

DES CHÂTEAUX EN L'AIR / **CASTELS IN THE AIR** // Ramona Poenaru & Gaël Chaillat  
Strasbourg, France



**DANUBIA - MIRROR IN THE WATERS**  
[a geopoetic Journey]

for  
audiences  
aged 8 and  
above

a multimedia immersive experience to wet your feet in

first performance on 24 November 2021 at the TJP CDN de Strasbourg, Grand Est  
**TJP National Centre for Performing Arts, Strasbourg, Grand Est, France**

# CREDITS



## Danubia - Mirror in the Waters

a multimedia immersive experience to wet your feet in

by Des Châteaux en l'air / Ramona Poenaru & Gaël Chaillat

For audiences aged 8 and above

expected duration : 1H30 (cloakroom included)

estimated capacity : 50 spectators (all publics) / 2 classes (scholars)

### cast & crew

written, directed and performed by

**Ramona Poenaru & Gaël Chaillat**

sound design and performance

**Étienne Haan**

set design and construction

**Olivier Benoît**

digital program developer

**Loïs Drouglazet**

video and light operator

**Philippe Lux / Lou Zimmer**

technical operator

**Yann Argenté**

video excerpt from **Miroir des eaux  
(Mirror in the Waters)**

an immersive performative micro-installation

by Des châteaux en l'air

2017, France

<https://vimeo.com/289695596>

# PRODUCTION

## produced by

Des châteaux en l'air

### co-produced by

Espace 110 - Centre culturel d'Illzach / Illzach Arts Centre, France

TJP - CDN Strasbourg Grand-Est / TJP National Centre for Performing Arts, Strasbourg, France

Les 2 Scènes - Scène Nationale de Besançon / Besançon National Playhouse, France

Le Nouveau Relax - Scène conventionnée Chaumont / Chaumont Public Playhouse, France

MOMIX Festival International Jeune Public / International Festival for young Audiences, Kingersheim, France

## support and funding

**French Ministry of Culture / Regional Department of cultural Affairs Grand Est** - Creation Grant 2021

**Regional Council of Grand Est, France** - Creation Grant 2020/21

**City of Strasbourg, France** - creation grant 2021

**Quintessence** - Performing Arts Network - Quint'Est professional meetings for live performance, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Grand Est, France, 2020/21

**The Grand Est Cultural Agency**, programmes : Cooperation Residency & Agency's Rehearsal Set Selestat, France

**The François Schneider Wattwiller Foundation for Contemporary Arts, France** - Residency Grant, 2021

**University of High-Alsace, Mulhouse France** - département ASI (Automatic Signal Image) & SIUAC (University Service for Cultural Action)

**TEATROSKOP (South-Eastern European Network for performing Arts)** a program initiated by French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, French Ministry of Culture, and Institut français Paris



## contact

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# CALENDAR



## Premiere

24 November 2021 : [premiere at TJP CDN Strasbourg - Grand Est / FR](#)  
(National Centre for Performing Arts - Strasbourg, Grand Est)

24 -28 Novembre 2021 : [TJP CDN Strasbourg](#) (7 performances)

## French tour dates

1 - 5 February 2022 [Espace 110 Illzach](#) - at [MOMIX International Festival for Young Audiences](#)  
Kingersheim / FR

23 March 2022 [Le Nouveau Relax](#) Scène Conventionnée Chaumont / FR  
(Chaumont Public Playhouse)

5 - 15 May 2022 [Passage Transfestival](#) in Metz / FR

Fall 2022 [Les 2 Scènes](#) - Scène Nationale Besançon / FR  
(Besançon National Playhouse)

# INTRODUCTION

The Danubia - Mirror in the Waters project grew from a string of intriguing trips to areas along the banks of the Danube River. Its source lying in the high plains of the Black Mountains in Germany, the river then travels 2888 km through Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine to its mouth on the Black Sea.

Embedded in history, for centuries the Danube has been a major axe of exchange across a large part of Europe. The river possesses a unique power in building unparalleled connections that are both geographical and civilisational: Named by Hölderlin as The «River of melody», its route links the deep Nibelungen forest with the vast oriental Scythian plains, it brings together Europe and Asia, and mixes Germanic culture with Mediterranean and oriental influences. Several countries claim The Danube as their national river, but its waters stir all pride and identity together into one curving mobile entity that is as elusive as its very being. Those that live on the river's banks belong to a single land - a forever moving macro-nation with no solid base: Danubia.

During the spring and summer of 2021, we will explore Danubia by boat, travelling on board the Amoras from Strasbourg all the way to the shores of the Black Sea. On our return, we will interpret our experience of this «world in movement» by way of a performance that will premiere in Strasbourg at the end of November 2021.

The audience will do more than simply witness our adventure; gathered together on the stage, it will participate in an immersive experience and become part of the show, part of the river on its journey from source to mouth.

## Dramaturgy of senses

If the audience becomes the river as such, will it perceive the world as the river does? Will it see through the river's eyes, hear through its ears and feel through its body? Will the audience begin to experience the river as a living entity, empathising with the memories it carries and is carried by?

Experiencing the river's point of view will be neither an educational visit nor a tourist trip. It will be a sensory journey in perceiving light, colour, sound, emotion and all things intangible such as the relationship between physical elements and living organisms, geological forces, climate, the passage of time or traces left by people and things. It will be a geopoetic journey.

This emphasis on the sensory requires a dramaturgy that will combine the physical circuit of the river with an itinerary in which places, people and references to both the past and the present can communicate and resonate with each other. Each geographical stage of the journey will have a theme nourished by local specificities and enriched by other discoveries made along the way.

But the river doesn't speak with a human tongue, and Danubia - Mirror in the Waters will be a play without words, written with sounds, images, bodies in movement, objects and water. Its form will emerge from translating a geopoetic experience into a theatrical event, through interpreting the different stages of the river's existence along a sensory journey.



## Directing disorder

Three performers : an actor, a musician and a video artist will take the audience through an immersive theatrical circuit built like a ecosystem in which the different composites interact with each other.

Our aim is to recreate a mechanism akin to a living structure who's system, both highly organised and unpredictable, will react to variants produced by individual elements. Disorder will obey the laws of entropy in a continual interaction of energy and information. It is this constant movement that will create the dynamics of the event, giving a flavour of the unpredictable to each and every performance.

If we consider the river as a living entity, then imbalance is the motor of its life force, and the journey, a path into the unknown, filled with detours and risks.

## THE JOURNEY [a floating residency]



From April to August 2021 we traveled from Strasbourg to the Danube Delta on board the AMORADOS.

On the first part on the journey, from 24 April to 16 May 2021, we took the boat via the Rhine, the Maine and the Maine-Danube Canal to our starting point on the Danube, at Kelheim in Germany, RKM (River Kilometre) point 2410, from where motorised navigation is authorised.

The second and main part of the journey, on the Danube itself, started on 7 June 2021 and took us down the river to Sulina in Romania, RKM 0 (The River Kilometre count starts at the mouth) where we arrived mid-August 2021. .

We logged images, sounds, experiences and impressions, dialogued with people who told us the river's «story»; historians, geographers, biologists, artists, sailors, fishermen, labourers, residents. This harvest of sensory information nourish the writing of the show.

As we continue downstream, we drew up an emotional map of the river: [www.danubia.org](http://www.danubia.org) was drawn little by little, spotted with video sequences, pictures and drawings made along the way.

We also edited a progressive film made up from the video recordings we made - it was screened at each stop where we had partners or we met new friends. For this editing we followed a specific average : 1 second of film for 1 kilometre of river. At the end, this film of 2894km is available on the website : [www.danubia.org](http://www.danubia.org) (click on the orange cinema clap).

Our children, aged 9 and 13, participated in the trip and the project and shared their points of view and experience with the public gathered by our partners during the meetings, on local TV and radio. In France, several classes and groups of young people were connected with us and followed the trip.

site-map of the journey  
film of the journey :  
[www.danubia.org](http://www.danubia.org)



# NAVIGATION PLAN [Ship's Log]



site-map of the journey  
film of the journey :  
[www.danubia.org](http://www.danubia.org)

## Stage one : 25 April - 16 May 2021

France (Strasbourg) - Germany (Kelheim) - 780 km  
Via the Rhine, the Main and the Main-Danube Canal  
Prologue : [mythology](#) / [sources](#) / [legends](#)

## Stage two : 7 June - 15 August 2021

Germany (Kelheim) - Romania (Sulina) - 2410 km

- **Week one : 7 - 13 June** : Germany > Austria

Regensburg 8 / Deggendorf / Passau 11 / Linz

Chapter 1 : [Europe](#) / [influences](#) / [identity](#) / [geography](#)

- **Week two : 14 - 20 June** : Austria

Linz 14 / Grein / Melk / Krems / Tulnn / Vienne

Chapter 2 : [The arts \(painting, music, architecture\)](#)

- **Week three : 21 - 27 June** : Austria > Slovakia > Hungary

Vienna 21-22 / Bratislava 24 / Komarno-Komarom / Sturovo-Esztergom

Chapter 3 : [Empires](#) / [history](#) / [civilizations](#)

- **Week four : 28 June - 4 July** : Hungary

Budapest 29-30 / Dunaujvaros / Paks / Baja / Mohacs

Chapter 4 : [borders](#) / [wars](#) / [genocides](#)

- **Week five : 5 - 11 July** : Hungary > Croatia > Serbia

Mohacs 5 / Apatin / Osijek 8 / Vukovar 9 / Backa Palanka 10 / Novi Sad

Chapter 5 : [Natural sciences](#) / [fauna](#) / [flora](#) / [ecocide](#)

- **Week six : 12 - 18 July** : Serbia

Novi Sad 12-13 / Belgrade 15-16 / Pancevo / Smederevo 17 / Veliko Gradiste

Chapter 6 : [Barriers](#) / [bridges](#) / [technology](#) / [navigation](#)

- **Week seven : 19 - 25 July** : Romania > Serbia

Moldova Veche / Orsova / Kladovo 22 / Drobeta Turnu Severin / Prahovo 23 / Cetate 24-25

Chapter 7 : [Revolution\(s\)](#) / [migration](#) / [The Orient - The Occident](#)

- **Week eight : 26 July - 1 August** : Romania > Bulgaria

Vidin 26 / Lom / Orshovo-Bechet / Corabia / Nikopol-Turnu Magurele / Svichov-Zimnicea / Ruse 1-2

Chapter 8 : [Poets](#) / [languages](#) / [travel](#)

- **Week nine : 2 - 8 August** : Romania > Bulgaria

Ruse / Oltenitsa-Tutrakan / Calarasi / Cernavoda / Braila 7 / Galati

Chapter 9 : [The Delta](#) / [prehistory](#) / [geology](#)

- **Week ten : 9 - 15 August** : Romania - The Delta

Galati 9 / Tulcea 11 / Sulina

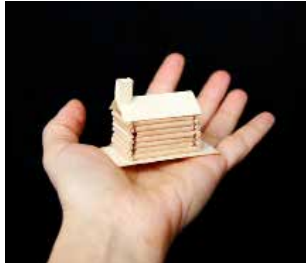
Chapter 10 : [Epilogue](#)

- **Week eleven : 16 - 22 August** : Romania

Tulcea : winterization of the boat and return to France



# THE COMPANY [itinerary]



In 2013, visual and performance artist Ramona Poenaru, and actor and director Gaël Chaillat create the company Les Châteaux en l'air in order to develop hybrid projects involving multiple art forms such as theatrical performances, immersive displays and art installations. They have set up an exploratory research that experiments with philosophy, learning, anthropology, science, poetry and architecture. Their various artistic proposals always involve the participation of the public in part of the creative process.

The company currently runs two "mother" projects that are in constant development, each carrying its own challenges and aesthetic vocabulary: **Cabanes (Cabins)** and **Corps public (Public Body)**.

**Cabanes (Cabins)** is composed of several participative performances, all inspired by Henry David Thoreau\* (1817-1862) and his book "Walden or Life in the woods" which tells of his reclusion in a forest in search of autonomy, and his questioning of the human condition. In all the variations of **Cabanes (Cabins)** we find the same recurring materials: cardboard boxes of one size to build or manipulate volumes, video mapping based on algorithms used in VJ-ing applications, electroacoustic compositions made from sound recordings and interviews.

**Corps public (Public Body)** questions the divide between private space, public space and performance space. All projects provoke interaction by placing both the audience and the performers in situations that engage them physically. The body is considered the main material of the performances and, depending on the subject, they may also use images, texts, sounds, objects and water.

\* Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) is an American author: poet, philosopher, abolitionist, naturalist, tax protester, surveyor and historian. Thoreau is best known for his essay **Resistance to Civil Government** (often titled **Civil Disobedience**), an argument for disobedience in an unjust state. The essay inspired Martin Luther King, Gandhi and all contemporary pacifist resistance movements such as Occupy Wall Street, ZAD (Zone to defend), the Umbrella Movement, etc.). Thoreau is also author of **Walden** that tells of his reclusion to a forest in search of self-reliance, and his questioning of the human condition at a time when the industrial revolution was taking hold.



At present, **Cabanes (Cabins)** includes :

- Ma cabane / My Cabin, La Filature, National Playhouse Mulhouse, France, 2013 •
- O cabana in centru / A Cabin Downtown, Brushpaint Factory Art Space, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2014 •
- Shelter, Make City Architecture Festival Berlin, Germany, 2015 •
- Cabane conversatoire / Cabin Meeting, Strasbourg University, France, 2015 •
- Cabane à sauvage / Cabin Wilderness, Bitche, France, 2015-2016 •
- Une cabane en ville 02 / A Cabin Downtown 02, Syndicat Potentiel Art Gallery, Strasbourg, France, 2016 •
- Entre-cabanes / Between Cabins, Le Maillon Theatre - European Playhouse, Strasbourg, France, 2016 •
- Cabane à palabres / Palaver Cabin - Pop-up Agora, World Forum for Democracy, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2016 •
- Point de vue d'une île / Island View, Ososphere Festival for Urban digital arts, Strasbourg, France, 2017 •
- Cabane sans nom / Nameless Cabin, Le Vaisseau, Centre for Children, Strasbourg, France, 2017 •
- Cabane du peuple / People's Cabin - Vox populi, World Forum for Democracy, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2017 •
- Manzel bê manzel, FADJ 36th International Festival of Theatre and performance, Tehran, Iran, 2018 •
- Cabane sans nom 02 / Nameless Cabin 02, Le Vaisseau Centre for Children, Strasbourg, France, 2018 •
- Cabane mixte / Mixed Cabin - Chorus, World Forum for Democracy, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2018 •
- Une cabane en ville 03 / A Cabin Downtown 03, La Méridienne City Playhouse Lunéville, France, 2019 •
- Appartement témoin / Showflat, Ososphere platform for urban arts, Strasbourg, France, 2019 •
- Shelter 02, Sir J.J. School of Architecture, Bombay, India, 2019 •
- Shelter 03, Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa, India, 2019 •
- Carried Cabin, Odisha Biennale of performing arts, Bhubaneshwar, India, 2019 •

At present, **Corps public (Public Body)** includes :

- Miroir des eaux / Mirror in the Waters, MOTOCO Mulhouse, France, 2016 •
- Public Body, IIUTF 21th Iran International University Theatre Festival, Tehran, 2018 •
- Occupation des sols / Occupying Grounds, Le Maillon Theatre, Strasbourg, France, 2020 • cancelled •

# THE COMPANY



## Ramona Poenaru

Multimedia artist, performer and director, born in Romania (where she graduated MA Literature) and established in Strasbourg since studying at the HEAR Strasbourg (Strasbourg Higher Academy of Arts) and at Fresnoy National Studio of contemporary Arts. Her works, exclusively inspired in situ, generally take shape during a residency, and have been exhibited in Europe, Canada, The United States, Mexico, Argentina, Korea, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestina etc. Since 2005 she has also worked with performance artists such musicians, choreographers and theatre directors. She is one of the founder members of Interim, an art collective that questions roles and rules of society, operating in situations that are not art specific. She is also a member of Sweet and Tender Collaborations, a group bringing together artists from around the world in order to research new performative art forms.

[www.ramona-poenaru.org](http://www.ramona-poenaru.org)  
[www.interim-artistes.info](http://www.interim-artistes.info)



## Gael Chaillat

Actor, director and dramatist. Trained as an actor at the Ecole de Théâtre National de Strasbourg (Strasbourg National Theatre School). Has performed plays by classic authors and been involved in the writing of contemporary works (Adely, Contamin, Levey, Sonntag). He regularly participates in projects using digital technology and has also performed in contemporary dance shows, scientific theatre shows, photography and digital performances. He advocates his artistic work as a form of political resistance. Gael Chaillat is co-writer of *MurMure (WhisperWall)*, a comedy about the Israel-Palestine conflict and of *Mouton (Sheep)*, a vaudeville theatrical show about racism. In 2019 he directed *On comprend rien (We understand nothing)* performed by the actors of L'Atelier des Artistes en Exil (Artists in Exil) at the Palais de la Porte Dorée - Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration (Porte Dorée Palace - National Museum of Immigration History) in Paris, France.

# SHIP'S CREW



## Dora & Amos Chaillat

born in 2008 and 2012  
Lifelong travellers of Central and Eastern Europe,  
by all means of transport. Participants in all of Des  
Chateaux en l'Air's projects, in all latitudes

# CAST



## Étienne Haan

composer and sound artist, he studied with Philippe Manoury, Tom Mays et Daniel d'Adamo in Strasbourg and with Hanspeter Kyburz at the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He composes for Hanatsu Miroir, Zafraan Ensemble, Têlémaque Ensemble, Philharmonic Orchestra of Strasbourg, Orchestra of the Nordharzer Städtebund Theater. As he has a particular interest in interdisciplinary projects, he created for the international festival Musica in Strasbourg „Vivian...connais pas!“ for actor and ensemble (2014) and „Eclipse“ for dancer and ensemble(2017). Other collaborations : theater companies „Quai n°7“ (Strasbourg) and „Robert aime Jocelyne“ (Cannes), the choreographer Alica Minar (Berlin), the visual artist Keke Vilabelda (Valencia), the film maker Marine de Contes, the set designers of „Scenotype“, or the architect Hans Walter Müller. He was member of the Académie de France à Madrid - la Casa de Velázquez - 2019/20.

## Philippe Lux

Sound Engineer, Audio-visual and Digital Concept Designer.

Works regularly with: Dominique Guibert-Pandora Company; Ivan Favier – IF Company; Christophe Greilsammer – L'Astrolabe Company; Jean-Marc Eder – Mythe de la Taverne; and Eve Ledig – Le Fil Rouge Théâtre. Also works as Technical Manager for a number of theatres in Strasbourg, including the TAPS-Actual & Public Theatre of Strasbourg and the Maillon - European Scene. Since 2013, he is Technical Manager of Des Châteaux en l'air.



## Loïs Drouglazet

Sound Designer and Engineer, Visual Director, Real-time Digital Designer for interactive, electronic and web performances. Member of several companies and artistic organisations (didascalie.net, Collectif Anonyme, Hana San Studio, Cie Adrien M/Claire B, Cie Vraiment Dramatique, KLP), Loïs is particularly interested in developing hybrid projects that are open to exchange and sharing. He is the webmaster of [www.entre-cabanes.net](http://www.entre-cabanes.net) for Des châteaux en l'air.



## Olivier Benoît

Specialized in set design and set building since '98; has built sets for theatre companies such as Les Méridiens; Le Fil Rouge Théâtre; La Cie S'appelle Reviens, for circus and dance companies such as Les Acroballes, Anomalie, Dégadezo and for street theatre companies such as La Trappe à Ressort, La Soupe.