

## AND...

### SHOW

*Sadness and Joy in the Life of Giraffes* by Tiago Rodrigues, directed by Thomas Quillardet, July 14-19, Chapelle des Pénitents blancs

### THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Louis Pasteur Supramuros University site

*Art and culture, actors of the transformation of our regions*, with in particular Tiago Rodrigues, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, July 10 at 14:30

Dialogue artists-audience with Tiago Rodrigues, July 13 at 16:30

*Theatre and power* with in particular Tiago Rodrigues, *Théâtre/Public*, July 15 at 14:30

*Author / Director : New connections* with in particular Tiago Rodrigues, *L'Écho des planches*, July 16 at 14:30

*The Lessons of the University* with Tiago Rodrigues, July 18 at 13:00

### UN JOUR, UN ÉDITEUR

*Contemporary Portuguese Theatre*, with in particular Tiago Rodrigues, July 9 at 17:00, Maison Jean Vilar

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 2-19 2017, Teatro Nacional D. Maria II (Lisbon)
  - March 2-3 2018, Teatro Viriato, Viseu (Portugal)
  - March 13, Le Parvis Scène nationale Tarbes Pyrénées, Ibos
  - April 2018, Festival Terres de Paroles Seine-Maritime - Normandie
  - June 19-22, TNT Théâtre national de Toulouse, with Théâtre Garonne scène européenne, Toulouse
- And during the 2018 / 2019 season :
- Théâtre de la Bastille, Paris
  - La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille

## SURTITLES - ELECTRONIC GLASSES

For the show *Sopro* on July 9, 13, 14, 15 and 16, 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 (translation Thomas Resendes), English (translation Graeme Pulleyn)

Also available for the following shows :

- *Antigone*, by Satoshi Miyagi, from Japanese to English, French and Arabic
- *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

## SOPRO – BREATH

When the theatre is nothing but ruins, when nothing remains of the walls, the desks, the wings, the machines, the sets, someone will still remain: the lungs of the place but also of the dramatic gesture itself, the prompter. The voices, sounds, and music that usually take centre stage now take a step back and the breathing of the theatre itself, this thing no one hears, is for once at the forefront. The guardian of memory and continuity is a woman has spent her whole life in this building where every day people have gathered and played. Tonight, she tells her stories, true or false, all the product of the theatre. She's in full view of the audience, onstage. Tiago Rodrigues takes her and her endangered position out of her box, out of her "house," and convinces her, who's never had more than the tips of her fingers on the stage, to come whisper a time gone by. Entering through her the soul and conscience of a unique place, he tries to understand how it breathes and adopts its rhythm. In one movement, the actors lend their voices to the whispers of the ghosts the prompter summons. We circle back to a before; before the text, before the voice, in a performance before the performance, when the theatre takes a deep breath.

## TIAGO RODRIGUES

The first ambition of Portuguese actor Tiago Rodrigues is to play with people who'd want to come together and invent shows. His encounter with the tg STAN in 1997, when he was but 20, definitively confirmed his attachment to the absence of hierarchy in a creative group. The freedom of performance and decision given him then would forever influence his future shows. Tiago Rodrigues thus found himself repeatedly and early in his career in a position of instigator, and little by little came to direct and write projects he "stumbled upon." In parallel to that, he also wrote screenplays, articles, poems, prefaces, op-eds, etc. In 2003, he co-founded with Magda Bizarro the company Mundo Perfeito, with which he created many shows without settling down in any specific location, becoming the guest of many national and international institutions. In France, he notably performed his Portuguese version of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Festival d'Avignon in 2015. *By Heart* played in 2013 at the Théâtre de la Bastille, which led to an invitation to "occupy" the theatre for two months in the Spring of 2016 and the creation of *Bovary*. Director of the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II in Lisbon since 2014, Tiago Rodrigues nevertheless continues to create shows using the limited means he has appropriated as his own artistic syntax. On a larger scale, he has become a builder of bridges between cities and countries, at once host and advocate of a living theatre.

71<sup>st</sup>  
EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,750 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.



#SOPRO  
#TIAGORODRIGUES  
#THEATRE

FESTIVAL-AVIGNON.COM



#FDA17

FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 71<sup>e</sup>

JULY 7 8 9 10 | 12 13 14 15 16 | CLOÎTRE DES CARMES

## INTERVIEW WITH TIAGO RODRIGUES

---

**Your shows are often set in what you call the “no man’s land where the negotiations that make theatre take place.” What does it mean to reveal those negotiations?**

**Tiago Rodrigues:** Certain forms, like political or aesthetic discourse, can be opaque, they impose their will, discipline bodies and voices to transform them. It’s a predetermined movement or projection. Rather than that, I much prefer the place where the text, the performance, and the direction serve to create transparency, to discuss different ideas about what makes humanity. The first few minutes of my shows reproduce the problems we encountered during the first days of rehearsal. What is this? What’s our goal? You have to offer an introduction to that new language and remember as an artist going onstage every night the why of this world, its starting point, and the place of the “I” within it.

**For *Breath*, what kind of material did you have when you started rehearsing?**

The very first day of rehearsal, I had three, maybe four short texts I’d written the day before. It was a starting point to ask questions of the actors. Little by little, we started having more and more material, which meant more and more questions, and at some point, as we were asking ourselves a new question, we thought: “This isn’t a question anymore, it’s something we need to show the audience. We can use it.” When I start working on a new show, I always begin with a void. The only thing I know—and which is incredible, it’s important never to forget it—is that I have the money to do it and the space I need to rehearse it. Otherwise, I only have the beginning of an idea and—but that’s already a lot—a bunch of people who want to try something with me.

**Wasn’t that “beginning of an idea” a little more than that if it made you want to do something with it?**

It’s the beginning of an idea because it hasn’t been developed yet, but it’s more than that because it already opens large paths: the question of the breathing of the theatre, its lungs and conscience, of the prompter as the neuralgic, nervous, emotional, and almost moral centre of a building. The general director, for instance, also has that function of memory, discipline, method, and protection. But you can steal those characteristics and condense them into the prompter because she also contains the passionate humility of the wings, while also intimately including the function of actor. She’s inside them—kind of like the hand of the puppeteer inside a cloth puppet. The figure of the prompter contains within itself not only the story of the theatre as a building but also the essence of the dramatic gesture, because it predates aesthetics, it predates form; its work is subterranean. It guarantees the memory of the radical meaning of the original words, and the protection of an existence of the text that predates its meaning. After that, there are different paths you can take, but here are truly the lungs of the theatre; not even its heart, but its lungs, in that the prompter exhales the very essence of the theatre.

**Why come back today to the essence of theatre?**

I already had this idea, and I’d talked about it with Cristina Vidal, who works as a prompter, when I performed at the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II as a guest back in 2010. With no money to do something about it, it remained an idea. At a time when throughout Europe, the possibility of theatre on a large scale, of a theatre made by troupes with a repertoire, is disappearing because supporting creation is less and less seen as legitimate, this show asks the question: “What would happen if what we have now were to disappear?” It’s also a promise of continuity. One of the things that makes the strength of the artists is their ability to say, in spite of the economic, political, and social circumstances, “we’ll be there” a hundred years from now. You can close down all the theatres in the world, it won’t put an end to the theatre. The question we have to ask of society is, how much access do you want to have to this art form? Do you want to enjoy its advantages and have members of your society enjoy them while it’s still going on? Because it is going on. Something essential remains when everything else is gone, and I think the prompter is a good metaphor for that. More than the actor, the prompter is the emotional and moral figure of the theatre, it gives an idea of its survival, beyond what we see of the theatre.

**Are the ruins of the theatre in which the show takes place more a projection than a past to rebuild?**

Yes, even if to present our project we used stock footage from the fire that destroyed the Teatro Nacional in 1964. I’m more interested in the ruins of the Teatro Nacional in 2080. I really like the work of Hubert Robert, a French painter from the 18th century, and in particular a beautiful painting that depicts the future ruins of a wing of the Louvre that was then under repair. In that sense, we’re following in the footsteps of Ray Bradbury or Aldous Huxley; it’s a dystopia, a dream turned nightmare, which takes us fifty years into the future, into a world where there are no more theatres. It’s not a documentary play about the Teatro Nacional, but a fiction about a building. The prompter evokes the idea of the theatre as a place where people work, where they have a function and have been living in “the house” for a long time. Mixing the idea of a theatre troupe as a big family with images of ruins is very romantic, but having the show revolve around the prompter turns this romanticism into something much sharper.

**What is Cristina’s status? Is she the source or the subject of the show?**

Our fiction uses and distorts biographical elements, but it isn’t authentic. I asked all the employees of the Teatro Nacional for stories. I didn’t talk to Cristina much before we started rehearsing so that we could all still be surprised. In between rehearsals, I re-wrote the stories she’d told us and tested them, like a teenager with his parents, to see how far I could go. Then, when I saw Cristina onstage, prompting the actors to tell that story, it confirmed the idea I already had: a prompter needs to talk to us but she can’t, it’s not the convention. A prompter has to use actors. This dramatic device might be even more powerful than the one that speaks explicitly of ruins, of an end of the theatre. It’s no longer me, the author, who’s talking; I serve something we all found together.

— Interview conducted by Marion Canelas and translated by Gaél Schmidt-Cléach