

## AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE with Macha Makeïeff,  
July 14 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

### PEDAGOGICAL FILE

*Pièce (dé)montée* produced by Canopé, available on festival-avignon.com

### CONVERSATIONS À LA MAISON, LE FESTIVAL CÔTÉ LIVRE

Encounter with Macha Makeïeff, July 12 at 11:30, Maison Jean Vilar

### LE TEMPS DES REVUES

Encounter with Macha Makeïeff, July 17 at 15:00, Maison Jean Vilar

### THOUGHT WORKSHOPS with Macha Makeïeff,

site Louis Pasteur Supramuros - Avignon Université

*The Triumph of emotions*, July 11 at 14:30

*Discussions artists-spectators*, July 19 at 11:00

### EXHIBITION by Macha Makeïeff

*Spoilsport, Curious Collections and Disquieting Things*,

July 5 to 23 from 11:00 to 20:00, Maison Jean Vilar

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- September 27 to October 13, 2019, Théâtre Gérard Philipe  
Centre dramatique national de Saint-Denis
- October 17 to 19, Le Quai  
Centre dramatique national Angers Pays de la Loire
- November 13 and 14, Le Grand R Scène nationale de La Roche-sur-Yon
- November 21 and 22, Le Liberté Scène nationale, Toulon
- November 27 to December 7, La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille
- December 11 to 13, Scène Nationale du Sud-Aquitain, Bayonne
- December 19 to 21, Théâtre national de Nice
- January 7 to 11, 2020, Célestins, Théâtre de Lyon

73<sup>rd</sup>  
EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,700 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.

FESTIVAL-AVIGNON.COM



#FDA19

## LEWIS VERSUS ALICE

Who in the audience is entirely clear about Lewis? Who knows that Lewis Carroll was an eccentric clergyman from Oxford, a photographer, a logician, and a spiritualist? And who thinks they know Alice? With *Lewis versus Alice*, Macha Makeïeff dives into the fantastic universe of the great British writer to explore the psyche of this enigmatic poet who rebelled against Victorian conventions, a strange collector who would be celebrated by the Surrealists... His reverie shows us the contradictions of a troubled world where everything is in flux and can reverse itself with humour and fragility. Because "*in Lewis Carroll's work everything is word, and only word, there's nothing dramatic about it, it's a like a conversation in a dream. It's 'said' and then it's gone...*" Accompanied by gothic pop music, sounds and voices that seem to come from another world, the show makes the audience face the supernatural: a set and what sits behind, characters that disappear, half-light and shards of dreams, tongue twisters in French and English... Worlds atop worlds mirroring each other, like Lewis-Alice, who loved nothing more than to defy the cruelty of reality.

## MACHA MAKEÏEFF

A writer, plastic artist, and director of La Criée, Théâtre national de Marseille, **Macha Makeïeff** loves to explore the pleasure of the eyes as much as that of words and bodies. At the theatre and the opera, and in museums, she creates sets and costumes, and acts as director. Lewis Carroll was the ideal author to venture into the pleasure brought by the contradictions of language and to explore dreams and the supernatural. During the Festival d'Avignon, Macha Makeïeff will present, at the Maison Jean Vilar, *Spoilsport, Curious Collections and Disquieting Things*, an echo to the creation of *Lewis versus Alice*.

## LEWIS CARROLL

A garrulous writer with an enigmatic personality, **Lewis Carroll** was born in 1832 and grew up in a large family of 11 children, with an ecclesiastic for a father, during the strict time that was Victorian England. He dedicated his life to mathematics and to the writing of fantastic fictions, the most famous of which remains *Alice in Wonderland*.

The work of Lewis Carroll, published by Gallimard La Pléiade, Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*, translated by Jacques Roubaud, published by Gallimard and Macha Makeïeff's *Zone Céleste*, published by Actes Sud, are on sale at the bookshop of the Festival d'Avignon, at the Maison Jean Vilar.



FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 73<sup>RD</sup>

JULY 14 15 16 17 | 19 20 21 22  
LA FABRICA

# INTERVIEW WITH MACHA MAKEÏEFF

---

**With *Lewis versus Alice*, you've chosen to dive into the fantasmatic world of the author, but also into his biography.**

**Macha Makeïeff** : I've always known that I need to feel intimately connected to a project before I can start working on it. Working on Lewis Carroll was a way of prolonging my desire to represent dream onstage—dreams turning to nightmares—but also the work I'd begun in 2017 with Mikhail Bulgakov's *Flight*. There have been many comments written about Lewis Carroll, from academics and experts, some fascinating or partial, others obsessive or malicious. He was himself a very prolific writer. I want to take a close look at his work as a writer, but above all at his enigmatic personality, to explore how he came to tell the kind of stories he told. His life didn't predestine him to it: he was born in a presbytery, the third of eleven children, and spent forty-seven years of his life in Oxford. He had a stutter, was half deaf and left-handed, his parents were first cousins, his father an ecclesiastic, a learned and renowned theologian—Lewis himself was a deacon, to his father's disappointment... The many brothers and sisters, the place of religion in daily life, the promise of a world inhabited and haunted and the disappointment it leads to were all elements of my own childhood. When Lewis Carroll died, his extravagant room, theatre of his insomnias, was emptied. His family only kept what they deemed worthy of publication. They got rid of all his possessions, of his very world... His artistic mechanism haunted by compulsion, cleaning, obsession, catalogues, objects, toys... all of that lost. What we deem "superfluous" was essential. Throwing all that away made part of his personality disappear, and it forever escapes us... That's what fascinates me, the uncertainty of the character which corresponds to the uncertainty of his writing, since he tells us it's all about words, about the meaning of words, the noise of words, and the elusive meaning which, like the ferret in the French nursery rhyme, runs away, escapes, comes back, and disappears. To get there, you have to listen to the text in French and English, to the plastic aspect of the words, to those poetic bolts of lightning, and to the worried humour of the poet. Without disregarding the weirdness, the cruel fantasy in his stories. I enjoyed delving into the fantastic in Mikhail Bulgakov; Lewis Carroll added what he called nonsense, a mixture of humour and of something more disquieting, with his lively, monosyllabic English with its extravagant tones. A symbol, for many of us since our teenage years, of a continent of freedom.

**Lewis Carroll's reality may seem close to the reality of his characters. A supernatural reality, close to the voices of childhood.**

Lewis Carroll defends this state of a somewhat wild childhood he belongs to. He wonders at the brutal, absurd, and tyrannical world of the adults in a stiff and unbending society. The supernatural offered by this Victorian poet is extraordinary, it's not what you might think at first. It's not this vertical relationship to God, or Protestantism, Anglicanism, as we understand it today. It's an extremely agitated and populated psychic zone. It's "his" supernatural which he invented to survive, people by fairies, elves, ghosts, spiritualists, ectoplasms, and also by the prophets and heroes of all biblical phantasmagorias! He took photographs to capture traces of the soul and to stop time; there's nothing of the anecdotal about his images, they belong in history.

Lewis alive was a Victorian myth he himself ended up rejecting. In *Lewis versus Alice*, I present Lewis, author, and Alice, this little girl at once real and fictional. But I don't see the little girl as just a way to talk about himself: he is her, Lewis is Alice. I know there are men and women who, throughout their lives, carry within themselves their own little girl, a small, vulnerable, sincere, and angry being. There is, set deep within them, a little girl they can't get rid of, except by telling stories. Lewis was obsessed with suspended time, with the state of childhood, and terrified by metamorphosis. A show is also always born of anger: in this case, the rejection of the flattening project of post-Freudians who want to see him as a predator preying on little girls because he sought the company of children as friends, of child actors, whom he adored and whom he exalted in his work. I want to express the voice of the child an adult can have hidden within him- or herself, and all the mystery and weirdness it entails.

**The title of the show is very enigmatic. And if we can imagine you'll give us to hear *Alice in Wonderland*, we have no idea what other texts and sources of inspiration you'll use...**

The texts are taken from Lewis Carroll's work—*Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass*, *Sylvie and Bruno*, *The Hunting of the Snark*—as well as from his diary. Others come from magazines, pieces by Virginia Woolf, by the surrealists who celebrated him, or by 20th-century authors we're inviting over for a cup of tea... We adapted those texts to build the rhythm of our questioning. Everything is possible since we are in the world of dream, and there's a constant exchange between our own desires and the noise of the world. We also aim to play with Lewis Carroll's own art of nonsense, his playful taste for the sound and potential misinterpretations of words, with the dead ends of translation. That's why English is as much an integral part of the show as French. Fancy is our way of delving into the text, of playing with Lewis Carroll's language and stories, with seven artists, actors, singers, musicians. Gothic pop music, surprising voices, sounds from another world, dance and shifts in the light...

**Does the scenography steer clear of the usual modes of representation of Carroll's tales, with a child's room and an underground world...?**

I pay particularly close attention to the set, I've decided to build a set-object in the form of a black aviary, gothic and fragile. It's full of light and shadow, of noises, it's a psychic world, a house without a roof. A place of uncertainty. The cardinal points have gone crazy. I wanted the set to correspond at once to a real or realistic representation and to a supernatural and dreamlike place. Lewis Carroll spent his whole life in Oxford, surrounded by gothic churches and colleges, and the atmosphere of the city seems supernatural to me. The show is built entirely around this idea of "versus," so the set had to also tell us about the contradictions in this man's life, trapped between conformism and fantasy, even phantasmagoria. This unique and mobile set is complemented by many old and salvaged items, the animals Lewis Carroll loved and which inhabit Alice's worlds. Items collected and loved as partners of the actors.

—  
Interview conducted by Moïra Dalant and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach