

DOSSIER ARTISTIQUE

CREATION 26 • 27

The Animal Room

A satirical-lyrical musical entertainment.

Text and lyrics **Martin Crimp**

Music **Roald van Oosten**

Direction **Christian Lapointe**



Lou Sarda

théâtre·s
de la Ville de
Luxembourg

The Animal Room

CREATION

Text and lyrics **Martin Crimp**

Music **Roald van Oosten**

Direction **Christian Lapointe**

Dramaturgy **Andréane Roy**

With **Judith Chemla and a band of 4 musicians**

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In English (text and lyrics) or in French (text) and English (lyrics)

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A co-production of **Carte Blanche (Canada)** and

Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (Luxembourg)

In partnership with **Usine C (Montreal)**, **Théâtre de l'Athénée (Paris)**
et **Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (Paris)**

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Premiere at **Usine C (Montreal)** on March 2, 2027,

with further performances from March 3 to 7, 2027.

Performances at **Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg / Studio** on
April 22, 23, and 24, 2027

Théâtre de l'Athénée (Paris) from April 29 to May 4, 2027

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Available for touring **Season 27 • 28**



“went down to the sea & the sea was all gone
so I lay in the sand, turned the radio on:
they were playing a song about love & the moon
& I knew that song cos I’d written the tune myself

“Welcome to the animal room” A mysterious musician confronts us from the dark. Who is she? Where is she? Why has she been excluded from human society? And is human society where she really belongs? Confined to “the animal room”, she and her band take us on a journey through a shimmering pop world of imagined animal consciousness — from enraged chameleons to Kantian cats. And on the threshold of irreversible environmental change, she sings for us all a melancholy torch-song. “If we lock the doors, it is for everyone’s safety. If we film your eyes, it is to see more clearly into your soul.”

“I’m not an automaton — I’ve got a name —
so why am I dead inside? — why this shame? —
this nagging feeling
I’m less than a human being.



A mysterious opera singer calls us from the darkness. Who is she? Where is she? Why has she been excluded from human society? And is human society truly her place? Confined to “the Animal Room,” she and her band take us on a journey through a world of shimmering pop music where animals possess an imaginary consciousness, from rabid chameleons to Kantian cats. And on the cusp of irreversible environmental change, she sings for us all a song both invigorating and melancholic.

The Animal Room is the brand-new theatre and music project from playwright and librettist Martin Crimp, directed by Quebec’s Christian Lapointe, and starring French actress and singer Judith Chemla. The music is by Dutch composer Roald van Oosten, a frequent collaborator of the British author.

The co-production with Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg and the partnership with Usine-C in Montreal allow this co-production to be presented in both Canada and Europe.

The play presents a marginalized woman and her musical dream, in which she enters, with the help of her rock band, the consciousness of dozens of animals. Caught between artificial intelligence and the animal kingdom, she escapes her solitude through song, swept away by a musical fervor in a playful, Brechtian quest to discover what still makes humans exceptional beings.

The dramaturgy, a striking collage navigating between analog and digital, takes us from the performance space of this Music-Hall, resembling a bestiary, to the rehearsal space of the band behind it, and finally to the bedroom where Danny—the mistress of ceremonies of this indie-pop celebration—sleeps in her lush, lyrical dream.



Listen here to the first demos of the songs

Trying to be human

When Roald van Oosten first suggested that we make a show about animals, I could not have predicted the many strange avenues of thought this would open up. But the more, with his gentle encouragement, I read about the intelligence of animals, the consciousness of animals, the emotions of animals, and began to look at the long tradition of animal writing from the surprising first century musings of Plutarch, to the confrontational fury of JM Coetzee, the more I was hooked.

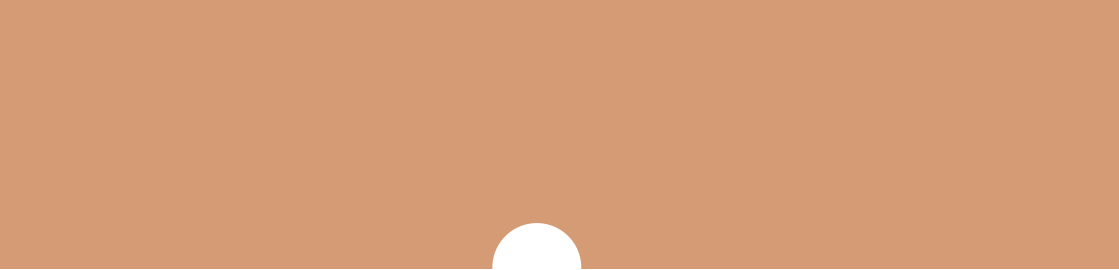
And so I began what is always for me a happy and liberating process of writing lyrics, to which Roald responded in his inimitable lo-tech scratchy pop way — channeling my often satirical impulses into his uniquely bitter-sweet and addictive melodies — sometimes composing a song in as little as twenty-four hours. But if an individual number could happen quickly, in fact we were in no hurry, and our exchanges of text for music often took place months apart, as the mood took us.

In the middle of it all, the global COVID pandemic intervened and made its way in to the music —

“there’s nowhere to go, no planes in the sky and the birds are all singing and she doesn’t know why”

— and perhaps it was that event that put our songs into perspective. Since — I now realized — we were not really writing about animals, but, like La Fontaine, we were in fact asking questions about human beings.

As the relentless promotion of Artificial Intelligence eats away at the supposed uniqueness of our intellect — and even of our imagination — and as the ever more intense study of animals shows that, as a species, we are not so much exceptional as part of a long-evolving animal continuum, where does that leave us? To turn the famous question of the Sphinx back on itself: what — exactly — is a human being?



This is the question that haunts Danny, our charismatic singer-protagonist. Locked inside The Animal Room for reasons she cannot quite understand, she rehearses for us all the sometimes bitter, sometimes funny paradoxes of trying to be human.

Martin Crimp

February 2026

Exerpt

I've got Descartes

I've got — what's his name? — Montaigne,
I've got whole systems — look —
based on minimising suffering and pain
and stuff about the burial rites of elephants
and who-do-you-throw-off-the-life-raft-first thought experiments
and can you film an animal in a cage and see
if they read minds and have moral agency
and is a human being whatever a machine
the heart just a moving part what does it mean
to kill sheep is it true that at some deep
level everything is conscious
stones trees starlight: d'you want us
to say what a bat thinks
or is that one of the bad things
you've no right to say
and what about when you see a cat play
with a mouse is it really that
or are you watching a mouse play with a cat
I know that I really ought
to be up to speed with radical thought
decolonise interrogate biology
problematise race sex cos what I really wanna be
is one of these disruptors of the old clichés
I mean Kant was okay but he still ranked species
and put humans on top — I mean what? — WHAT? —
like an angel? — are you serious?? — like a GOD?!

Biographies

Martin Crimp

WRITER / PLAYWRIGHT

Martin Crimp is a pioneer of bringing music into serious drama, first incorporating lyrics into his ground-breaking play *Attempts on her Life* – for which pop-artist Roald van Oosten composed music for the Veen-fabriek production in Amsterdam. Subsequent collaborations with Roald include *In the Republic of Happiness* at London's Royal Court Theatre, and *When we have sufficiently tortured each other* at London's National Theatre, whose cast included Jessica Gunning, Stephen Dillane and Cate Blanchett. His plays range from elliptical dramas of contemporary life – *Definitely the Bahamas* (1987), *Dealing with Clair* (1989), *The Country* (2000), *The City* (2008), *Men Asleep* (2018) – via the two satirical 'entertainments' *Attempts on her Life* (1997) and *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012) – to re-imaginings of Greek classics – *Cruel & Tender* (2004) and *The rest will be familiar to you from cinema* (2013) – the French language premiere of this play being presented at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers and the Festival d'Avignon (2019). At the same time, his writing for operas such as *Written on Skin* (2012) and *Picture a day like this* (2023) is widely acknowledged to have revitalised the form and extended the contemporary repertoire. Martin's work is the subject of books by Aleks Sierz (UK), Vicky Angelaki (UK, Sweden), and Clara Escoda (Spain). In 2020 he was awarded the Nyssen-Bansemer Theatre Prize.

Christian Lapointe

DIRECTOR

Christian Lapointe is the artistic director of Carte Blanche in Québec City. Over the years, he has directed more than 30 plays and performances and has established himself as a cutting-edge and atypical figure on the Canadian theatrical scene. His work has been presented in numerous Quebec institutions, as well as at Avignon, the Royal Court Theatre in London, the Schaubühne's Festival International of New Drama in Berlin, and on several occasions at the National Arts Centre of Canada, the

Carrefour international de théâtre in Québec City and the Festival TransAmériques in Montréal. In 2022, he directed *Not One Of These People*, by British playwright Martin Crimp, with the author performing on stage for the first time. In 2025 he created an opera based on *Hiroshima mon amour* by Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais, which premiered at Montréal's Usine C.

Roald van Oosten

COMPOSER

Roald van Oosten's music ranges from indie pop gems to ghostly theatrical soundscapes. A versatile musician who grew up in Brussels and Amsterdam, he's the singer-guitarist of the indie band Caesar with whom he performed at the Lowlands and CMJ festival, and recorded an album with Steve Albini in Chicago. His pop sensibility is much appreciated by the worlds of theatre, film and television. His musical work on Martin Crimp's play *Attempts On Her Life* for the Dutch company Veenfabriek, led to a closer collaboration with the playwright on *In The Republic of Happiness*, for the Royal Court Theatre, London. This led to a commission by the National Theatre in London to write music for Martin's play: *When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other*, directed by Katie Mitchell.

Andréane Roy

DRAMATURG

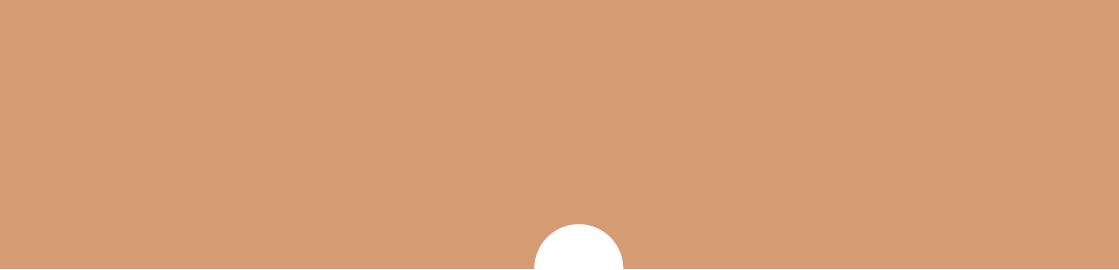
Andréane Roy has worked as dramaturg and artistic advisor since 2014, most notably alongside writers and directors such as Christian Lapointe (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Le reste vous le connaissez par le cinéma*, *Quand nous nous sommes suffisamment torturés*, *Not one of these people*, *Hiroshima mon amour*), Brigitte Haentjens (*Parce que la nuit*, *Sang*), Alix Dufresne and Marc Béland (*Hidden Paradise*), Claire Renaud (*Sportriar-cat*) and Olivier Choinière (*L'école des femmes*, *Zoé*, *La dernière cassette*). She also collaborates on occasion with the CEAD and with Canada's National Theatre School, as well as with the magazines *Jeu*

and *Aparté*. After pursuing studies in Music, Theatre (UQAM) and Comparative Literature (UdeM), she obtained a Masters in Theatre (UQAM).

Judith Chemla

ACTRESS AND SINGER

Judith Chemla began her film career in the late 2000s and came to the public's attention in 2012 with Noémie Lvovsky's *Camille Redouble*, for which she received the Lumière Award for Most Promising Actress and a César nomination for Best Supporting Actress. She went on to star in Mikhaël Hers's *Ce sentiment de l'été* (2015), Stéphane Brizé's *Une vie* (2016), for which she was nominated for a César Award for Best Actress, followed by Eric Toledano's *Le sens de la fête* (2017), Mia Hansen-Løve's *Maya* (2018), Olivier Dahan's *Simone, le voyage du siècle* (2021), Yvan Attal's *Les Choses humaines* (2021). In 2022, she played one of the leading roles in Léopold Legrand's *Le Sixième enfant*, which earned her another César nomination for Best Supporting Actress. This year, she appears in Michel Leclerc's *Le mélange des genres* and Isabelle Carré's *Les rêveurs* in 2025. Alongside her film career, Judith Chemla is an opera singer and stage actress. A member of the Comédie-Française between 2007 and 2009, she performed in productions including *Le Misanthrope*, *L'illusion comique* and *La Grande magie*. Judith Chemla performs on major theatre and opera stages, notably at the Théâtre du Châtelet in *Hamlet/Phantoms*, directed by Kirill Serebrennikov in 2025. That same year, she premiered *Le Procès de Jeanne*, based on the trial records of Joan of Arc, directed by Yves Beaunesne at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. She has premiered numerous productions at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, where she has worked with, amongst others, Emmanuel Meirieu, Jeanne Candel, Samuel Achache and Benjamin Lazar... Her performances there included *De Beaux Lendemain*, *L'Annonce faite à Marie*, *Le Crocodile Trompeur / Dido and Aeneas*, and *Traviata / Vous méritez un avenir meilleur*, in which she sang the role of Violetta. At the Montpellier Opera, she played Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, conducted by the Ukrainian conductor Kirill Karabits; in 2024, she sang Kurt



Weill's lieder at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. On television, Judith Chemla has appeared in several series, including Xavier Giannoli's *D'argent et de sang*, *La Peste* and, more recently, *Mitterrand*, both directed by Antoine Garceau. Judith Chemla is also developing her work as a writer and director. In 2021, she wrote and directed the short film *Les Enfants de bohème*, and is currently editing her second film.

Carte Blanche

Carte Blanche's mission is to create and produce resolutely contemporary, exploratory theatre with diverse, uninhibited stage forms rooted in the visual, performing, and multidisciplinary arts. As its name suggests, the organization champions artistic freedom and is committed to encouraging arts organizations and theatres to take risks by creating innovative projects, often in co-production. It is also dedicated to supporting emerging artists and offers formal initiatives in partnership with arts organizations.

Since its inception in 1979, the dialogue between theatre and visual arts has been central to Carte Blanche's work. Following the leadership of Denis Bernard and Gill Champagne, the central role of set design became even more prominent with the arrival of set designer Jean Hazel, who took over as director of the company in 2003. From 2013 to 2017, Jean Hazel shared artistic direction with director Christian Lapointe, who had previously directed two of the company's productions and who has assumed sole artistic direction since June 2017. Carte Blanche has produced some 50 original works, approximately a quarter of which were created in partnership with major Canadian production companies and several producers from across the international Francophonie. In the coming years, Carte Blanche will continue to pursue and strengthen its mission through new multidisciplinary artistic collaborations.



Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg

Each season, the Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, namely the Grand Théâtre and the Théâtre des Capucins, present a programme of dance, opera and theatre in several languages, highlighting a multiplicity of aesthetics, voices and narratives, and motivated by the desire to meet the expectations and demands of a dynamic cultural scene and a cosmopolitan audience. Deeply rooted in their era and at the crossroads of cultures and languages, the Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg aim to be a place of encounter and discovery open to all, a place dedicated to the performing arts and artistic innovation.

Long-standing partnerships with international companies and artists, a presence in European networks and a model of collaborative co-productions enable them to support national and international creation. Creation is increasingly encouraged and supported through multiple initiatives designed to accompany artists, but also to promote the transmission, sharing and emergence of new forms.

The importance given to creativity has only increased in recent years, particularly with the addition of artists associated with the theatre, and now informs all activities carried out by the Théâtres de la Ville. In line with the professionalisation of the performing arts currently taking place in Luxembourg, they have set up various support mechanisms and chosen to invest more and more in creation. In 2016, TalentLAB, a project laboratory and multidisciplinary festival, was launched. Organised every year at the end of the season over a period of ten days and designed as an interdisciplinary festival, it offers selected project leaders and their participants a break from the constraints of everyday life in a secure space, but also and above all a framework for research, transmission and exchange. With the establishment of the Capucins Libre end-of-creation residency

in 2018 and participation in the "Bourse Projet Chorégraphique: Expédition", the Théâtres de la Ville are involved in yet another area of creation, supporting artists and collectives in the realisation of a project by offering them the time, space and support necessary to bring it to fruition.

At the European level, the Théâtres de la Ville have also joined various European networks over the years, such as the European Theatre Convention (ETC), enoa (European Network of Opera Academies) and Opera Europa. In the same spirit of networking and supporting emerging artists, the Théâtres de la Ville initiated the Future Laboratory, a research residency project supported by twelve institutions in the performing arts field and supported by Creative Europe from 2022 to 2025. More recently, in January 2026, they joined the Prospero NEW network, the first platform dedicated to emerging artists in the theatre sector, thus adding another link to their work of accompanying and supporting artists.

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