

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young People's Theatre Presents  
An Interactive Experience for Little Explorers!

# TREE



Produced by Théâtre Motus

In the Studio

Feb. 14 – 22, 2026

TORONTO, ON (Jan. 28, 2026) — **Young People's Theatre** (YPT) is delighted to welcome its youngest audience to the Studio for **TREE** — a magical, multi-sensory journey designed specially for infants and toddlers. Produced by the acclaimed Quebec-based **Théâtre Motus**, this gentle and luminous production invites children **ages 6 months to 3 years** to settle into a cozy world of wonder from **Feb. 14 to 22**.

*TREE* transforms the Studio into a soft-sculptured, immersive woodland where little explorers and their caregivers can nestle into “Mama Bird’s” nest. Through enchanting puppetry, ambient lighting, and serene melodies, the production creates a nurturing space that meets young audience members exactly where they are in their discovery of the world.

“We are so pleased to offer a production that speaks directly to the curiosity of very young children,” says YPT Artistic Director Herbie Barnes. “*TREE* offers a thoughtfully considered environment where babies and toddlers can feel safe to explore, listen, and interact at their own pace. It’s a beautiful way for families to create their very first theatrical memories together.”

The experience is structured to meet the needs of young audiences with a **40-minute performance and limited audience sizes**, allowing the cast to engage one-on-one with every child in the room.

A versatile ensemble of five multidisciplinary artists bring *TREE* to life: **Valérie Bourque, Salim Hammad, Paola Huitrón, Marie-Claude Labrecque, and Hugo Monroy Najera.**

Guided by the vision of Théâtre Motus co-founder **Hélène Ducharme**, *TREE* is a specialized adaptation of her acclaimed work, *Tree: A World in Itself*, which was originally developed for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). On Thursday, Feb. 19, YPT will host a dedicated staging of the original *Tree: A World in Itself* specifically for young people with ASD, intellectual disabilities, and/or reduced mobility. (This performance is sold out.)

*TREE* is a presentation of YPT's newly launched Room for Play program offering immersive play-based adventures designed to ignite imagination and interactions between young children and their grownups. Room for Play is made possible by the generous support of the Slight Family Foundation.

### ***TREE***

Original idea and stage direction by Hélène Ducharme

Produced by Théâtre Motus

**Assistant stage direction:** Danaëlle Ducharme-Massé; **Artistic assistant and puppets:** Marie-Claude Labrecque; **Music:** Julie Labrecque and Hugo Monroy Najera; **Scenography:** Normand Blais; **Costumes:** Érica Schmitz; **Lighting and technical direction:** Valérie Bourque

### **TREE PERFORMANCES:**

**Public:** Feb. 14, 15, 17, 22 at 11 AM & 2:30PM | Feb. 18 at 11AM | Feb. 16 and 21 at 10:30AM & 2:30PM

**Please note:** There are no school performances of this production.

**Recommended for Ages 6 months – 3 years**

**Run Time:** Approx. 40 mins.

**Location:** The Studio at Young People's Theatre

**Tickets:** \$22 for children and seniors; \$27 for adults (plus fee and HST)

**Purchase Online:** [youngpeopletheatre.org](http://youngpeopletheatre.org)

**Box Office:** 416.862.2222

## **TREE BIOS**

### **HÉLÈNE DUCHARME**, Director and Creator

Hélène Ducharme is an author, director, actor, puppeteer, and co-founder of Motus Theatre. For the past 20 years, she has written, co-written, or co-adapted every Motus creation and directed most of the company's productions. She explores her passion for puppetry, dramatic acting, and shadow theatre through her bold, adventurous texts and productions for young audiences. Deeply respectful of her young audience members, Hélène collaborates with children throughout her creative process. Her training as an educator allows her to design activities for each production. In addition to her work at Motus, Hélène is on the board of directors and several committees of the Centre des Auteurs Dramatiques (CEAD) and the Québec Association of Puppeteers (AQM). She was also treasurer of the Union Internationale de la Marionnette Canada (UNIMA-Canada) and the International Association of Theatres for Children and Young People Canada (ASSITEJ Canada).

### **VALÉRIE BOURQUE**, Performer

Lighting designer with a "non-institutional" background, she creates light inspired by music, places, texts, bodies, and the audience for whom the works are intended. For over twenty years, and in various parts of the world, she has collaborated on theatrical, musical, dance, circus, and diverse performance creations, believing that the performing arts are both a priority and an important tool for a healthy society.

### **SALIM HAMMAD**, Performer

Salim, of Algerian Kabyle origin, has lived in Quebec since 1992 and has deep expertise in puppetry and clowning, acquired from renowned masters such as Claire Voisard, René Bazinet, Chatouille, Massimo Schuster, and Jackie Gosselin. Gradually, he has developed a unique style as a puppeteer, actor, and creator of shows for young audiences. As co-artistic director of L'Os de Bois, he collaborates with prestigious companies such as L'Illusion et Motus Théâtre, Les Sages Fous, and Théâtre Spirale. His professional career has also led him to participate in international productions and tours in Europe, Mali, Mexico, Switzerland, the United States, Burkina Faso, and Brazil. His practice has enabled him to forge links between communities here and elsewhere, fostering stimulating and harmonious relationships. At a party, you will find him with the children and on the dance floor.

Off stage, Salim regularly collaborates with schools and community organizations, adapting workshops and performances to the specific needs of marginalized audiences. Convinced of the inclusive potential of art, particularly puppetry, he sees this discipline as a valuable tool for expression, social inclusion, and intercultural dialogue. He actively promotes sensory theater for neurodivergent children, demonstrating his commitment to artistic accessibility. His

attention to detail leads him to create works in which every audience member, regardless of their background or abilities, finds a place and a resonance.

Known for his generosity and dynamism, Salim takes care to mentor and support young artists. Thanks to his inspiring career, he is a unifying figure in Quebec's cultural landscape, always ready to build bridges between generations, disciplines, and horizons.

**PAOLA HUITRÓN**, Performer

Paola Huitrón, originally from Mexico City, is a performer, puppeteer, and researcher. Since 2005, she has collaborated creatively with professional companies and conducted research on puppetry techniques and materials. Based in Montreal since 2016, she continues her artistic explorations working with several Quebec companies, including L'illusion, Motus, and Ombres Folles, among others. A committed artist dedicated to the transmission and promotion of puppetry arts, Paola actively participates in conferences and roundtable discussions. She has also curated two exhibitions focused on this unique art form, highlighting the significance of puppetry as a contemporary language with sensitivity and passion.

**MARIE-CLAUDE LABRECQUE**, Performer

Marie-Claude is a multidisciplinary artist and puppeteer based in Quebec. A graduate in set design from the École Supérieure de Théâtre (2004), she has collaborated on numerous productions with Théâtre Motus, Théâtre en l'Air, La Dame de Coeur, Cirque du Soleil, and Ex Machina. Her work spans stage, street theater (e.g., Les Toxiques Trottoir), and screen (Slaxx, It's All Right Michel). In 2017, she premiered her first puppet show, Bijoux, at the Castelier Festival. For over 15 years, she has led puppetry and shadow theater workshops across Quebec, engaging diverse audiences including youth with special needs and seniors. Marie-Claude's practice explores the poetry of image, crafting imaginative worlds with ingenious mechanisms and fluid boundaries.

**HUGO MONROY-NAJERA**, Performer

Mexican born guitarist and percussionist Hugo Monroy Nájera has vast wide-ranging musical experience. He completed his training as a composer and a classical guitarist in Mexico where he took part in many projects and events. Since moving to Montreal in 2007, he has been involved in various projects, with groups and artistic companies and performed on various stages and festivals: the Afrique en Mouvement and S'Temps d'Art Africain schools, the Bolokan, Tiriba, Lamogoya and Jaya Sangha groups, as well as the Théâtre Motus and Ondinnok theatre companies to name a few. His passion for music and traditional instruments of various origins led him to broaden his knowledge of traditional West African music and more recently the musical traditions and heritage of Mexico, India and the North American Indians.

## About Young People's Theatre

Young People's Theatre (YPT) is Canada's largest and oldest professional theatre for young audiences. Celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in the 25.26 season, the company produces and presents a full season of theatre and arts education programming. With the purchase and renovation of YPT 161 Studios across the street from its historic theatre, YPT has expanded its footprint, increased its accessibility, refreshed its lobbies, and upgraded the theatrical equipment capabilities of its 433-seat Ada Slight Stage and 115-seat Studio. United in vision, the two facilities anchor the corner of Front and Frederick streets in downtown Toronto creating Canada's largest theatre complex for young people.

[Learn more.](#)

### YPT's 2025.26 Season Presenting Sponsor



### YPT's 2025.26 Lead Room for Play Sponsor



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### Connect with Young People's Theatre



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