

# BLOCK

Theater of connected sonorous objects  
La Boîte à sel company- création october 2018

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# BLOCK

La Boîte à sel company

Theatre  
sound architectures  
connected objects

**Direction, dramaturgy, comedian**

Céline Garnavault

**Director's Assistant**

Lucie Hannequin

**Block creation and design**

Thomas Sillard

**Artistic collaboration**

Frédéric Lebrasseur (Quebec)

Dinaïg Stall (Montreal)

**Sound creation**

Thomas Sillard

**Sound assistant**

Margaux Robin

**Sound collaboration**

Pascal Thollet

**Musical composition**

Frédéric Lebrasseur

Thomas Sillard

**Block development**

Raphaël Renaud / KINOKI

**Lighting and stage management**

Luc Kerouanton

**Scenography**

Céline Garnavault, Thomas Sillard

Lucie Hannequin et Luc Kérouanton

**Set construction**

Daniel Peraud

**Costumes**

Lucie Hannequin

Creation October 2018

All audiences, 3 year's old onwards

Duration: 40 minutes

*"The true urban place is the one that modifies us, we will not be leaving it any more than we were by penetrating it."*

Pierre Sansot, Poetics of the city, Payot and shores, 2004

## BLOCK, Presentation

A puppeteer interpreter and the blocks - sixty speakers, connected objects- compose in close proximity with the audience the sound and luminous architectures of an evolving city.

"BLOCK" addresses the theme of construction, of oneself, of the city which unfolds, builds up, mutates permanently, changes its perspectives and our point of view. And it becomes a space, ours? A familiar day, an unexpected day again.

The blocks seem to be pieces of construction, inert, transparent, almost empty except for a few wires, and a PCB that can be seen behind the rounded front speaker.

They are like boxes, sound boxes, real and rudimentary powered by batteries, like mooing cow boxes, which only work if they are turned around. Their synchronicity - hand action / block sound reaction- is effective, funny, and simple. Nothing fancy. We are in control.

Then they multiply, and become many, their sounds are complex, developed, tangled and project the audience in other spaces and times.

In the same way, the interpreter navigates through architectures gradually turning complex: artistic constructions, luminous and noisy cities, teeming with activity, without any human form ever appearing in them ...

It is now necessary to sort, organize, and arrange his urban "thing" in constant mutation, to try to run, to contain what escapes. The loud sound cannot be kept into control any more ...

But what does the architect do when, after so much effort, the city that she has created no longer sleeps and prevents her from resting? When the blocks suddenly no longer obey, resist with sounds, inertia, vibrations, lights?

And if suddenly the blocks rebelled? Would it be a revolution? What would drive them? How to understand and build something else together?

So many questions that we want to explore in a physical dramaturgy with objects and innovative, playful and poetic sounds. An unexpected story remaining as open as possible to the possibility for the spectator of imaginary projections.

Céline Garnavault – director and comedian in BLOCK

### VIDEO LINKS

**BLOCK - Workshop at Québec + meet the audience** <https://vimeo.com/252414310>

**BLOCK - teaser (made by kids)** <https://vimeo.com/273571276>

**BOOMER - Art and sound Installation - teaser** - <https://vimeo.com/260204410>

# La Boîte à sel company

The company La Boîte à sel explores a plastic, sound and multidisciplinary theater, influenced by art installations and contemporary puppet theater.

The founder, Céline Garnavault, collaborates with foreign artists and her productions are performed in France and abroad.

Her creations combine theater, music, puppetry in the form of shadow theatre and object theater. She works with objects or materials to create a unique scenography. She cares deeply about the dramaturgy link and relationship between words, objects and space.

She wants to give the audience, especially young children, a space where they can make sense on their own of tracks and signs, experiment, create, challenge the performers in a very straightforward and playful relationship.

La Boite à sel company is located in Bordeaux. In partnership with the Ducourneau Theater - Agen from 2015 to 2017, she is now in partnership with the Très Tôt Théâtre - Quimper for two seasons.

Vice President of the Scenes of Assitej France in 2017 and 2018, Céline Garnavault was re-elected to the Board of Directors last June. On July 11, 2017, she directed a theatrical and musical performance for "Avignon, enfants à l'honneur" in the courtyard of the Palais des Papes.



# Artistic approach of the company

The company La Boîte à sel claims research, creation and renewal of artistic forms are at the heart of its work. It is intended for the general public with a great attention put into childhood and youth.

The creations and installations are designed to be a theatrical experience with or without text. The viewer's journey is part of the dramaturgy as much as what happens on stage.

Our writing is plural, it mixes and confronts expressions and techniques. It relies on figuration modes which surprises the expectations and renews the report spectator / spectacle.

You will often find in our shows the question of "control" and "no control" which questions the child and the adult's relationship in world where very little is controllable. It also reveals the comedian's position who finds himself often confronted with the stage, with a world that resists him with throughout elements such as marionnettic, plastic and sound mediums (forms, figurines, connected objects, shadows, materials, sensors, machines) and the audience.

We like to transpose this challenge on stage and say: no, we do not control everything, but we are, we live, we play, we exist, we make. We "grow" by accepting this inconstancy, this disorder and this part of life that is so hazardous.



## To give life to the object

In the object theater, often, a look, a gesture of the comedian, without the object being necessarily moved is enough. And already we project life itself.

In the big sound project of BLOCK, everything can come alive, everything is potentially alive, inhabited. And these constructions of material and sonorous urban spaces, are not there without purpose, they are a way of understanding reality. They allow the person to tame his space, to learn how to control what surrounds him. Like a child accustomed to deal with a recalcitrant world.

And for the performer who ventures on stage, it becomes true again. Because the stage confronts the comedian with space, with his own body in this space, and often with the objects that are there. Multiple possibilities of acting emerge between his body and these objects depending on the place and the status that he decides to attribute to them.

Finally, the blocks are very strong projection surfaces for the viewer. Their small size gives them a harmless, gadget and sympathetic aspect. It is by their number and power of evocation that they reverse the codes and make the audience reach out and feel empathy for them.



## BLOCK, dramaturgic notes (part one)

A woman discovers the first block hidden under a construction helmet: a small transparent cube of 7cm<sup>3</sup> equipped with a speaker. The first sound coming out of this block is a beep sound, a security beep, a technological beep, which suddenly gets out of control. The woman - in an attempt to restore calm – starts manipulating and unknowingly unleashes a chain reaction.

Other blocks come to life with their own sounds: truck reversing beep, car engines, sirens, squealing wheels ... The city's game can begin: metaphorical constructions of a world, of a society, of an individual and thus a way to apprehend the world. However, at first, the designer does not seem to be quite aware of the scope of this new undertaking. She almost seems to become the “great architect”.

The blocks reveal many possibilities, that of carrying us from one universe to another, to reveal a tiny detail in a big hullabaloo, to suddenly have a jammed city, a building site, rain turn up. This head of a “building site” with her new helmet, tries to organize, to make us hear, playfully, then exhilaratingly. But soon she does it to control and seize power.

At that point the blocks start to emancipate to resist the solicitations of their creator and gradually discover free will. They begin to operate on their own and by this autonomy become the actors of their changing universe. They have access to a form of awareness of their condition, their status and therefore of the possibility of changing it.

The blocks use the space, conquer their territory and build an emancipated world to exclude their creator, voluntarily or not. It is just no longer its territory. Like a parent whose child grew up too fast, a deposed authority, or a person ostracized when she just previously belonged.

## BLOCK, dramaturgic notes (part two)

How will this human be willing to let go of his control obsession and invent another form of relationship? What will he have learned and understood? What will be his new status when the blocks no longer need him? How to exist now?

There are, of course, innumerable answers to this question and I am relying on the stage work to decide how my character and the blocks will reach an understanding, join together, become a whole composed of all their singularities.

I lean towards the idea a choral work with human voices, sixty voices plus the voice of my character. But I do not rule out any surprised idea that may arise from the work on set.

My upcoming experience as a performer on set with 60 connected sonorous objects will demonstrate very concretely all the questions that I tackle in my dramaturgy: what about my control? What about their resilience? Their evocative power and their creativity? How to live up to it? What body language will I develop to exist with them?

What could be more fruitful and jubilant than to test one's character in such an empirical way! For a puppeteer it is obviously a unique opportunity. Besides the interest of working with these amazing blocks, it seems to me that it is this concrete and sincere mise en abîme of our statement that will propose a new show experience for the public.

Céline Garnavault, director, comedian, puppeteer.



*« Our perception of space depends  
as much on what we hear as  
on what we see. »*

Max Neuhaus

## Sound creation

# The blocks: sonorous and connected architectures

When Celine told me about her desire for a show tackling the subject of a city in which sounds would be an integral part of the dramaturgy, my first thought was: how to give to see the city? Knowing the work of Céline on the subject, on materials, I looked for a way to make the sound palpable, plastic, fun, at hand ...

The city is composed of a multitude of sounds and sound transmitters: horns, cars, voice, works, planes, footsteps, parks, ... I proposed to transpose these transmitters into small speakers of cubic form, the most basic form, that of a speaker, the sound transmitter as we know it. A form recognizable by everyone and at the same time easily operated, like a child's cube or a building block that brings playfulness and interactions between the comedian and the object. The blocks were born.

Unlike what is usually done - where two speakers reproduce a stereo sound space, giving the illusion of horizontality and depth - we looked for the multiplication of these small sound sources called blocks, to compose a whole. It was no longer an illusion, by accumulation, we would create a scene, a sound image, in the proper sense that would have a meaning and a role. In the manner of small figurines that create a universe in children's games: from the multitude of figures is born an overall picture, a projection of their imaginary worlds.

These objects needing to be operated and interact with the comedian, I very quickly thought about the "mooing cow boxes". They are super real, and their synchronicity and simplicity are very effective dramaturgically. They are "theater" for the person operating them but also for the one who watches and hears them. They would have to work on this principle of action / reaction.

Finally, the choice of the transparency of these objects came to me during our research in Montreal, for what it brings as a generic, neutral, beautiful object and what it allows in light work. The visibility of the printed circuit boards is a response to the: "how does it work" question children voice who like to disassemble everything to understand it. It is also an echo to the modern, technological world and an image of the mirror cities of our time.

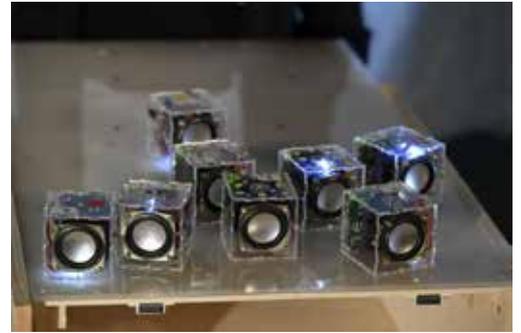
From these material, sound and technological choices, we want to explore different dramaturgical routes, to articulate a rhetoric and a logic specific to these objects, to the space and the public. The blocks will build sound spaces characterizing atmospheres (building site, countryside, crowd, city, building at night, rain, etc ...). They will be the decor. Then they will change their status. Coming alive little by little, they become the comedian in the story and overthrow the one who gave them their first impulse.

We still have to improve and build the blocks, about sixty or so. I will therefore work with different designers to create efficient, reliable objects, that are emitters of sound, lights and are interconnected.

Thomas Sillard - block designer, sound designer and composer.

# Original musical creation

## A new instrument - sixty blocks



Inspired by concrete music, the musical score will be cooperatively written by Quebec musician and composer Frédéric Lebrasseur and Thomas Sillard, sound designer and designer of the blocks. And it will be particularly done on set during the residencies because it is inseparable from the spatialization provided by the 60 blocks which are sound diffusion points distributed in a space of 7m by 8m.

“Sixty blocks” is a medium in itself, a new musical instrument to tame. During our residency, we have therefore developed a way to proceed to for example compose remotely for these 60 blocks.

To compose, we will design our own digital tools, adapted to the blocks, combining granular synthesis, sequencer, spatializer, pad and mapping. We also work with graphs and tables to classify, organize and process everything (for example a number corresponding to each Block but also color codes to manage the spatialization during writing). Thus, the composer Frederic Lebrasseur knows how to transmit his sound files and notes to Thomas, the engineer and creator of the 60 blocks.

The handover is crucial for the music to take the form desired by the composer. We were able to experience this during the first tests of the BOOMER installation at the festival Momix 2018 and the result is up to our expectations.

### Contemporary and fun musical writing

The music composition is completely related to the stage writing, the way the blocks are used by the actress and their position in space. Some examples of the scenes being written:

The big construction site / concrete music, block orchestra led by the interpreter (each block diffuses on demand a specific sound of construction site)

Choir / A choral ensemble of 60 human voices broadcast on 60 blocks and based on polyrhythm. It is a separate score of separate voices that stand out and others that add to it and thus define an audible polyrhythm. In other words, on a rather dense harmonic but vague background, rhythmic melodies are isolated and then one by one again exposed and superimposed.

### Musical references:

- Steve Reich for minimalist, repetitive music:  
“Drumming”, “Music for Pieces of Wood”, “Music for 18 Musicians”
- Pierre Henry and Pierre Shaeffer for concrete music
- György Ligeti for micropolyphonic music: “Lux Aeterna”
- Iannis Xenakis for granular synthesis: “Concrete PH”

# Scenography

An empty space, a place in transition, as if an exhibition was being planned out. A translucent white tarp hanging in the background and backlit, other tarpaulins on the ground, and a construction helmet placed in the center.

The blocks that will reveal the scenography as the show progresses. First on the ground or in the hands of the performer, then on a box. They will then be placed on thin metal feet that will allow to work vertically since they can reach 2m50.

These metal feet are born from the desire to take the blocks off from the ground and from the idea of the concrete bars that constitute the structure of building walls. It is interesting for us to show what holds, the invisible, the building site, the columns, the frames.

They are made of metal with a minimum encroachment base. At the top of each foot a square base of 6cm / 6cm makes it possible to place the magnetic block. Thus, the blocks on feet are easily transportable to modulate the space and the sound.

It is a question of leaving behind the idea of building a city in a classical way and to approach the construction by the spatialization of the sounds, the occupation of the space, to build with the emptiness and to draw in space in a non-realistic way .



# Meet the audience



*Pictures : one of our blocks meeting kids and adults in Canada and in India*

*The BLOCK project is created along three axes, each offering a singular artistic experience with its own audience / connected objects relation. The goal is to offer a living and evolving experience in interaction with the audience.*

## **BLOCKS - INTERACTIVE MEETING WITH BLOCKS OF MEDIATION**

At the end of the show while still in the venue, we systematically propose an after show “surprise” with a very special block. Then, once the spectators are outside, we present them with ten blocks that they can operate to propose a sensorial and interactive experience with the blocks.

Our “mediation block pack” allows short interactive relations (2 hours maximum) around the show and the connected objects. This mediation can be conducted by the stage director and performer during touring or during specific events. It allows us to go outside theaters and specially to meet audiences in hospitals, retirement homes etc ...

## **BOOMER - THE SOUND INSTALLATION**

The public is invited to a space in which the 60 blocks are placed, like so many singular points of sound diffusion to listen to a piece of concrete music. We will regularly invite composers to write for this block choir. The installation will evolve according to each composition.

# Production and Partners

- Théâtre jeunesse Les Gros Becs de Québec
- Très Tôt Théâtre - Scène conventionnée Jeunes publics à Quimper
- Le Tout Petit festival - Communauté de communes d'Erdres et Gesvres
- Institut Français
- Ville de Bordeaux
- La Fabrique - Création culturelle numérique de la Nouvelle Aquitaine
- IDDAC – Institut Départemental de Développement Artistique et Culturel – Agence Culturelle de la Gironde
- OARA - Office artistique de la Région Nouvelle Aquitaine
- DRAC Nouvelle Aquitaine

This project benefited from a creative residency in May 2016, with the support of the Les Gros Becs Youth Theater of Quebec and the Cultural Development Agreement between the City of Quebec and the Ministry of Culture and Communications of Quebec. The Quebec / France cooperation was also supported by the Institut Français and the City of Bordeaux development device of international artistic exchanges.

## Calendar

### BLOCK

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| From 18th till 20th Oct 2018: | Le Tout Petit Festival - CC Erdres et Gesvres (44)                          |
| From 20th till 22nd nov 2018: | Le Carré-Colonnes - Blanquefort et Saint Medard en Jalles                   |
| The 12th Dec 2019:            | Plougerneau, Festival Théâtre à tout âge (29)                               |
| From 16th till 19th Dec 2018: | Festival Théâtre à tout âge - Quimper (29)                                  |
| From 14th till 19th Jan 2019: | Les Transversales, Verdun - Scène conventionnée cirque (55)                 |
| From 6th till 10th Feb 2019:  | Théâtre Massalia, Marseille, Scène conventionnée TP, JP (13)                |
| The 6th and 7th March 2019:   | Le Plateau, Eysines (33)  |
| The 18th and 19th March 2019: | Centre des Arts, Enghien les bains - Scène conventionnée numérique (95)     |
| From 28th till 30 March 2019: | Festival Petits et Grands - Nantes (44)                                     |
| From 1st till 6th April 2019: | Théâtre Jean Arp, Clamart - Scène conventionnée arts de la marionnette (92) |
| From 9th till 27th July 2019: | Festival Théatr'enfants - Avignon   |

### BOOMER

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| The 10th and 11th Feb 2018: | Festival MOMIX, Kingersheim (68)                    |
| The 24th Sept 2018:         | Lancement de saison, Très Tôt Théâtre, Quimper (29) |
| The 16th March 2019:        | La nuit de la marionnette – Clamart                 |

# BLOCK, the team



**Céline Garnavault**  
Director, comedian, puppeteer.

Comedian trained at the Theater Academy of the Union-National Dramatic Center of Limoges, Céline Garnavault has since then performed under the direction of Silviu Purcarete, Xingjian Gao, Émilie Valantin, Philippe Labonne, Filip Forgeau, Marie Pierre Besanger, David Gauchard, Frederic Maragnani, Hala Ghosn, Dinaïg Stall ...

In 2000, she created in Bordeaux the company La Boîte à sel. Since then, she has directed and performed in fourteen plastic and sound exploration theatre shows.

She continues to train in material mediums, notably with Philippe Genty (visual theater and puppet), Christian Carrignon (object theater) and Fabrizio Montecchi (shadow). She teaches contemporary shadow theater herself at the Bachelor of Performing Arts at the University of Bordeaux.

Since her encounter in 2015 with the sound artist Thomas Sillard, she has developed an interest for sound installations, sensors and connected objects that are now part of her creations.

Her shows are touring in France and abroad, and she usually starts her creations in Quebec, where her artistic partner Dinaïg Stall, director of the Master in contemporary puppetry at the Montreal UQAM, now resides.

Engaged in the recognition and discussions around creation for childhood, she has been co-vice president since January 2017 of the Association Scène d'enfance - Assitej France.



**Thomas Sillard**  
Creator and sound artist, designer of the blocks.

Thomas Sillard trained at the School of Image and Sound of Angoulême. He first worked as a Sound Operator for Television (1996 to 1998 and 2001). In 1997 and 1998, he moved to Burkina Faso as General Manager of the French Cultural Center Georges Méliès of Ouagadougou.

Back in France, he devotes himself to sound creations, and designs soundtracks for theater and dance.

Passionate about the relationship between sounds, images and interactivity, he undertakes a research projects that leads him to create the visual world of shows, and sound installations.

# BLOCK, the team



## **Frederic Lebrasseur** Musical composer

A self-taught musician and multidisciplinary artist, Frédéric Lebrasseur has been exploring the world of percussion since his birth by playing drums, didgeridoo, Jew's harp, boat horn, feet, laptop, etc.

He composes, directs and improvises in many orchestras of different musical styles including Ranch-O-Banjo and Interférence Sardines.

He designs soundtracks for his Kiwistiti animation group. Often produced by the National Film Board of Canada, their films have featured in festival programs around the world. Fred is a creator of dynamic soundscapes that are unique in theater, cinema, circus, visual art and contemporary dance.

<https://fredlebrasseur.com/>



## **Dinaïg Stall**

Stage director, comedian, puppeteer, director of the Contemporary Puppet Theater DESS at UQAM Montreal.

A National School of Puppetry Arts in Charleville-Mézières graduate in 2002, Dinaïg Stall carries out since then a multiform work at the crossroads of artistic disciplines. She mixes in turns shadows, puppets and objects in a demanding and specialized research where the effigy's language is used in all its potential and not as a punctual effect of staging. It matters to her that the puppet is not a simple aesthetic choice but a dramaturgical engine driving the play. She searched the relationship between the living and the animated object, a relationship that is always given to see on stage. According to her, the puppet is efficient and strong when we are able to see the strings, that there is no "magic", and that, however, the magic operates fully.

Dinaïg Stall lives in Montreal today, where she is a stage director and puppeteer, teaches contemporary puppet theater and coordinates the DESS at the École Supérieur de théâtre (UQAM). Her creative research focuses on both contemporary puppetry and dramaturgy, and the question of representativeness in a feminist perspective.

# BLOCK, the team



**Lucie Hannequin**  
Director's Assistant,  
Scénography  
and costumes



**Luc Kerouanton**  
Lighting,  
stage management  
and scenography



**Margaux Robin**  
Sound assistant



THEATRE  
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PLASTIQUES

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