

SURTITLES - ELECTRONIC GLASSES

For the show *Ramona* on July 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16 at 16:00, and on July 17 at 16:00 and 19:00, 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 Gaston Bouatchidze), English (translation Corinne Hundleby)

Also available for the following shows :

- *Antigone*, by Satoshi Miyagi, from Japanese to English, French and Arabic
- *Sopro*, by Tiago Rodrigues, from Portuguese to English and French,
- *SAIGON*, by Caroline Guiela Nguyen, from French and Vietnamese to English and French

Information and booking location@festival-avignon.com

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 7-18, 2017, Le Monfort Paris
- November 30-December 1st, La Filature Mulhouse
- December 9-13, Théâtre national de Nice
- December 15-22, Théâtre des Célestins, Lyon
- March 13-14 2018, Le Bateau Feu Scène nationale de Dunkerque
- March 20-21, La Rose des vents Scène nationale Lille Métropole Villeneuve d'Asq
- March 27, Théâtre Paul Éluard de Choisy-le-Roi
- April 3, Théâtre de Corbeil-Essones
- April 7, Scène 55, Mougins

RAMONA

Inspiration can be a mischievous thing, especially when it is triggered by a quote by Rudyard Kipling stating that “a locomotive is, next to a marine engine, the most sensitive thing man ever made.” Coming across this sentence among his many memories, Rezo Gabriadze decided one day to return to two of his childhood friends: the locomotive and the circus tent. Both are relics of a disappearing world, living within his memory like autonomous organisms. In *Ramona*, the director and puppeteer once again calls on all his artistry to reveal the animation that resides in things and to give voice to the delicate feelings they experience. In a train station somewhere in the USSR, *Ramona*, an optimistic locomotive, curious and quick, falls in love with a solid steel engine, Ermon. But the latter isn't free to choose where his rails will lead him, his destination dictated by the points that orient him towards faraway lands... On their trajectory, a circus, its magic, and its troupe of acrobats accompany the star-crossed lovers. The popular tunes, the smell of sawdust, and the grand gestures of the circus provide a backdrop for the feelings, steam emissions, and whistles of the locomotives in love.

REZO GABRIADZE

A poet who expresses himself in various ways, Rezo Gabriadze writes, draws, sculpts, builds, paints, and creates the characters and stories he directs in the theatre he founded in 1981 in Tbilisi, Georgia. After working as a journalist, he began his career in cinema “by accident,” but soon found himself directing his own films. Up until the 1990s, he also wrote many screenplays for films which met with great success in the USSR, notably *Mimino* and *Kin-dza-dza!* According to him, it's also “by accident” that he picked up puppetry, becoming a master of the art with *The Autumn of our Springtime* in 1985. Next to his theatre, characters, sets, and other creations fill a wondrous tower which illustrates his relationship to the world: in his work, inanimate objects aren't necessarily deprived of souls, and the past and the present keep crossing in always delicate ways, sometimes with extravagance and often with humour. Recognised throughout the world for the enchanting way he uses his childhood and his ties to Soviet Russia in his work, Rezo Gabriadze now returns to the Festival d'Avignon twenty years after *The Song of the Volga*.

***Ramona* by Rezo Gabriadze, translation Gaston Bouatchidze is published by L'Avant-Scène Théâtre.**

71st
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.



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#FDA17

INTERVIEW WITH REZO GABRIADZE

More concretely then, how does the show actually take place? Do the puppeteers lend their voices to the characters? Is the music played live or pre-recorded? Did you compose it yourself?

Rézo Gabriadze: In our theatre, the voices of the characters are pre-recorded. I choose very good actors, who are each responsible for the voice and interventions of one character. As for the puppeteers, they don't say anything. They give life to the puppets, but the voices come from recordings. I worked a lot in cinema, I've written about thirty-five screenplays, and I have a long experience of actors, of their job, of the possibilities they give us. When it comes to the music, some elements are pre-recorded, others are produced live. The songs and genres used are very diverse; my palette extends from great symphonic scores to the most modest song. Of course, we can't have an orchestra onstage, so we use recordings. I don't write the music. Music is always present within me, around me. Very early, just like the images and the ideas for stories that come to me based on fragments of sentences, I have in mind the music that will accompany each character. It's either music I already know, or that I research according to a particular axis. I pick great composers from different countries and eras to create a bouquet that will accompany the story I'm telling.

Why is the central figure of your story a locomotive?

Human memory keeps track of individual sentences, scattered scraps of things we've heard or seen. I have within me sentences I grab as they flutter by, which stay printed in my memory and suddenly reemerge, when I'm least expecting it. And it's completely at random—a picture on television, a sentence I heard on the street, a sound close to that of the machine when you shift tracks... I don't know what triggered it—that I was reminded of a sentence by Kipling, who says with tenderness that a locomotive can fall in love. I belong to a generation who's had a firsthand experience of trains and locomotives. Nowadays, people travel the world by car or by plane... Trains, actual trains, driven by locomotives, have mostly been forgotten. But I remember them. I knew them well. Inanimate objects can have a life of their own, can have relationships and fall in love. Sometimes, this love leads to a happy ending, it's an infinite love; sometimes, it's unrequited love, the unhappy kind... If, for instance, you picture a nightingale, and picture its song as a love song, it makes sense to imagine the nightingale having fallen in love with a rose. The rose is above all silent, it can't speak, it's the nightingale that sings and speaks of love to the rose. Even when there's wind, the rose remains silent, it doesn't say anything. It's the branches or the leaves of trees that make noise, because they are young; the rose remains silent. Why did I pause in front of a locomotive? Because the locomotive is a man-made object, and all human beings can understand its fabrication, its function, its usefulness. For instance: my grandmother knew how locomotives work. In a locomotive, everything's clear: steam makes the wheels turn, all the details are visible and

comprehensible. You see the fire, the pushrods, the whole mechanism: it's like a living thing. Even the music of the locomotive I enjoy. That's why I chose the locomotive. There's also the fact that locomotives have often inspired poetry. I could cite many works about locomotives and trains, about the movement of the engine, about the whistling of the train and its steam.

Beyond having ties to one another and to other objects, can locomotives meet and build relationships with people?

Yes. Ramona joins the circus, she meets its troupe. There are therefore human beings among the show's puppets. The actors, jugglers, and acrobats of the circus are there and interact with the locomotives. In addition to having their own lives, their own feelings and relationship to the world, objects share their existence with humans, they are of course united by close ties.

What led you to bring together the story of a circus and those two locomotives?

I see the locomotive and the circus as two allied elements. They get along well. And I've heard that I get along well with them as well, with things that no longer exist...! I'm from a generation that loved the kind of circus performed under a circus tent. The circus tent is hundreds of years old. I'm not a hundred years old, only 81, but when I think of my childhood, the circus tent pops into my memory right away. The circus of my childhood was free of all plastic and synthetic material, of all artificial things. Back then, circus tents were made of organic material; the fabric, the sawdust, the presence of the animals gave that world its authenticity. It's that circus I have in mind. In cinema the world over, the circus and its tent are often used. The tent, as I was saying about the locomotive, is also its own organism, an entity built by men but alive, which seems to breathe on its own. It's a natural thing that's begun to disappear and that you could understand, you could grasp in its entirety. The circus tent and the locomotive are the great characters of my childhood. They're very dear to me. In *Ramona*, I returned to them and decided to give them a personality.

How did you come up with the story for *Ramona*, after remembering the Kipling quote?

I decided all of a sudden to sit down, grab a pen, and write a play. I wrote a story. Then I drew the characters. Then I created small sculptures. I drew the faces, imagined their expressions. Right from the start, I have a character. We then work with my team to refine them. It's very rare in my shows for one character to have several puppets. If I decide one day to base a show on a novel by Balzac in which the characters age and change because we follow them over a period of years, then I'll have several different puppets for each character. But here, for *Ramona*, the characters each have one face, one aspect for the entire duration of the show.

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