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MONTREAL'S NATIONAL THEATRE FOR CHILDREN LES PISSENLITS TO PERFORM IN USSR AND SWITZERLAND

The Department of External Affairs announces that under its auspices the Montréal-based NATIONAL THEATRE FOR CHILDREN LES PISSENLITS will tour three cities in the USSR, Tbilissi, Odessa and Moscow, from May 28 to June 15 with its production of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver, and will also open the First International Festival of Children's Theatre in Geneva, Switzerland on May 21. Thirteen performances of Gulliver will be presented in the USSR and four in Geneva.

The three-week tour of the USSR is part of the programme of exchanges for 1978 and 1979 governed by the 1971 General Exchanges Agreement between Canada and the USSR. In the field of performing arts the current programme specifies an official exchange of three artistic groups.

Born in 1967 in Lac-Saint-Jean, Québec, as the brain child of its artistic director Jean-Yves Gaudreault, le Théâtre des Pissenlits has as its sole mandate the entertainment of children and the awakening of their sense of theatre. During its 11-year existence Pissenlits has produced 11 plays and, to an audience of over one million, has given 2,712 performances in parks, schools, cultural centres and theatres in Québec, across Canada and in the United States. The invitation to take part in the Geneva International Festival of Children's Theatre and to tour the USSR marks the company's first appearance in Europe.

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Gulliver was adapted by le Théâtre des Pissenlits from Jonathan Swift's famous story Gulliver's Travels and first produced by the company during its 1976-77 season. It was with this production of Gulliver that, in November 1976, le Théâtre des Pissenlits became the first children's theatre company to perform for school children at the Place des Arts in Montréal. An invitation from Jean Herbiet, artistic director of French theatre at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa, followed and Pissenlits gave 10 performances at the NAC in April 1977. With a grant from the Touring Office of the Canada Council, the company toured Gulliver in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario in the autumn of 1978. Pissenlits then took Gulliver to 41 communities in Québec. Gulliver is a sad Chaplin-like clown, incapable of laughter, bored with his friends. He seeks happiness, unaware that true contentment lies not in foreign lands but in the heart.

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