

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 26, 2016

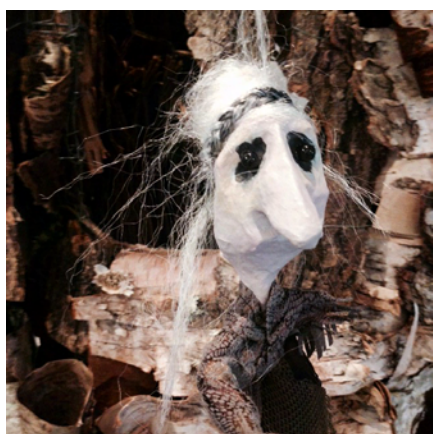
**Studio Reynard presents *Fox vs Kingdom*, an epic puppet satire,
at the historic Byrdcliffe Theater in Woodstock NY**

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Press quality photos available: [click here](#)



***Fox vs Kingdom* premiere**

October 28 - 30, 2016

(Halloween weekend)

Friday + Saturday, 8pm / Sunday, 7pm

Doors open an hour before the show

@ The Byrdcliffe Theater

380 Upper Byrdcliffe Road, Woodstock NY

Tickets: \$40/\$25/\$20

Purchase tickets online: studio-reynard.com
or by calling 917-622-0294

Studio Reynard, directed by Hélène Lesterlin, is pleased to announce the premiere of *Fox vs Kingdom*, an epic puppet spectacle based on the ancient story of the anti-hero Reynard the Fox. **Created by local artists and long-time collaborators Hélène Lesterlin and Anastacia Bolina, and Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter Laura Brenneman**, this original project brings together live music, dance, masks, and over three dozen puppets, along with tasty snacks and drinks by chef/sculptor Mor Pipman, all sealed with a wicked sense of humor.

Drawing on the disarming charm of puppets, *Fox vs Kingdom* is an outrageous story told in English/French/Latin/jibberish, and through song and puppetry. It exposes themes of entrenched power structures, the advent of law, the slick rebuttal, and the hunger that drives us to break codes of conduct.

With handmade puppets, low-fi special effects, songs and shadows, the three troubadour performers will immerse the audience in one of the oldest animal satires in the history of literature. Staged as though in a medieval tavern, *Fox vs Kingdom* teases the line between spectacle and lyrical animal tale. Careening from folk song to operatic lament to salacious tango, animal appetites dominate in this retelling of a medieval blockbuster.

The audience is encouraged to don Halloween costumes with a beastly medieval theme – think, wild boar with a cutlass.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE STORY

The original epic of Reynard the Fox goes something like this: Reynard dupes everyone, devours a few, sweet talks his way out of trouble, and side-steps a sure death by hanging, multiple times. In the process, he blithely exposes hypocrisy, corruption, greed, lechery, and gluttony, including his own.

The story of Reynard was wildly popular in central Europe eight centuries ago: the witty outlaw who triumphs over entrenched power through sheer rhetoric had resonance in a violent feudal society with nascent rule of law. We believe it has resonance today: **Reynard is a trickster, who muddies the waters between right and wrong, between what we say we want and what we actually do.**

We are animals after all.

Our script is based on two versions of the tale:

1. [William Caxton's English translation of 1481](#), edited/publ. by Henry Morley in 1889
2. J.W. von Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs*, trans. by Thomas James Arnold, publ. in 1954

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PRODUCTION

Fox vs Kingdom is Studio Reynard's biggest, most ambitious production to date, and has been in progress for over four years.

When she came across the story of Reynard the Fox in the course of researching *Darkling*, another medieval-themed project, Lesterlin was smitten by the epic's combination of satire, story-telling, talking animals, and the dark, troubling, complicated light it shed on the emergence of justice in medieval Europe. She stored the idea away and then began approaching collaborators in 2013. Imagining that this story could only be told through puppetry, Lesterlin turned to her background as a sculptor and dove in, without any prior experience with puppets.

"Puppetry is ideal territory for me – I love it. Combining dance, gesture, sculpture, sound, music, humor, and this strange, uncanny presence that a puppet can have, puppetry allows us to say and do things that we would never dare to say or do in person. And, it's all surprising, always new... This project is definitely more complex and a lot funnier than I imagined at the start, and it is full of hilarious songs. That all has to do with the talent and generosity of Laura and Anastacia, who each bring such amazing artistry and commitment... We make a really good trio, we have good chemistry: that's what people tell us! We can't wait to perform this after so long."

– Hélène Lesterlin

Invited to be a part of the **Puppet Lab at St. Ann's Warehouse** in NYC, a nine-month development lab for new puppet theater, Studio Reynard presented the first 20 minutes of the show as part of the 2014 Labapalooza! Festival to sold-out audiences in the 400-seat theater.

Studio Reynard also hosted a series of dinner salons, called **Caf   Isegrim**, in different venues in the Hudson Valley: scenes in progress were shown while sharing a feast with a community of fans. Begun as a way to share inspiration, prototypes, techniques and new material, Caf   Isegrim grew into a twice-yearly public event in which a fully-fledged new episode of the show-in-progress was presented each night, alongside a light dinner.

Other support that has made this project possible include two grants from The Jim Henson Foundation, a grant from local funder Arts Mid Hudson (a competitive New York State Council on the Arts regrant program) and the essential time provided by development residencies and work-in-progress showings at Mount Tremper Arts, and Drop, Forge & Tool. Studio Reynard also ran a successful Indiegogo campaign in September 2016 to raise funds for the premiere.

About Studio Reynard | H  l  ne Lesterlin

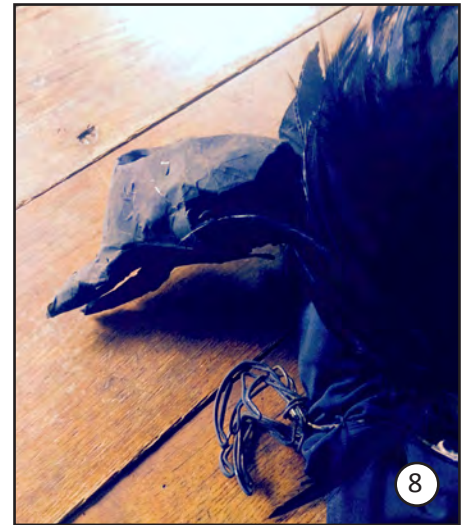
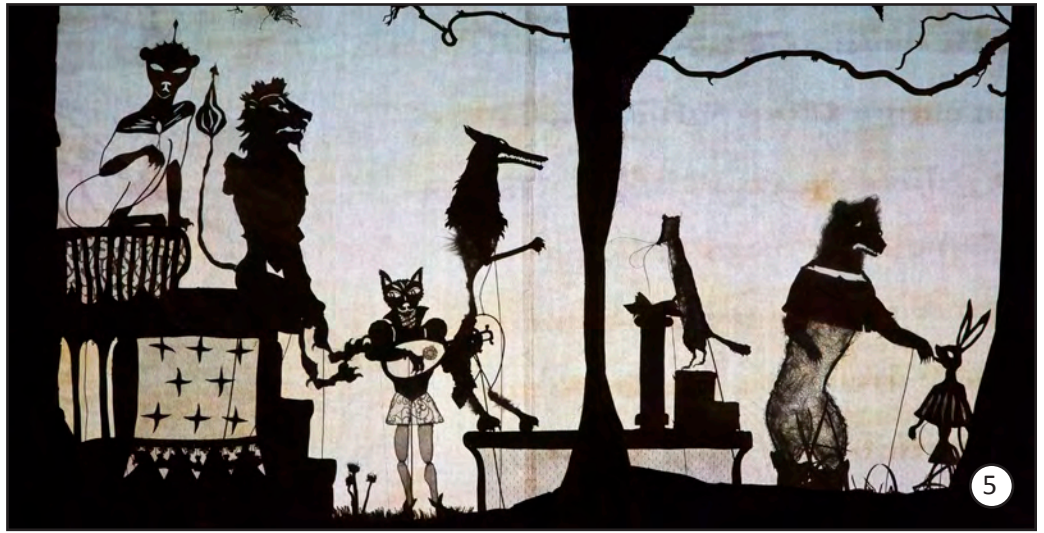
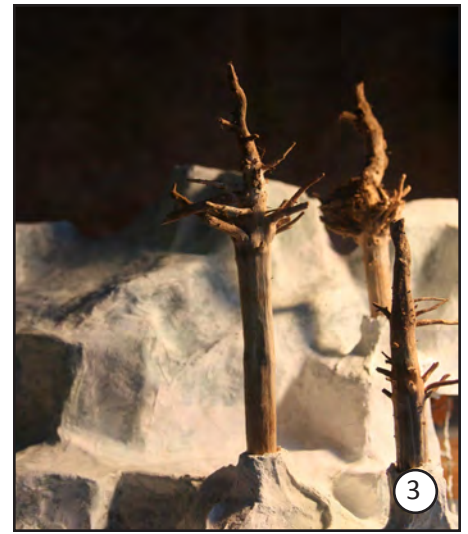
Nimble and wily, **Studio Reynard** is inspired by its protagonist mascot – the fox. Directed by H  l  ne Lesterlin, Studio Reynard is a space for the creation and production of performances, installations and other art projects. The creative practice embodied by Studio Reynard crosses boundaries: artist/curator, live performance/visual art, sound/video, dance/text, solo/epics.

H  l  ne Lesterlin creates performances that fuse theater, dance, puppetry, sound and visual art. She’s insatiably curious about the creative process: she’s a collaborator, performer, director, choreographer, improviser, and hands-on maker. Fascinated by fables, memories, and ancient songs, she digs into history, archives, poetry, art and music to create her performances. Founded in 2012, [Studio Reynard](#) is home base for her work. Lesterlin also has a passion for working with contemporary performing artists to help bring their works into being: she currently serves as Director of Programs at Mount Tremper Arts, and was the founding Curator for Dance and Theater at EMPAC.

In 2014, she created two works based in historical archives: [Overlook](#), a solo dance theater project in the format of a lecture, drew from the Woodstock Historical Society’s archives and interviews with elders in the community; [Geographica](#), a site-specific improvised dance duet with a radio-based sound-score, created for Wave Farm’s Groundswell 2014 event at Olana (Hudson, NY) mined the Olana archive, and responded to both the Persian-inspired historic site and current events in the Middle East.

Lesterlin is the recipient of numerous awards and residencies, most recently a 2016 Project Grant for *Fox vs Kingdom* and a 2014 Individual Artist Grant for *Overlook*, through the Decentralization Program regrant from NYSICA, administered by Arts Mid Hudson; and two Jim Henson Foundation grants for *Fox vs. Kingdom*. In 1999-2000, a Luce Fellowship allowed her to pursue her work for a year in Taipei, Taiwan. She holds a BA in Visual Art (sculpture/performance) from Yale College and a MFA in Dance from Bennington College. She grew up in Paris, London and NYC, and now lives in Saugerties.

COLLABORATOR BIOS: <http://studio-reynard.com/collaborators/>



Fox vs Kingdom

A troubadour puppet satire by Studio Reynard / Created and performed by Laura Brenneman, Anastacia Bolina and H el ene Lesterlin
Developed as part of Puppet Lab 2013-14 at St. Ann's Warehouse, NYC.

Photo 1, Reynard the Fox rod puppet (20" tall)

Photos 3, 4, Isegrim the Wolf rod puppet (8" tall) and set design for his scene of getting stuck in the ice

Photos 2, 5, 6 taken at dress rehearsal for Labapalooza! festival performances at St. Ann's, May 2014 (performers + shadow scene)

Photo 7, the entrance to Reynard's castle lair

Photo 8, hand puppet of the Crow (18" tall)