

AND...

THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Dialogue artists-audience with Satoshi Miyagi, July 8 at 16:30,
Site Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

Encounters Research and Creation in Avignon, *Dignity and heroism, or, the wandering subject* – ANR, with in particular Yoshiji Yokoyama,
July 10 at 14:30, Cloître Saint-Louis

Antigone, a necessary tragedy, with in particular Satoshi Miyagi *Théâtre/Public*,
July 10 at 16:30 Site Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

FICTIONS & SHOWS - FRANCE CULTURE

Antigone, with the Orchestre national de France, July 9 and 10 at 20:00,
Cour du musée Calvet

Ismène, by Yannis Ritsos, July 18 at 20:00, Cour du musée Calvet

NAVE OF IMAGES (screenings)

Mahabharata-Nalacharitam – Satoshi Miyagi (2014), July 9 at 14:30,
Église des Célestins

SURTITLES - ELECTRONIC GLASSES

For the shows *Antigone*, the Festival d'Avignon and Panthea/Theatre in Paris, with the support of the Ministère de la Culture offer a service of individual and multilingual surtitles on electronic glasses in French (Corinne Atlan), English (William Snow, Corey Turpin, Yoshiji Yokoyama), and Arabic (Racha Abazied).

Also available for the following shows :

- *Sopro*, by Tiago Rodrigues, from Portuguese to English and French,
- *SAIGON*, by Caroline Guiela Nguyen, from French and Vietnamese to English and French,
- *Ramona*, by Rezo Gabriadze, from Georgian and Russian to English and French.

Information and booking location@festival-avignon.com

ANTIGONE

Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus and Jocasta, fought and died by each other's sword. Thebes, which Eteocles defended against his brother's assaults, is ruled by Creon, Jocasta's brother. As soon as the brothers are dead, the tyrant enacts a law to differentiate between the "good" brother and the "bad" one: citizens are strictly forbidden to bury Polynices according to the customary rites. Sophocles, who paid more attention to his characters' psychology than any of the other Greek poets whose work survived Antiquity, tells the story of the Eteocles and Polynices's sister, Antigone, and of her determination to honour both her brothers, as is her duty. Betrothed to Creon's son Haimon, she challenges the injustice of men to obey the laws of the gods and follow her heart, which doesn't distinguish between her kin. She will bury her brother, even if she then has to die. Satoshi Miyagi, with his deep knowledge of tragedy, has decided to further explore the strict distinction the West operates between "the good" and "the bad." In the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes, the symbol of an authority that is wont to create such distinctions, but also a place whose large wall challenges and tames egos, the director has chosen to work on water, fire, and shadows to celebrate the true nature of all the characters with their numerous layers, within a story one might call archaic.

SATOSHI MIYAGI

Satoshi Miyagi began his career as an actor and a director while studying at the University of Tokyo. In 1986, he began performing solo shows bringing together major literary works and a method inspired both by dance and clowning. He founded the company Ku Na'uka in 1990, with which he has directed ancient and classical European works as well as modern Japanese authors, basing his actors' work on Eastern gymnastics and on the idea that every role should be played by two actors. This led to his invitation to the most prestigious international institutions. In 1995, he was invited to direct *Electra* with Tadashi Suzuki at the Ancient Theatre of Delphi. The recipient of numerous awards, in 2006 he adapted and directed the *Mahabharata*, which he also directed in 2014 in the Boulbon quarry. Appointed director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center in 2007, he adapted the masterpieces *Kyoka Izumi's Yashagaike*, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Euripides's *Medea*, as well as the texts of Olivier Py, mixing Japanese traditions and eclectic influences. Every year, Satoshi Miyagi organises the World Theatre Festival Shizuoka, where he invites the most famous names in international theatre to create and present shows in a spirit of sharing and openness.

SOPHOCLES

Of the one hundred and twenty-three plays written by Sophocles during the 5th century B.C., only *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone*, *Philoctetes*, *Ajax*, *Electra*, and *The Women of Trachis* remain. At the Dionysia, the great drama competition of ancient Greece, Euripides's contemporary won the highest honours many times. During the twentieth century, *Antigone*, the third of his three Theban plays, inspired a composition by Camille Saint-Saëns and plays by Jean Cocteau and Jean Anouilh. Bertolt Brecht wrote his own version in 1948, based on Hölderlin's translation. More recently, Henry Bauchau's novels *Antigone* and *Oedipus on the Road* revisited the myth of this cursed family, trapped by the gods in a dire cycle.

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INTERVIEW WITH SATOSHI MIYAGI

Why adapt *Antigone* today? What prompted you to do it?

Satoshi Miyagi : When I first worked on *Antigone* back in 2004, what I was most interested in was Antigone's thinking: she offers Creon a great principle, which should guide the whole world, namely, the idea that we should love every single human being. The great lyricism of Antigone's lament as she dedicates herself to death, which moves the chorus of old Thebans deeply, was also at the heart of that first creation. It's a little different this time. Over the past few years, and even more so over the past year, the world has become catastrophically more segregated. Raging winds have been wreaking havoc the world over, winds born of a way of thinking that distinguishes between "friends and foes" just like the religions of the desert establish a strict distinction between "those on the side of God and those on the side of the Devil." When the Festival gave us the opportunity to perform in the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes in Avignon, a symbol of Christian authority, I thought that the play that would best fit the place, or maybe the one we, Japanese, had to perform there, was *Antigone*. The way of thinking that categorically divides people into "friends" and "foes", seeing those attributes as intrinsic and permanent rather than as subject to change based on circumstances, is part of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. That's not how Japanese Buddhism encourages you to think.

Is judgment absent of the Buddhist tradition?

There is good and evil in Buddhism, but it isn't a permanent distinction. Christianity talks about Judgment Day, Heaven, and Hell. Japanese Buddhism doesn't tell you that the wicked will go to Hell to suffer for all eternity. If someone behaves badly in this world, he might still go to Heaven, if his deeper nature reappears right after his death. This way of thinking spread throughout the Japanese people in the form of a custom, that of calling all the dead, friends and foes alike, "*hotoke*," which means "buddhas." Sophocles's Antigone wasn't a Buddhist, but in her speeches, you'll find ideas that echo today's Japanese Buddhism, and particularly her desire to "love all human beings, without distinction."

What do you see as the most striking elements of your interpretation?

I've been thinking about how to perform a Greek tragedy in the very unique space that is the Cour d'honneur. Its uniqueness has less to do with its size and more with the fact that because of the slope, more than half the audience faces the massive wall of the Palais des papes rather than the stage. In the *wayang kulit*, the Indonesian shadow theatre, the audience will sometimes be not on the side of the screen where shadows are visible, but on the other one, on the side of the torches. We've created a similar *wayang*. Often, during concerts for instance, the faces of the musicians will be projected onto a screen so that everyone can see their expression. We've taken the opposite approach. The expressions on the actors' faces serve no purpose. This trick allows us to create a sort of map representing the

structure of the world, the time of the story of the Greek tragedy, which is not exactly human-sized drama. It's the astonishing machine of Greek tragedy, and in order to make that machine run, I ask of my actors a bigger performance than one that would rely on their facial expressions.

What are the consequences of this approach on the perception of the actions that make up the tragedy?

The part of the audience that's near the stage sees the actors as well as the shadows projected onto the wall, in the back. And those who see the stage from up high, who make up more than half of the audience, see the shadows first, but their eyes are also attracted by the actors who create those shadows. The goal is for them to pay attention to the human body through the abstraction of the body. When an actor plays with his facial expressions, ironically, the audience has trouble perceiving his body because, before they can focus on what's within the body, their gaze is absorbed by this superficial change. The actors who perform with their shadows don't speak. Their lines are said by the chorus that surrounds them. Each character—Antigone, Creon, Haimon, or Ismene—has a dedicated actor saying his or her lines. But sometimes, their lines are also said by a chorus made up of several actors. In Japanese *Noh*, you have what we call *jiutai*, which resembles the Greek chorus. It's as if the words of the shite, the protagonist, slowly spread to the entire *jiutai* (which comprises about eight actors). We're exploring a way to stage the "collective voice" of all the people who felt and thought the same thing but didn't express it. It's a way to adapt our methods to plays written before the advent of the modern ego.

Do you intend to create links between Greek and Japanese myths?

We'll cover the entire stage of the Cour d'honneur with shallow water, representing the Acheron, the river that marks the border between this world and the hereafter. In Japan, we have the river Sanzu. We're transposing this metaphor to the stage without changing anything. People float on the water for a while, then they sink to the bottom of the river, in the hereafter. In Japan, the realm of the dead is called *yomi*, which means "Yellow Springs," and the hereafter is called *senka*, "What Is Below the Springs." The twenty-five beings that make up the chorus are the residents of this *senka*, that is, the souls of the dead. They are the ones who speak, and they play instruments. In *Antigone*'s final scene, all the living depart for the realm of Hades, even Creon and Tiresias. No human being can escape death, and all become *hotoke*, "buddhas." We'll "celebrate" that event. The *Bon-Odori* is a ritual dance whose purpose is to help souls that have become "buddhas" enter the hereafter. In Japanese Buddhism, another ritual, the *Shoro nagashi*, is performed by sending small candles that represent the souls of the dead out on a river. Those small flames drifting away will appear at the end of the show. That scene isn't part of the original play. We want to present this play not as tragic and sad, but as a celebration to appease the spirits of the dead.

Interview conducted by Marion Canelas and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach