

**LA MAMA**  
EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE CLUB

as part of the  
**La MaMa Puppet Festival**  
presents  
**Kindred Widows**

By Claudine Rivest



The Downstairs  
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003  
Nov 1-3, 2024

# ***Kindred Widows***

Creation, Design and Performance: Claudine Rivest

Stage Direction: Sophie Deslauriers and Claudine Rivest

Music: Isaac Beaudet-Lefèbvre

Lighting Design: Nancy Longchamp

Collaboration on Animated Costume Design: Sylvie Baillargeon

Collaboration on Set Design: Paul Foresto

Assistance with Puppet Design: Sophie Deslauriers

Advisor on Hand Puppet Manipulation: Noë Cropsal

Advisor on Dramaturgical Movement: Olivia Faye Lathuillière

Co-production with Les Sages Fous

The New York City production is supported in part by Québec Government Office in New York, Jean-Pierre Dion | Director Cultural Services



Special thanks to Les Sages Fous, Maison de la culture Marie-Uguay, La Bulle -lieu de création, Atelier Silex, Dinaïg Stall, Isabelle Payant and Nicole Mossoux.

This research and creation has been in progress since November 2020 thanks to the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec as part of the Mauricie territorial agreement and the company Les Sages Fous. *Kindred Widows* was presented in unfinished form during the Café causerie Créations dans l'oeuf at the Festival de Casteliers in March 2021, as part of the Micro-Festival de marionnettes inachevées presented by Les Sages Fous in October 2021 and as part of Prélude at the Maison internationale des arts de la marionnette in November 2021. The premiere was presented at the Festival de Casteliers in March 2023.

*The performance runs 50 minutes with no intermission*

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

A few years ago, my aunt told me about her childhood home: her mother's hat collection; the lump in her grandmother's back. Her grandmother who always sat in the corner of the kitchen. Her grandmother who, after the death of her husband, stopped speaking for 18 years. I was overwhelmed by a strong feeling of astonishment and déjà vu; a kind of vertigo in front of all these inner lives that will remain secret, and that constitute our individual and collective memory.

Possessed by the strong image of my great-grandmother, I created the short form piece *Amanda*, the first iteration that would become *Kindred Widows*. Digging into her story made me interested in the stories of the other women who gravitated around her. Beyond factual experiences, my questions are related to perception, identity, the unconscious, and the shifts between the real and the imaginary.

Through a fragmentary staging, I seek to create a language without words, anchored in bodily feelings. Using a wearable garment as a puppet allows me to highlight the ambiguous relationship between actor and object; between the body and what animates it. Meanwhile, hand puppets, provide me an outlet to break the weight of silence and to transgress conventional gestures.

I've approached this project as a sort of quest for a sense of belonging through the memories of the women in my family. The inclusion of traditional music, rooted in its revival of the past, offers another terrain for exploring how snippets of memory are transmitted through generations.

## SYNOPSIS

*Kindred Widows* paints a dreamlike portrait of a family that is both terrifying and banal. Through the story of *Amanda*, who was mute during the last 18 years of her life, this work examines how memory is passed along between women of different generations. Drifting between reality and imagination, the dining room table serves as a theatre where the past resurfaces. As the violin plays, fragments of life, loaded with secrets, flow into each other, and overlap with everyday gestures. An invitation to step into the elusive world of memory.

**Claudine Rivest (Creation, Design And Performance)** is a multidisciplinary artist whose work focuses on puppetry arts. She has trained in both visual arts (Atelier Sfumato, 2008) and contemporary puppet theatre (UQAM, 2017). She creates contemplative and non-verbal universes that are both playful and strange, and draw their inspiration from clowning, dance, and microtheatre. Both a performer and a visual artist, she also works with several theatre companies as a set designer and puppet designer. Her short pieces Pipo and Amanda have been performed in Québec and abroad. *Kindred Widows* is her first long-form creation. [www.claudinerivest.ca](http://www.claudinerivest.ca)

**Sophie Deslauriers (Stage Direction)** trained as a sculptor in synthetic materials, moulding techniques and resins. She then trained with costume and set designer Natacha Belova and the Point-Zero company in Brussels before returning to acting and manipulation at the Théâtre aux Mains nues in Paris in 2013. In Quebec, she completed a thesis at UQAM, adapting Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *MAUS* for puppet theatre. Today, she continues to be involved in directing as well as designing puppets, sets and costumes.

**Isaac Beaudet-Lefebvre (Music)** began learning the violin at a young age. Fascinated by the traditional music of Quebec, he began his classical training while working on the folk repertoire. He subsequently became familiar with the Irish tradition during several visits to that country. He was then introduced to jazz by completing the jazz composition and arrangement technique at the CEGEP de St-Laurent and discovered klezmer music with the group Ichka. Now established in Trois-Rivières, he devotes himself to his art within several groups such as Kavaz, Isabelle Charlot and the Delegation.

**Nancy Longchamp (Light Design)** has worked in the performing arts for twenty-five years. A lighting designer by trade, she has worked in lighting design, artistic creation and lighting management. Through her work with Théâtre Momentum, Théâtre Sans Fil, Théâtre des Deux Mondes and Kobol marionnettes, Nancy has developed her expertise. For the past fifteen years, Nancy has specialized in the design and manufacture of self-contained lighting systems and wireless lighting accessories for several puppet theatre companies, including Théâtre de Deux Mains and Théâtre des Petites Âmes.

## **La MaMa Puppet Festival**

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*The 11th La MaMa Puppet Festival Fall 2024 is made possible by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, the Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), the Cultural Office of the Spanish Embassy in Washington DC and the Cultural Office of the Consulate General of Spain in New York, the Howard Gilman Foundation, The Jim Henson Foundation, the Québec Government Office in New York, Puppet Slam Network, Radio Drama Network, The Shubert Foundation. Additional support from Cheryl Henson is gratefully acknowledged.*

**A full program with information on this  
production can be found on the  
*Kindred Widows*  
page of the La MaMa website.**

**In addition you can scan the  
QR code Poster located in the theatre  
lobby for access to the digital program.**

# LA MAMA



## RESTORE A BUILDING REMAKE A WORLD



*Rendering: 74 East 4th St.*

La MaMa's historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street underwent an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit [www.lamama.org/remakeaworld](http://www.lamama.org/remakeaworld)

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The Downstairs

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