is still touring today, and continues to amaze its young audience - now numbering in the thousands.



PHOTO : ROLLINE LAPORTE

"This latest choreography from Hélène Langevin, founder of Bouge de là, is simply one of the best works for young audiences that I have ever seen. Children aged 4 to 10 will adore the playful elements addressed directly at them, and the piece is in itself an irresistible introduction to the world of dance. It's like La La La Human Steps mixed with the «gracious» hippopotamus ballet from Fantasia."

— Chantal Guy, *La Presse*, March 2003

SSHH!! (January 2006) sees the playful, refreshing choreographic style of Hélène Langevin in dialogue with the talents of some of today's most innovative artists, including Marcelle Hudon and her skill for creating shadow play, a reference in her field in Quebec. *SSHH!!* invites us to walk, dance and tumble along with the mischievous Julie. She has just closed her eyes, and the sandman has done his evening's work—and she whisks us away to a parallel reality, a surrealistic universe where the overflowing energy of the body joins the fertile and fathomless mysteries of the shadow play.

"[...] the seamless integration of the shadows makes the piece even more fascinating. The performers are like charismatic, multi-talented chameleons, making magic with the shadows, and ensuring the success of the piece with its young audience."

— Frédéric Doyon, *Le Devoir*, January 2006

With ***Old Thomas and the Little Fairy***, Bouge de là embarks upon a new adventure, one that marries dance and literature.



OLD THOMAS AND THE LITTLE FAIRY

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS:

Emotions run deep in Vieux Thomas. [...] Contemporary choreographer Hélène Langevin knows just what mix of fun, adventure and emotion children will respond to in a dance setting. [...] The young crowd responded with a full range of emotions, from peals of laughter to tears. [...] It is a beautiful story about loneliness, friendship, love, life and death. [...] Guillaume Chouinard portrayed Thomas's emotional growth and eventual physical demise with tenderness and understanding. [...] his pas de deux with the unconscious fairy (danced by the sparkling Ève Boissonnault) was a comedic triumph.

— Kathryn Greenaway. *The Gazette*

A thrilling trip between land and sea. Combining theatre, dance and visual effects, Old Thomas and the Little Fairy is able to appeal to the imagination of the youngest audience members while inspiring the older ones [...] The score complements the maritime atmosphere perfectly, reflecting the shifting emotions of the characters (who are depicted with brio). A refreshing breeze that will surely be loved by the whole family.

— Sarah Talbot. *Le Journal de Montréal*

The piece is very faithful to Dominique Demers' story. [...] The scenography by Richard Lacroix is really extraordinary. The back wall of the stage is a screen with video projections of the sea and the range of its moods and behaviors. This same sea unfurls right down to the floor in front of us, with different lighting effects and the three performers who represent the ocean. They really do interpret water, its movements and its tempers. The work involved is really incredible, and these three dancers do a fantastic job. The inventiveness of the stage direction is brilliant. [...] The children understand perfectly what's going on. This is a delightful piece.

— Catherine Perrin. *C'est bien meilleur le matin / SRC*

In Old Thomas and the Little Fairy, the waves dance with the fairies. This work is for newcomers to contemporary dance as well as for the more seasoned fans. The piece has everything needed to appeal to children: a moving story, a scary character and an act of heroism.

— Tania Lapointe. *Le Téléjournal / Radio-Canada*

This dance work for children really grabs the audience's attention. The five dancers/actors weave together the story of Old Thomas using no dialogue at all, which is no small feat. [...] Hélène Langevin's choreography is full of inventiveness – for example, the three dancers who provide the illusion of the ocean's movement...

— Jean Siag. *La Presse*

Langevin succeeds once more in making dance a poetic object that is perfectly accessible to children. She has also judiciously transposed the scenes that take place inside Thomas's cabin using shadow play. The technique that she developed with CHUT!., refined here, draws a line between the indoor and the outdoor and adds to the magic of the story, using effects of perspective.

— Frédérique Doyon. *Le Devoir*

It is wonderful to see that Langevin's humour and creativity are back with us once more.

— Fabienne Cabado. *Voir*

The piece is stunning, both visually and choreographically. [...] There is some absolutely magical shadow play. [...] It was a must-read, and now it is a must-see!

— Francine Grimaldi. *Samedi et rien d'autre / SRC*



PHOTO : ROLLINE LAPORTE

THE CHOREOGRAPHER

It comes as no surprise that H el ene Langevin – whose work has always been known for energy and spontaneity – has chosen to dedicate herself, through the works of her own company, to introducing young audiences to dance. Her sincerity and the clarity of her ideas capture and stimulate the imaginations of her young public, while introducing them to simple themes.

In 1987, following her studies in contemporary dance at l'Universit e du Qu ebec   Montr al (1983-1986), H el ene Langevin joined Ginette Ferland, Rolline Laporte and Guylaine Savoie, three choreographers who shared Langevin's creative spirit to found the **Brouhaha Danse** collective. The company quickly became known for its dynamic pieces, works of great irreverence.

While a member of the collective, H el ene Langevin created *Brouhaha* (1987) and * a frise la fr nesie* (1988), while the following works were created with her colleagues: *M fiez-vous des faux frissons* (1989), *Claire* (1991) and *La Galerie des horribles* (1992). In 1996, H el ene produced her first piece for young audiences, *Roche, Papier, Ciseaux*. Today, with her company *Bouge de l *, she dedicates herself entirely to the creation of works for children aged 3 to 10. Her pieces include *La Tribu Hurluberlu* (2000), *Like the 5 Fingers on your Hand* (2003), *CHUT!!* (2006) (*SSHH!!*)

and *Old Thomas and the Little Fairy* (2008). She has been working with young people for a long time now. Parallel to her work as a choreographer, she also teaches creative dance to children across the province of Quebec. This is her true passion, and she is driven by her desire to communicate the sheer pleasure of movement.

From its beginnings, H el ene Langevin's choreographic work has been based on the power of expression. Her ever-present impulse to explore different forms has led her to participate in projects that fuse dance and video, acrobatics, shadow play, etc. Throughout her career, Langevin has been committed to pursuing her

research on body and movement by studying different techniques and approaches: Body Mind Centering, the Padovan method (neurofunc-

tional re-organization), contact-improvisation, and tango. More recently, her work with (among others) Alexandre Del Perugia (theatre), Chrysa Parkinson (changing habits in dance) and Ted Stoffer (new dance) has allowed her to develop the theatrical aspect of her work while developing a vocabulary that helps her better communicate her vision of movement and performance to her dancers. While she appreciates physical prowess, she places special importance on theatricality, an interest that dates back to the beginning of her career. With her colleagues in *Brouhaha Danse*, she was already making works that brought together dance, theatre and animation and were included in various festival programs.

H el ene Langevin places great importance on teamwork, and works much as a symphony conductor does, setting the tone and the quality of the movement. She emphasizes the point of view of the dancer, who is experiencing the movement from the inside. For Langevin, the dancers are also creators, and she often uses improvisation as a starting point and feeds her creative process with sensory exercises.

Playful, fanciful, filled with humour and poetry, Langevin's choreography leaves the door wide open for children's imaginations, and for her own creativity.