

# Playing Cards: HEARTS



Text

**Louis Fortier, Reda Guerinik  
Ben Grant, Catherine Hughes  
Kathryn Hunter, Robert Lepage  
Marcello Magni, Olivier Normand**

Direction

**Robert Lepage**

## ***Playing Cards***



**Regular deck: 52 cards. 4 colours. 4 royal families. 2 jokers.**

**Tarot deck: 78 cards. 4 symbols. 4 royal families. 21 arcana or trump cards. 1 joker.**

Card games consist of a series of rules, symbols, signs, mathematical or numerological structures, mythologies, and, above all, characters. By combining and ordering them, you can create as many stories as there are possible arrangements. At least that's the intuition guiding Robert Lepage and his collaborators on the project called *Playing Cards*. With such a range of possibilities, the creators imposed the structure of a deck of cards on the project. It will consist of four parts: *SPADES*, *HEARTS*, *DIAMONDS*, and *CLUBS*, each exploring a universe inspired by the asset the suit represents.

Research into the origin of cards invariably leads back to the Arab world. The tetralogy's four parts, each independent and yet interrelated with the others, will make up a cosmos dealing with our past, present and future relationships, our exchanges, and sometimes too, our culture shocks when encountering the Arab way of life.

## ***Playing Cards: HEARTS***

In *Playing Cards: HEARTS*, a web is woven around three countries and across five generations, linking Algeria, France and Quebec, from the 1848 Spring of Nations to the Arab Spring.

In 2011, Chaffik, a young North African taxi driver in Quebec City, delves into his genealogical past to untangle questionable events linked to the disappearance of his grandfather and the origins of his family.

In 1856, renowned French magician Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin is sent to Algeria by the French government to challenge the spiritual and magical powers of the marabouts.

Chaffik and Robert-Houdin are connected by a familial, political and artistic network naturally woven by history and stories, along with questions of faith, beliefs, magic and performances. These themes fit together like clockwork.

*HEARTS* tells the story of colonial Algeria, a confluence of foreign politics and French inventions in magic, science and photography. These innovations and ideas incubate in the alleys of Algiers and become essential tools of the Algerian resistance.

*HEARTS* also explores 19th-century France, particularly French magicians (Robert-Houdin, Méliès) and their relationship to science, cinema and Spiritualist séances—very popular in French intellectual and artistic circles of the era.

Among bureaucratic archivists in Paris, Chaffik uncovers the story of a forger from the resistance and traces links between France and its former colony.

In Quebec, we meet Chaffik, his immigrant family and his girlfriend Judith, who is a lecturer in cinema theory at Laval University and the daughter of a diplomat. She is the centre point of all these rotating gears.

With a 360° scene design, the set of *HEARTS* becomes everything from a magic lantern with fantastic stories and cinematic images, to a hot spot on the brink of exploding from a complex chain of relationships.

## Actors

### Louis Fortier

In 1996, he left Quebec to move to Bosnia, where he discovered resistance art and studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo. In Paris, he was a student of Jacques Lecoq and assistant to Mario Gonzales at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique. He acted under the direction of Omar Porras in *Maître Puntila et son valet Matti*, presented at the Théâtre de la Ville, and *Romeo and Juliet*, which was created in Japan with the acting company of Satoshi Miyagi. With Sophie Brech, he founded Théâtre Fools and Feathers and created *The Tragi-comic Destiny of Tubby and Nottubby*, which is touring internationally.

### Nuria Garcia

Nuria graduated from the Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Valencia (1998). She also trained with artists from the Moscow Art Theatre School (MXAT), the Odin Teatret and the Roy Hart Theatre, among others. She has worked with numerous Valencian theatre companies and appeared in local TV series. This is her fourth collaboration with Robert Lepage after *La Celestina*, *Lipsynch* and *Playing Cards: SPADES*.

### Reda Guerinik

Reda Guerinik completed his theatre studies in 1998. In the same year, he joined the creation of Cirque du Soleil's O in Las Vegas.

He has acted in television shows such as *Cover Girl*, *Les Bougon*, *Tout sur moi* and *Pure laine*. However, he is most known for his theatre work, including his role in Wajdi Mouawad's *Incendies*.

From 2008 to 2013, Reda lived in Asia and was involved in the creation of two shows: *ZED* with François Girard in Tokyo and *The House of Dancing Water* with Franco Dragone in Macau.

### Ben Grant

A performer, writer, composer and sound designer with a strong interest in new work, Benjamin Grant has collaborated with many Australian theatre companies since graduating from the National Institute of Dramatic Art and Monash University. He has also created three one-man shows: *No Right Turns*, *Ben(t)* and *The Shrink and Swell of Knots*. In 2011, he won the Green Room Award for Best Male Performance in Melbourne Independent Theatre.

### Catherine Hughes

Since graduating from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in 2009, Catherine Hughes has worked on numerous theatrical productions in Quebec, in Montreal and on tour. A citizen of both Canada and Australia, she perfected her English with internships in Sydney and London. In 2012, she received a Prix d'excellence des arts et de la culture for her performance as Clytemnestre in *Iphigénie en auto*.

### Kathryn Hunter

Kathryn Hunter's previous acting work includes Kafka's *Monkey* (New York); *Fragments* (Peter Brook); *King Lear* (London, Tokyo); *Richard III* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Visit*, for which she received an Olivier Award for Best Actress (Theatre de Complicite, National Theatre); Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*, for which she received an Oliver nomination for Best Actress (National Theatre); and Lee Hall's *Spoonface Steinberg* (Ambassadors Theatre, The Kennedy Center).

She has also directed several productions, including *My Perfect Mind* (Young Vic), *Othello* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *The Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles* (Shakespeare's Globe), Aristophanes' *The Birds* (National Theatre), *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti* (Almeida, Duke of York's), and Rebecca Gilman's *The Glory of Living* (Royal Court).

In film, she is most known for *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *All or Nothing* (Mike Leigh), and *Orlando* (Sally Potter).

### Marcello Magni

Trained under Jacques Lecoq (1980-82), Marcello Magni is co-founder of Theatre de Complicite, where he has worked as an actor and director for over 20 years. He has also performed at the Royal National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe in London. Over the last 25 years, he has collaborated with Kathryn Hunter. He has worked under director Hideki Noda in Japan and on world tour, as well as directors George Kimoulis (Greece), Helena Kaut-Howson (UK) and Annie Castledine (UK). More recently, he acted in Samuel Beckett's *Fragments*, directed by Peter Brook and performed in Paris, London, New York and Rome. He collaborated with Gilles Aufray to create *Tell Them That I Am Young and Beautiful*.

### **Olivier Normand**

A graduate of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec, Olivier Normand has performed on all of Quebec City's stages, working on both classical work and new creations. Interested in movement, he has danced for Code Universel and teaches at the École de cirque de Québec. He directed a show for Flip FabriQue that was presented at Montréal Complètement Cirque. He received the Prix de la Critique for his performance as Feste in *La nuit des rois*.

## **Designers**

### **Peder Bjurman Dramaturg**

Peder Bjurman (born 1966), director and scriptwriter, works in the field of visual theatre with his company The Missing Link based in Stockholm, Sweden. His first collaboration with Robert Lepage was in 1994 during *A Dreamplay* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. Bjurman also provided the original idea for *The Far Side of the Moon*, co-wrote *The Andersen Project*, and currently works as dramaturg for the *Playing Cards* project.

### **Sybille Wilson Assistant director**

With a degree in violin from the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles and a degree in literature from the University of Cambridge, Sybille Wilson quickly found herself directing lyric and musical shows. She assisted opera artists such as Robert Wilson, Trisha Brown and Christophe Marthaler before mounting her own lyric shows and multidisciplinary productions. She has worked with Robert Lepage on opera projects since 2007.

### **Michel Gauthier Set Designer**

Originally from Chicoutimi, Quebec, Michel Gauthier studied visual art before entering the world of theatre in 1974. Since then he has worked on more than 160 productions. Working primarily in Quebec City, he collaborates with most of the theatres in town. In the 1980s, he mostly worked with theatres for young audiences. He has collaborated with organizations as varied as the Musée de la civilisation and the Opéra de Québec. Recipient of awards from the Gala des Masques de l'Académie québécoise du théâtre and the Prix d'excellence des arts et de la culture de Québec,

he also has been awarded grants from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. He worked with Ex Machina as a set designer for *The Blue Dragon* before joining the team of *Playing Cards: HEARTS*.

### **Jean-Sébastien Côté Sound Designer**

Musician and sound designer Jean-Sébastien Côté wrote musical scores for several Québec City theatre and dance productions before joining Ex Machina on *The Far Side of the Moon*, in 1999. Since then, he has worked regularly on the company's projects, including *The Andersen Project*, *The Dragons' Trilogy*, *1984*, *Lipsynch*, *The Blue Dragon*, *Eonnagata* and *Needles and Opium*. In between projects with Ex Machina, he has worked with various renowned Canadian directors such as Daniel Brooks, Wajdi Mouawad and François Girard.

### **Sébastien Dionne Costume Designer**

Straight out of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in 2007, Sébastien Dionne was asked to create several different costume designs for major projects and for several different Québec City and Montréal theaters. In 2011, he received the Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture for his design of *La Locandiera* by Goldoni at the Théâtre de la Bordée. *Playing Cards: HEARTS* is his second formal collaboration with Robert Lepage.

### **Louis-Xavier Gagnon Lebrun Lighting Designer**

Lighting designer for architectural and art projects, Louis-Xavier has worked on several theater productions in Quebec and Europe. Since 2005 he has collaborated many times with Robert Lepage, notably on *The Andersen Project*, *Eonnagata*, *The Blue Dragon* and *The Tempest*. Co-founder of Atomic3, he is developing new projects for interactive installations that integrate light, video and new media.

### **Jean Hazel Set Designer**

A 1985 graduate of Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in set design, Jean Hazel contributed to designing sets and lighting for close to one hundred productions. Nominated five times for the Gala des Masques of Académie québécoise du théâtre, he won the award twice. He was also honoured three times with the Prix d'excellence des arts et de la culture de Québec. In addition to collaborating with Robert Lepage on *Lipsynch* and *Playing Cards* he recently worked with Franco Dragone and Gill Champagne.

**David Leclerc**  
**Video Designer**

David Leclerc is a freelance graphic designer working in web design and video production. His aptitudes in visual communication and problem solving, as well as his creativity, have brought him to work on different theatrical productions at Ex Machina, including *The Busker's Opera*, *The Andersen Project*, *Lipsynch*, *The Blue Dragon*, *La Tempête* (in Wendake), *Playing Cards* and the opera *The Tempest*. His works and photos have been used in a multitude of theatrical and corporate productions.

**Virginie Leclerc**  
**Props Designer**

After obtaining a BA in theater and film at Laval University in 2001, Virginie Leclerc continued her studies in set design at the Conservatory of Dramatic Art of Quebec (2004). Her costume design of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2008) is greeted by a nomination for the award Fonds du Théâtre du Vieux-Québec. Eventually it is for her costume design of *L'asile de la pureté* (2009) and *Fin de Partie* (2012), that the Conseil de la culture awards her this prize. For Ex Machina, she worked on *La Celestina* (2004) as costumes and props manager and designed the props for *Lipsynch* and *La Tempête* (in Wendake).



## Robert Lepage Co-author and Director



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([leconsulat.ca](http://leconsulat.ca))

Versatile in every form of theatre craft, Robert Lepage is equally talented as a director, playwright, actor and film director. His creative and original approach to theatre has won him international acclaim and shaken the dogma of classical stage direction to its foundations, especially through his use of new technologies.

He graduated from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec and studied in Paris in 1978. In 1984, his play *Circulations* toured Canada. Followed *The Dragons' Trilogy* (1985), *Vinci* (1986), *Polygraph* (1987) and *Tectonic Plates* (1988).

From 1989 to 1993 he was Artistic Director of the Théâtre français at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Meanwhile pursuing his own creative projects, he directed *Needles and Opium* (1991), *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* (1992). *With A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1992 he became the first North American to direct a Shakespeare play at the Royal National Theatre in London.

In 1994, he founded Ex Machina, then wrote and directed his first feature film, *Le Confessionnal*. Followed *Polygraph* (1996), *Nô* (1997), *Possible Worlds* (2000), and *The Far Side of the Moon* (2003). In 2013, he codirects *Triptych* with Pedro Pires, an adaptation of the play *Lipsynch*.

With Ex Machina, he creates for the stage *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* (1994), *Geometry of Miracles* (1998), *The Far Side of The Moon* (2000), a new version of *The Dragons' Trilogy* (2003), *The Andersen Project* (2005), *Lipsynch* (2007), *The Blue Dragon* (2008) and *Eonnagata* (2009).

Current productions include *Playing Cards* (2012) (*SPADES, HEARTS, DIAMONDS, and CLUBS*, each exploring a universe inspired by the asset they represent), a new staging of *Needles and Opium* (2013), and *887*, a solo performance by Robert Lepage (2015).

Robert Lepage directed Peter Gabriel's *Secret World Tour* (1993) and *Growing Up Tour* (2002), designed and directed Cirque du Soleil shows: *KÀ* (2005) and *TOTEM* (2010). For Quebec City's 400th anniversary in 2008, Robert Lepage and Ex Machina created the largest architectural projection ever achieved: *The Image Mill*.

As part of the festivities surrounding the Grand Bibliothèque's 10th anniversary, Ex Machina has created, based on an original idea by Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, an exhibition inspired by Alberto Manguel's *The Library at Night*. Multifaceted, *The Library at Night* (2015) embarks visitors on a journey through 10 libraries across the world, real or imagined, by means of virtual reality.

Robert Lepage made a grand entrance in the opera world with *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* (1993). His continued with *La Damnation de Faust* (1999). Followed *1984* (2005) based on the novel by George Orwell, with Maestro Lorin Maazel providing the musical direction, *The Rake's Progress* (2007) and *The Nightingale and Other short Fables* (2009).

*Das Rheingold*, Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* prelude, premiered September 2010 at The Metropolitan Opera with the cycle being presented during the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons. His latest staging include *The Tempest* (2012), by Thomas Adès, libretto by Meredith Oakes, based on William Shakespeare's eponymous play, and *L'Amour de loin* (2015), with music by Kaija Saariaho and a libretto by Amin Maalouf.

Robert Lepage's work has been recognized by many awards. Among the most important: the Légion d'honneur (2002); the Denise Pelletier Prize (2003); the Hans Christian Andersen Prize (2004) for his outstanding artistic contribution to honouring Hans Christian Andersen worldwide; the Stanislavski Award (2005) for his contribution to international theatre; the Festival de l'Union des Théâtres de l'Europe honoured him with the distinguished Prix Europe (2007), previously awarded to Ariane Mnouchkine and Bob Wilson among others; the Médaille de la ville de Québec (2011); and the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT (2012). In 2013, he became the recipient of the Tenth Glenn Gould Prize awarded by the Glenn Gould Foundation.





## Credits

Text	Louis Fortier Reda Guerinik Ben Grant Catherine Hughes Kathryn Hunter Robert Lepage Marcello Magni Olivier Normand
Director	Robert Lepage
Dramaturg	Peder Bjurman
Assistant Director	Sybille Wilson
Performed by	Louis Fortier Kathryn Hunter Reda Guerinik Ben Grant Catherine Hughes Marcello Magni Olivier Normand
Original music & sound design	Jean-Sébastien Côté
Assisted by	Donato Wharton
Set Designers	Michel Gauthier and Jean Hazel
Lighting Designer	Louis-Xavier Gagnon-Lebrun
Assisted by	Renaud Pettigrew
Costume Designer	Sébastien Dionne
Assisted by	Gabrielle Arseneault
Props Designer	Virginie Leclerc
Assisted by	Ariane Sauvé and Jeanne Lapierre
Images Designer	David Leclerc
Wigs	Rachel Tremblay
Production Manager	Marie-Pierre Gagné
Production Assistant	Véronique St-Jacques
Tour Manager	Marie Rondot
Technical Director	Patrick Durnin
Assisted by	Paul Bourque
Stage Manager	Katia Talbot
Sound Manager	Donato Wharton
Ligthing Manager	Renaud Pettigrew

Video Manager	Nicolas Dostie
Costume Manager	Sylvie Courbron
Props Manager	Virginie Leclerc
Head Stagehand	Anne Marie Bureau
Stagehands	Eric Pierre Blanchard Nicolas Boudreau
Technical Consultants	Catherine Guay Tobie Horswill
Consultant for magic	Philippe Beau
Additional musics	<i>Nocturne # 1 in F, op. 15</i> by Frederic Chopin performed by Idil Biret from album <i>NOCTURNES</i> 8.554045 used with the permission of Naxos of America  <i>Les Roses du Bengale</i> , by Jacques Offenbach performed by Marco Sollini from album <i>Offenbach, J.: Piano Music, Vol. 1</i> CPO 777079-2 used with the permission of Naxos of America  <i>The Fountains of the Villa d'Este</i> , by Franz Liszt performed by Jenö Jando from album <i>Liszt - Years of Pilgrimage Vol. 3</i> <i>(Third Year)</i> 8.550550 used with the permission of Naxos of America  <i>Taqsim Au Qanoun</i> , performed by l'Ensemble Ibn' Arabi, used with the permission of Long Distance Productions  <i>Marche de la Légion étrangère</i> , from album <i>Anthologie de la musique militaire française des</i> <i>origines à 1870</i> , performed by Les Musiciens de la Marine Nationale used with the permission of France Productions  <i>Les Africains</i> , from album <i>Anthologie de la musique</i> <i>Militaire française des origines à 1870</i> , performed by Les Musiciens de la Marine Nationale used with the permission of France Productions  <i>La Belle vie</i> , written by Jack Reardon and Jean Brousolle, composed by Sacha Distel used with the permission of Prosadis
Set building	Astuce Décors
Costume maker	Par Apparat conception créative
Director's Agent	Lynda Beaulieu

An Ex Machina production initiated by the 360° Network  
in coproduction with  
Ruhrtriennale  
La Comète – Scène nationale de Châlons-en-Champagne °  
Cirque Jules Verne & Maison de la Culture – Scène nationale d'Amiens °  
La Tohu - Montréal °  
Østre Gasværk Teater – Copenhague °  
Roundhouse – Londres °  
Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg  
° Members of the 360° Network, an international group of round artistic venues.

Associate Production - Europe, Japan  
Epidemic (Richard Castelli, assisted by Chara Skiadelli, Florence Berthaud and Claire Dugot)  
Associate Production - The Americas, Asia (except Japan), Australia, NZ  
Menno Plukker Theatre Agent (Menno Plukker, assisted by Sarah Rogers and Dominique Sarrazin)

Producer for Ex Machina

Michel Bernatchez

Ex Machina is funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, Quebec's Arts and Literature Council and the City of Quebec.



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