

# LES SOMNAMBULES



COMPAGNIE  
LES OMBRES PORTÉES



# LES SOMNAMBULES

Shadow theatre and music

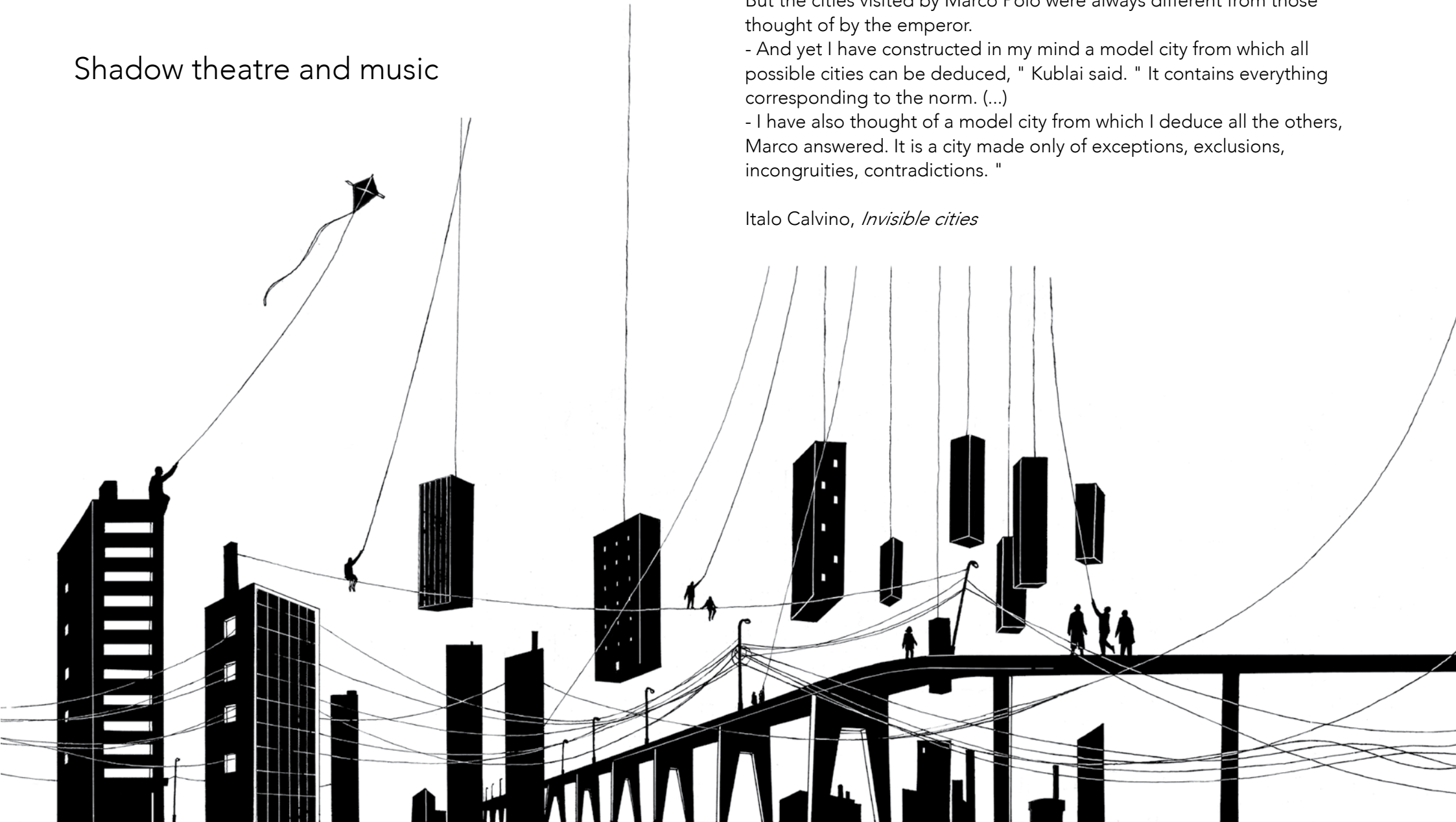
" - From now on, I'll describe the cities to you, the Khan had said. In your journeys you will see if they exist.

But the cities visited by Marco Polo were always different from those thought of by the emperor.

- And yet I have constructed in my mind a model city from which all possible cities can be deduced, " Kublai said. " It contains everything corresponding to the norm. (...)

- I have also thought of a model city from which I deduce all the others, Marco answered. It is a city made only of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions. "

Italo Calvino, *Invisible cities*



Show with no dialogue  
Suitable for all ages, from 7 years old  
Running time: 50 minutes, followed by a visit of the set on stage  
Audience: 180 to 210 persons (to be confirmed according to the venue)

Premiere: September 2015 at the Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières (08, France)

**Idea and design:** Les ombres portées

**Puppets and lights:** 4 puppeteers

Erol Gülgönen, Florence Kormann, Marion Lefebvre, Claire Van Zande

**Music and sound effects:** 2 live musicians

Séline Gülgönen (clarinets, accordion), Simon Plane (trumpet, euphonium, percussions)

**Lighting technician:** Nicolas Dalban-Moreynas

**Sound technician:** Frédéric Laügt & Corentin Vigot (alternating)

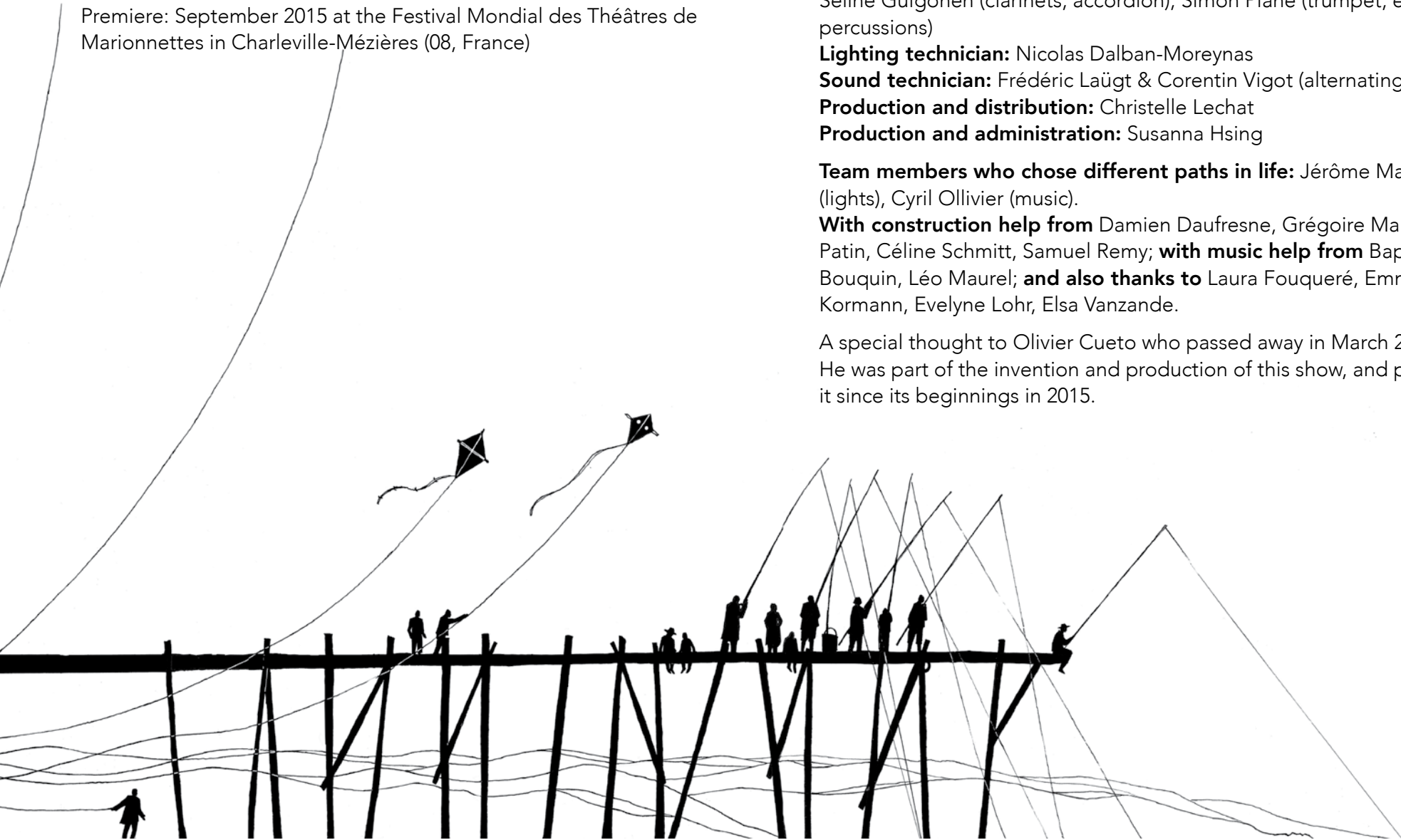
**Production and distribution:** Christelle Lechat

**Production and administration:** Susanna Hsing

**Team members who chose different paths in life:** Jérôme Mathieu (lights), Cyril Ollivier (music).

**With construction help from** Damien Daufresne, Grégoire Martin, Eric Patin, Céline Schmitt, Samuel Remy; **with music help from** Baptiste Bouquin, Léo Maurel; **and also thanks to** Laura Fouqueré, Emmanuel Kormann, Evelyne Lohr, Elsa Vanzande.

A special thought to Olivier Cueto who passed away in March 2020. He was part of the invention and production of this show, and performed in it since its beginnings in 2015.



# THE SHOW

*An old neighbourhood destined for demolition makes room for a dehumanised modern city. But even the best-set plans cannot withstand the unexpected... As the night goes on and the city falls asleep, the dreams of its inhabitants intertwine and transform the city into a place of infinite possibilities.*

*Les Somnambules* evokes these contemporary urban transformations with irony and poetry, sketching a city whose many contours are redrawn by its inhabitants.

This story unfolds through a spectacular large-scale model of the city brought to life by shadows and lights, with four puppeteers and two musicians leading the audience into a swell of imagination.

*Les Somnambules* examines how urban areas are transformed today and draws a poetic and critical look at our cities.

Far from proposing a model of a utopian city, this piece of theatre imagines an urban area in perpetual evolution, continually being enriched by the dreams of its inhabitants and in which transformations and developments are not forced by others: political decision-makers, developers, urban planners, architects...

A large-scale model of the city, the undeniable starting point to any urban development project, is the principal element of the set: this performance of shadow theatre breaks free from the use of a traditional screen, with the ensemble of the set working in mass to create a three-dimensional backdrop for the projections.

The model comes to life before the eyes of the audience through the projection of shadows into the different neighbourhoods, bringing to light the story's characters. While they are sleeping, their dreams emerge on a huge screen over the city, allowing the audience to plunge deep into their imagination. In contrast to this fantastic world and to underline the violence of the situation, the city also maintains the appearance of a simple model – white and sterile – that the puppeteers transform into a modern city in full view of the audience.

*Les Somnambules* combines different artistic disciplines. Music, a fundamental element of the performance, carries the narration. It is composed and played by two multi-instrumentalists, stationed next to the model. Traditional and invented instruments, original melodies and handcrafted sound effects accompany each step of the city's evolution.

Free of any verbal dialogue, *Les Somnambules* is intended for everyone and invites members of the audience to imagine their own cities.





# 1. OLD CITY



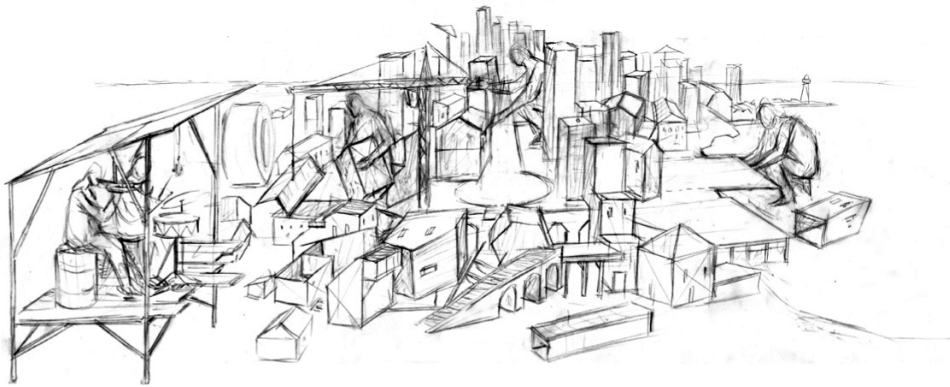
It is the end of the day in an old neighbourhood of a city.

The main square is surrounded by small streets, houses, and a bar called "Aux Somnambules". The building facades leave the audience to imagine the neighbourhood's past and the different time periods that have left their mark. This square has been condemned for destruction, as is suggested by a billboard boasting the advantages of the future remodelled and modernized neighbourhood and informing the public of the first phase of a huge restructuring project.

Inhabitants refusing to be evicted attempt to sabotage the construction site and meet at the neighbourhood bar to celebrate their actions.



## 2. CITY IN CONSTRUCTION



The city appears under a cold white light like a lifeless model. All traces of the shadow theatre disappear and leave a stark – homogenous and stripped down – set in its wake.

A new city is gradually constructed and shaped by the puppeteers turned urban planners before the audience's eyes. They manipulate the model's elements, completely restructuring the old neighbourhood. This brutal change to the environment is forced upon the inhabitants.

The city gains all of the characteristics of a modern metropolis. Distinct areas emerge and partition the different zones: business districts with rising towers, uniform housing units, concentrated commercial spaces, methodically organized greenery, roads criss-crossing the city, etc.



### 3. NEW CITY



The sun rises on the new city that gradually comes to life with the rhythm of well-regulated mechanisms: the regular flow of car and subway traffic, the measured movements of inhabitants traveling from one zone of the city to the other, the systematic cleaning of streets, the same work repeating over and over again... no longer leaving room for the unexpected.

The characters of the old neighbourhood appear in this newly transformed city and must adapt themselves to this unfamiliar environment that is both cold and highly structured.





## 4. CITY OF DREAMS



Each night, when the city sleeps, its inhabitants dream. Their dreams are concrete repercussions on the city, up to the point where they alter it completely. An inhabitant dreams that he pushes back the walls of his apartment and transforms it in an extraordinary manner. A secretary has strange nightmares. A supermarket check-out clerk escapes the city during an imaginary walk. In another dream, nature takes back its place and turns the city into a luxurious jungle.

The fantasies of these inhabitants mingle with one another, inciting new dreams which continually reinvent the city, creating a place where anything is possible albeit in permanent transition.



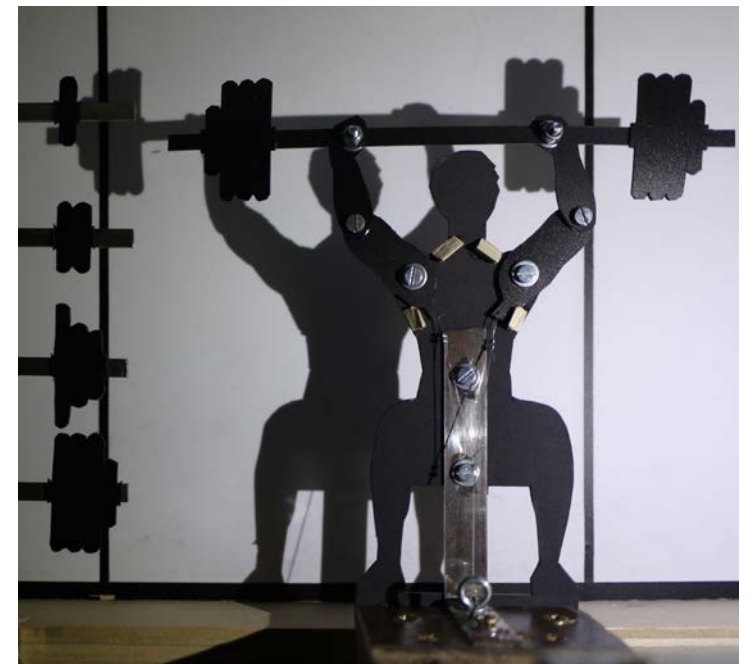
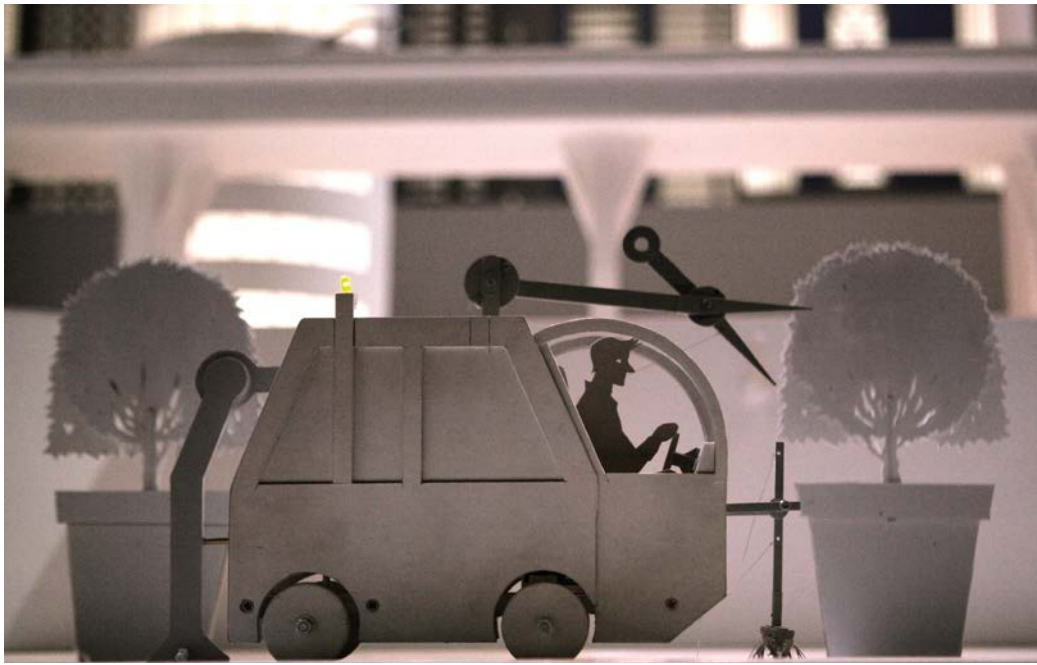












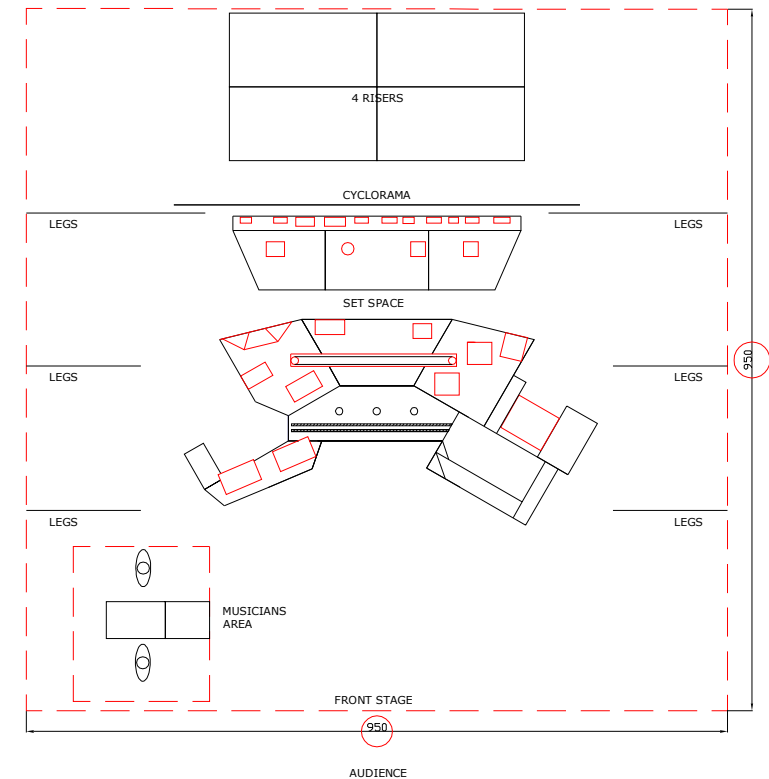
# STAGE PLAN

The city model is built upon tiered levels creating an accelerated perspective effect that gives the audience the illusion that the city is extending before their eyes into infinity.

Behind the model is a screen and four stage rises on which set pieces are placed for projection. Two musicians, playing live side by side, are located downstage right.

The majority of the buildings and transportation routes are modifiable depending on the stages of the city's evolution. They can be manipulated either by a pulley system or in direct view of the audience, lit from within or by lights placed around the model.

The audience is seated directly in front of the stage.



Size:

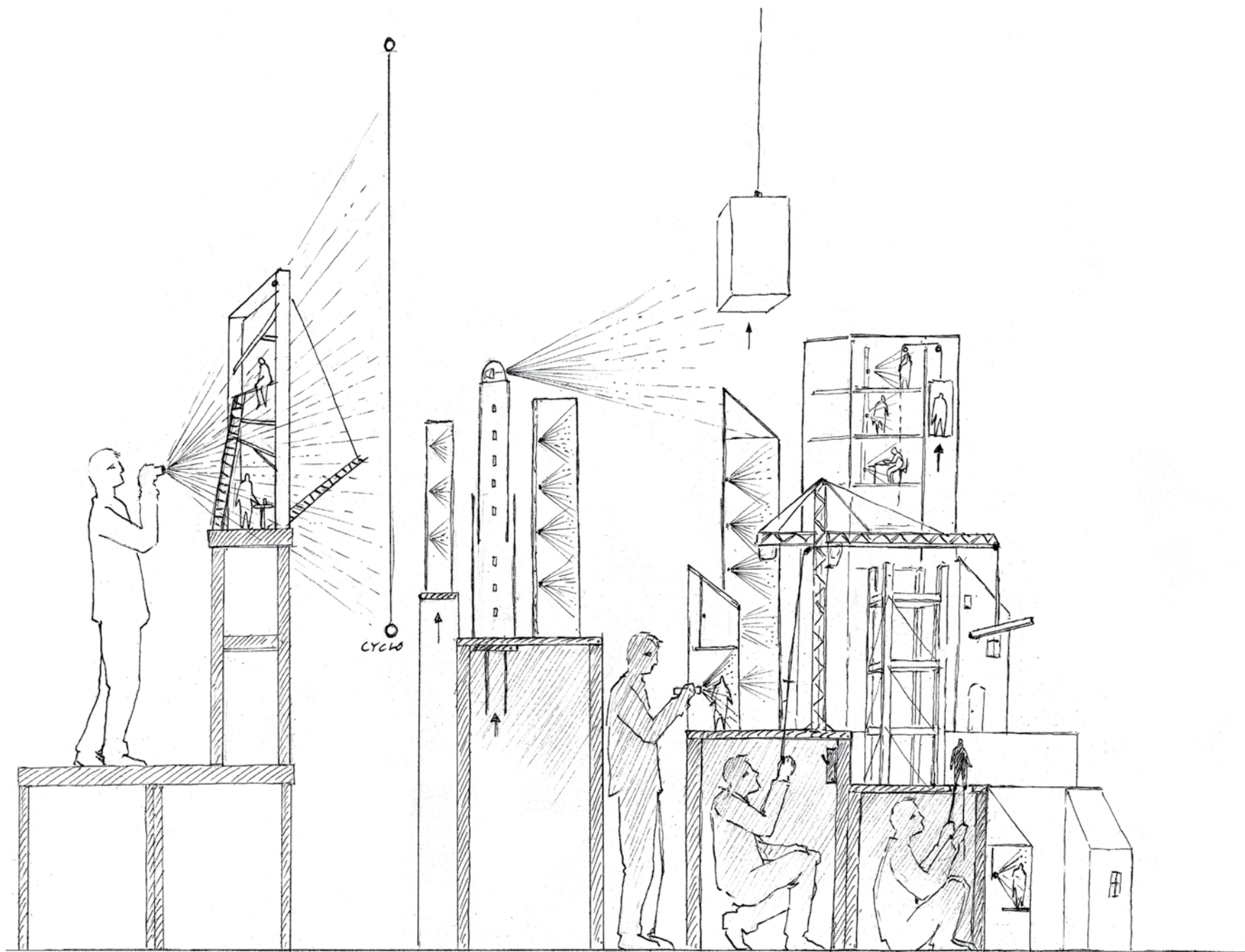
Minimum size of the stage: 9m50 x 9m50

Minimum height under the grid: 5m

Size of the broad steps on which the city model sits:

5,60m width x 4m depth x 2m height

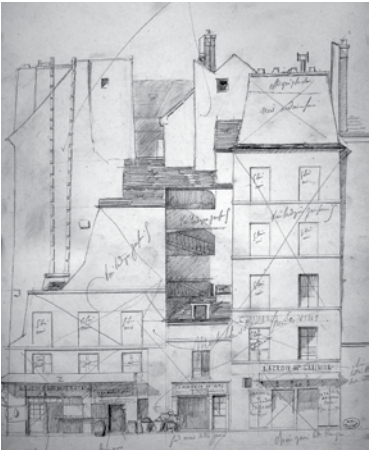
Size of the cyclorama: 3,50m height x 5,50 width



Set cross-section



# SOURCES & INSPIRATIONS



1.



2.



3.

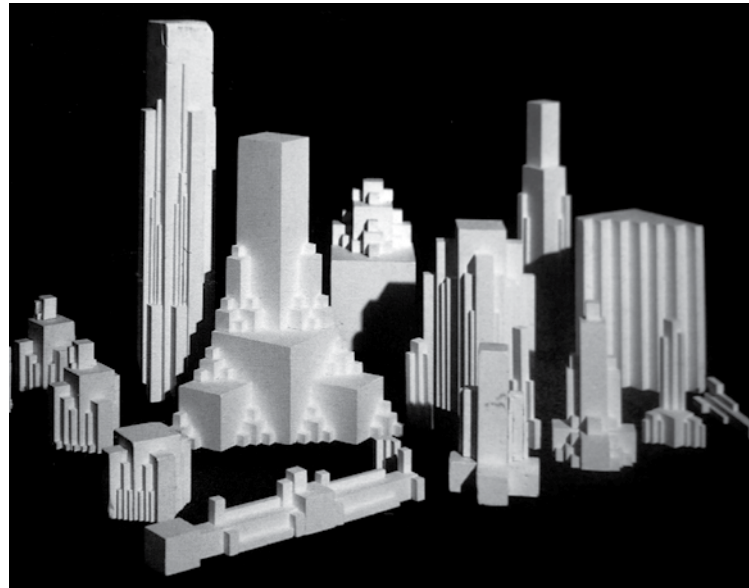


4.

--- eviction --- demolition ---



5.



6.



7.

--- town planning --- model ---





8.



9.

--- planning ----- megalopolis -----



10.



11.

--- dream ----- utopia -----

1. Relevé de façades rue du Marché-à-la-Verdure, 1851-1854. Paru dans *Paris pour mémoire, Le livre noir des destructions haussmanniennes*, Pierre Pinon, 2012.
2. *Perçement du boulevard de Sebastopol*, XIXe s.
3. Erol Gülgönen, *Istanbul*, 2013
4. Edward Burtynsky, *Urban Renewal, Old out, Shangaï*, 2004
5. Architectes associés, projet pour New York
6. Kazimir Malevitch, *Ornements suprématises, ville, Moscou*, 1927
7. Erich Kettelhut, maquette pour les décors du film *Metropolis* de Fritz Lang, 1926
8. Jacques Tati, *Playtime*, 1967
9. Edward Burtynsky, *Urban Renewal, Apartment Complex, Honk kong*, 2004
10. Béatrice Coron, *Invisible cities*, detail, 2008  
[www.beatricecoron.com](http://www.beatricecoron.com)
11. Winsor Mac Cay, *Little Nemo*, 1910

## OTHER REFERENCES

- Anne CLERVAL, *Paris sans le peuple*, 2013  
 Italo Calvino, *Invisible cities*, 1972 & Marcovaldo, 1963  
 Le Corbusier, *La Charte d'Athènes*, 1933  
 Mike Davis, *City of quartz*, 1990 & *Le pire des mondes possibles*, 2007  
 Alèssi Dell'Umbria, *Histoire universelle de Marseille*, 2006  
 Henri Gaudin, *Seuil et d'ailleurs*, 1992  
 Haussmann, *Mémoires*, 1890-1893  
 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirium New-York*, 1978  
 Lewis Mumford, *La Cité à travers l'histoire*, 1961  
 Bernardo Secchi, *La ville des riches et la ville des pauvres*, 2014  
 Z, n° 2, Marseille, automne 2009
- 
- Gwenaël Breës, *Dans 10 jours ou dans 10 ans...*, 2008  
 Imre Azem, *Ekumenopolis, La ville sans limites*, 2012  
 Patrick Taliercio, *Les indésirables de la rue de la République*, 2008



# TOURING

## 2015 - 2016 SEASON

Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes, Charleville-Mézières • TJP, CDN Strasbourg – Grand Est • Festival Momix et le CREA, scène conventionnée Jeune Public d'Alsace, Kingersheim • L'Eclat, Pont-Audemer • Espace Lino Ventura, Garges-les-Gonesse • Festival Courants d'Arts, Gentilly

## 2016 - 2017 SEASON

Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival, Groningen (Netherlands) • La Ferme du Buisson, scène nationale, Noisiel • Le Quai, CDN Angers Pays de la Loire • Théâtre-Sénart, scène nationale • L'Embarcadère, BIAM 2017, Aubervilliers • Théâtre de l'Agora, scène nationale Evry Essonne

## 2017 - 2018 SEASON

Le Grand R, scène nationale de La Roche-sur-Yon • Les petits devant, les grands derrière / Centre de Beaulieu, Poitiers • Le Carré, scène nationale, Château-Gontier • Le Dôme, Saumur • Centre Culturel André Malraux, scène nationale, Vandoeuvre-Lès-Nancy • La Canopée, Ruffec • Bords 2 Scènes, Vitry-le-François • Théâtre National de Toulouse • Le TANDEM, scène nationale, Arras-Douai • Tour in South Korea : UiJeongbu Music Theatre Festival and Gwangmyeong Theatre

## 2018 - 2019 SEASON

Opéra de Saint-Étienne • Centre des Arts, scène conventionnée, Enghien-les-Bains • Espace Georges Sadoul, Saint-Dié-des-Vosges • Festival FACTO, La Méridienne, scène conventionnée, Lunéville

## 2021 - 2022 SEASON

À La Faïencerie, scène conventionnée, Creil

## 2022 - 2023 SEASON

Teatro Municipal, Porto (Portugal) • Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon (Portugal)

## 2023 - 2024 SEASON

Théâtre Gérard Philipe, Frouard

## 2024 - 2025 SEASON

Salle du Lignon, Vernier (Switzerland) • Le Théâtre, scène nationale, Bourg-en-Bresse

## 2025 - 2026 SEASON

Scène culturelle Mézidon Vallée d'Auge • Théâtre municipal d'Autun

**For a detailed agenda, please take a look at our website.**



# PARTNERS

## Co-productions and residencies:

APEAI et la Maison des Enfants du Quercy, Le Bouyssou • Le Colombier des Arts, Plaineoiseau • Côté Cour, scène conventionnée jeune public, Franche-Comté • Espace Périphérique, Parc de la Villette - Mairie de Paris • La Ferme du Buisson, scène nationale de Marne-la-Vallée • Festival Momix et le CREA, scène conventionnée Jeune Public d'Alsace, Kingersheim • Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes, Charleville-Mézières • La Fonderie, Le Mans • L'Hectare, Vendôme • Hostellerie de Pontempeyrat • Le Magasin, Saint Loup Géanges • La Nef - Manufacture d'utopies, Pantin • Premières Lignes 2014, L'Atelier à Spectacle, scène conventionnée de Dreux • Le Tas de Sable, Amiens • Théâtre de l'Agora, scène nationale Evry Essonne • Théâtre du Soleil, Paris • L'Usinotopie, Villemur-sur-Tarn

## Grants:

Arcadi Île-de-France • Conseil Général de l'Essonne • Ministère de la Culture - DRAC Île-de-France

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