

BY MONIQUE CORBEIL, APRIL VICZKO,
AND FLIP THE SWITCH COLLECTIVE

Flip the Switch receives the CITT/ICTS Technical Merit Award at Rendez-vous

The internationally-recognized micro production captivates with its unique and personal *Le Voyage* production.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY FLIP THE SWITCH COLLECTIVE

Le Voyage at Scenofest, World Stage Design in Taipei, July 2017. Left to Right: Lindsay Bell, Melania Radelicki, Monique Corbeil, Jordan Watkins, James Coomber, Corwin Ferguson, and April Viczko.

At the CITT/ICTS Rendez-vous 27th annual awards banquet held in Saint John New Brunswick in August, the Award of Technical Merit was given to Flip the Switch for their work on *Le Voyage*. The production was presented at Scenofest during the World Stage Design Festival 2017 in Taipei last July. Monique Corbeil and April Viczko had the opportunity to experience this intimate micro theatre production personally.

Where did *Le Voyage* originate?

IN THE SUMMER OF 2014, director and writer Jordan Lloyd Watkins was helping to clear away a lifetime of clutter from his grandfather's home. He came across an old model ship that had been tucked away on a shelf for decades. The model was headed for the trash, but something about the object intrigued him enough to save it from such a cruel fate. The model was half finished, and that got him thinking about

abandoned projects, legacy, the inability to follow through, and forgotten dreams. The model itself was interesting as a symbol for travel, including the time it had travelled to arrive in his care. This fate from which the boat was saved got Watkins thinking about disposable consumer culture and the significance humans place on special objects.

These musings brewed in Watkins' mind until the fall of 2014 when he penned a proposal to the 2015 Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space with this model ship in mind as the centrepiece for a theatrical experience. The proposal was accepted and a group of artists quickly formed around the project and began development. After premiering *Le Voyage* in Prague the project was shelved for over a year until late 2016 when the artists were invited to mount the project again as part of the 2017 World Stage Design Festival. In early 2017, *Le Voyage* went back into development and in July of 2017 an updated version of the experience premiered in Taipei. The artists at the core of this project have decided to formalize their artistic group into the Flip the Switch Collective, a group focused on creating art and performance with design and technology at the core of the creative process.

What is *Le Voyage*?

Le Voyage is a micro theatrical experience. The installation is small in size, but it takes place within a much larger controlled space. Upon entering the experience, the audience



CITT/ICTS Interim President Elizabeth Wilkie presenting Jordan Watkins and Corwin Ferguson the CITT/ICTS Award of Technical Merit for *Le Voyage* at the 2017 annual CITT/ICTS Rendez-vous Conference Awards banquet.

steps into a great void, the unknown. The scenography of this piece is designed to control focus and illuminate intimate details. The result is a much more private, and by extension intimate, experience.

Le Voyage tells the story of two emigrants on their way to “the New World.” It serves as a trilingual snapshot of humanity’s enduring quest to conquer the next frontier, spoken in English, French, and Mandarin.

The story moves through three separate time periods while the theme of emigration remains constant.

CITT/ICTS Award of Technical Merit

When we consider what could constitute technical merit, we might consider the grandiose and the spectacular. However,

in this case, we nominated a project that is micro; its audience is two people with headsets in a vast sea of black with a small ship as the set. The performers are virtual and projected in various shapes onto the ship. This little ship is rigged with LEDs and helps to set the stage for the various voyages of the three couples in the story.

Le Voyage is about leaving and arriving, new frontiers, and the timelessness of human connection. The production makes use of high and low technologies. The projection mapping is precise; the soundscape is exquisitely executed. Most importantly, however, the whole concept of how all of the Arduino, manually-operated dousing, LED sequences, sound effects, evocative video recording with defined framing, and storytelling come together is not only original but emotionally stirring. Theatre that strikes at the heart is what we all want in our business and we think this micro-theatre piece throws a very precise arrow.

The production provides a very intimate experience: it is a 15-minute trilingual story installation intended for an audience of two people. The core inspiration comes from an old ship model—ship being a huge reference for stage technology—is telling and provides a unique backdrop for the video mapping story of new beginnings in unknown territories and the interconnection of humans in time and space. Flip the Switch has created something unique and internationally recognized,



“No need to crowd. Everyone will get their turn.” The Snake Oil Salesman, played by Sebastian Kroon.



“It takes a moment of solitude to recognize it.” The Seawitch, voiced by Adele Noronha.



Jordan Watkins shares an insider view during a talkback session at Scenofest.



Lingling Zhang prepares with Jordan Watkins to embark on her mission to Mars.

including receiving the 2017 CITT/ICTS Award of Technical Merit for acknowledging the company's desire to present compelling stories with technical rigour.

Technical rider of the production

- Three Macbook Pros*
 - **MBP #1** – Video and sound via Qlab
 - **MBP #2** – Secondary sound and controlling MBP#3 via OSC controls with Qlab
 - **MBP #3** – Driving color changing LEDs with a PixelPusher by using Qlab to send Art-Net through a bridge application. Also, controlling the EL Wire with Qlab by signalling another bridge application to send serial commands to the Arduino controller.
- (* *In theory, this could all be condensed into a single MBP. When considering ease of workflow and time constraints it was easier for each artist to work on a separate machine and network those machines together during setup.*)
- One AV projector
- Video/sound/lighting/LED playback controlled by Qlab 4

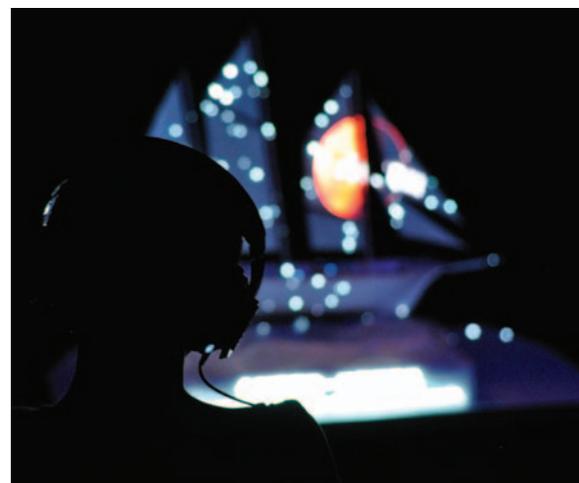
- Video mapping through Photoshop and Isadora
- Video content created through After Effects, Photoshop, and Premier
- Sound content created through Logic Pro
- USB Audio Box Focusrite Scarlett Four Channel
- Two sets of noise cancelling headphones
- One PixelPusher controlling an array of color changing LEDs
- One EL Sequencer with an Arduino processor controlling the EL Wire
- One regulated 12 V power supply

The creative team behind *Le Voyage*

Jordan Lloyd Watkins, Director and Writer, is a multidisciplinary artist whose body of work includes theatre, dance, live art, and film. He is most interested in pursuing dynamic storytelling; work that is accessible, engaging, and relevant. Recently he finds himself at the core of devised creations; performance work in which design, technology, space, and concept play a more integral part in developing the thematic content of a performance. The complexity

and evolution of technology is his way into qualifying contemporary values, lifestyle, and social order.

His work has been seen across Canada and the United States, as well as in the Czech Republic and Taiwan. His most notable work as a performer was the international tour of *Cranked* (Green Thumb Theatre), for which he received a Jessie Richardson Award nomination for outstanding artistic achievement. His writing can be found published as part of the anthology *Canadian Ginger*. As a director and technology designer

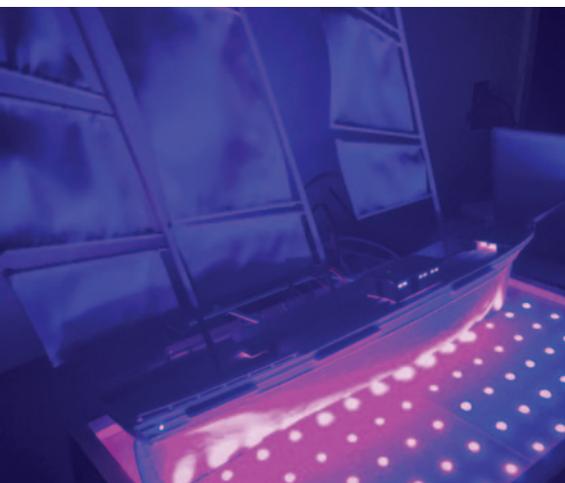


"It's a dream that has become your obsession . . . and sometimes it's the only thing that feels real."

Jordan conceived *Le Voyage*, a theatrical experience first presented at the Prague Quadrennial and later at the World Stage Design Festival. *Le Voyage* went on to receive the 2017 Award for Technical Merit from the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology.

Jordan holds a BPA from Capilano University, is a graduate of Studio 58, studied projection technology at Banff: Centre for Arts and Creativity, and is an alumni of the Leadership Intensive Program at the Summerworks Theatre Festival in Toronto. Learn more at www.jordanlloydwatkins.com.

James Coomber, Music and Sound Design, is a composer, sound designer, and musician based in Vancouver. His style employs compositional techniques from a broad range of genres, including contemporary classical, folk, minimalism, bluegrass, and jazz. His artistic interests lie heavily in collaborative work, where the intermingling of disciplines is prevalent and pushes the boundary of audio-visual forms. Recent collaborations have involved Arts Club, Hardline, Vision Impure, Caravan Stage Company, Redcurrent Collective, Rumble, rice and beans, Bleeding Heart Collective, Upintheair, Theatre Terrific, and Pacific Theatre. He holds degrees in both music composition and theatre collaboration from the School of Contemporary Arts at SFU. More info at www.jamescoomber.com.



Close-up shot of color changing LEDs in use.



Le Voyage is intimate—only two audience members at a time.

Corwin Ferguson, Video and Projection Designer, works across Canada primarily as a video and projection designer. He has earned a Robert Merritt Award and holds nominations for three Jessie Richardson Awards, two Betty Mitchell Awards, and an Elizabeth Sterling Award for his designs. Corwin has studied animation, is a founder and artistic associate of Awkward Stage Productions, a storyteller with Forbidden Vancouver Historic Walking Tours, and a game designer/operator with Vancouver Mysteries. Corwin's professional theatre experience also extends to acting, directing, set/sound/props/graphic design. Corwin is a Studio 58 acting graduate and holds a Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts from Capilano University. Select company credits include: Alberta Theatre Projects, The Arts Club Theatre Company, Calgary Opera, Citadel Theatre, Pacific Opera Victoria, Persephone Theatre, Ruby Slippers, Saint John Theatre Company, Studio 58, Théâtre la Seizième, The Virtual Stage, and Vancouver Opera. For all things Corwin, visit www.corwinferguson.com. ■



After studying fine arts and theatre production, **Monique Corbeil** became involved in the performing arts industry in Québec and has worked in almost every aspect—from technical production and touring to management and marketing. Based in Montréal, Québec, she is known as Mo, the CITT/ICTS National Coordinator, a position she has occupied since 2005.



April Viczko is a set, costume, lighting, and projection designer. She is an Associate Professor in the School of Creative and Performing arts – Drama at the University of Calgary. In 2012, she was honored with a Distinguished Researcher Award from the Faculty of Arts. April holds an MFA Theatre Design from the University of Alberta. She is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada (ADC).

Website: <https://www.levoyage.ca>

Video: <https://youtu.be/oRugGmf0ZWM>

Instagram: [@flip_the_switch_collective](https://www.instagram.com/flip_the_switch_collective/)

Facebook: [facebook.com/fliptheswitchcollective/](https://www.facebook.com/fliptheswitchcollective/)