

## JULIETTE ET JUSTINE, LE VICE ET LA VERTU

What if Justine and Juliette were the same person? What if the former's virtue and the latter's cynicism were but the two sides of a single soul? Such is the idea at the heart of this show by Raphaël Enthoven who, using Justine, or Good Conduct Well-Chastised and Juliette, or Vice Amply Rewarded, creates a dialogue between two worldviews that are also nothing more than two character traits. Those two figures needed one face that could give this argument between vice and virtue the sweeping scale of an inner dialogue: who better than Isabelle Huppert for such a performance? Alternating between the events and philosophical considerations of those at once picaresque and theoretical novels, intertwining accounts of awful orgies with fervent and vain prayers, this juxtaposition gives Isabelle Huppert the opportunity to embody at once the one who suffers and the one who is victorious, like the struggle of day against night. Justine is virtuous, believes in a God who has forsaken her, and her body remains unsullied no matter how much abuse is heaped upon it. Juliette is awful—or joyful maybe, believes only in her own pleasure, and notes that those who act like her are happy... Which one should we prefer to the other? Should we choose virtue, at the risk of suffering, over crime, even if it pays? Should we hate the heavens for being empty? And, most of all, is it better to suffer an injustice than to perpetrate it?

## ISABELLE HUPPERT

World-renowned for her work in cinema, the winner of two Best Actress awards at the Cannes Film Festival, Isabelle Huppert learned the ropes at the École de la Rue Blanche—now the ENSATT—then at the National Conservatory, notably with Antoine Vitez. Simultaneously with her work with the greatest film directors, Isabelle Huppert also works with the most challenging and prestigious theatre directors. She appears in Peter Zadek's adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* in 1991. Robert Wilson has her speak Virginia Woolf's words in *Orlando* in 1993, then Heiner Müller's in *Quartett* in 2006. In 2000, Isabelle Huppert makes a grand entrance in Avignon with Euripides's *Medea*, directed by Jacques Lassalle in the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes, before appearing in Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*, directed by Claude Régy in 2002. In 2005, she is in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, directed by Éric Lacascade. She takes part in Krzysztof Warlikowski's adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 2010 at the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, where she then works with Luc Bondy for his direction of Marivaux's *Les Fausses Confidences*.

## INTERVIEW WITH RAPHAËL ENTHOVEN

### **Are you the instigator of this project?**

Raphaël Enthoven: Yes, but the idea being to create two characters that would occupy a single body, my role is only to accompany this metamorphosis. The idea for this moral dialogue came from the end of Plato's *Theaetetus*. There, Socrates refers to philosophy as a dialogue between the soul and itself. To practice philosophy is to find the best arguments against your position, to forbid yourself to defend an idea without immediately defending the opposite, not to let one truth blind you to other contradictory truths, to "wage war against yourself," to quote Nietzsche. The meeting of the two sisters created by Sade could be seen as a variation on this inner process. The dialogue between Justine and Juliette is a moral dilemma that revolves around two temptations because virtue isn't any less tempting than vice. Between the pure Christ-like figure whose virtuous behaviour is ceaselessly punished (Justine) and the deceitful one who resigns herself to the torture she is subjected to, to the point of mastering it (Juliette), what you have is the expression of two possible paths for human existence. It was important for both those paths to be embodied by the same person, in this particular case by an actress gifted enough to switch from one identity to the other in an instant, with no more than a smile or a glance. Even as I was putting the texts together, it seemed obvious to me that Isabelle Huppert should be the one to read and embody them.

### **Do you think Justine's Christ-like characteristics were an attempt by Sade to demythologise Jesus?**

Every time one of her torturers looks at Justine, he is amazed to find that her skin, save for a few scars and blemishes, still looks perfect. It's almost magic; her body is impervious not to pain and suffering, but to their physical manifestation. The Marquis de Sade hated the Christian God, but that doesn't stop him from using His figure. It's not the only contradiction you will find in his work, or the least of them. His entire work is a perfect example, on every level, of this tension between wisdom (of not believing in anything) and bitterness (at still believing, or at having believed): is God dead, or has He never lived? It isn't the same thing. In the former case, man is a believer disappointed in his faith, whereas in the latter, he is a wise man whom nothing can shock or surprise. Sade doesn't quite know which attitude to adopt.

### **Would you say this Justine/Juliette duality is a reflection of Sade's inner duality?**

Maybe. Above all, though, this duality exists within Juliette herself. Among the advice Juliette gives or receives from her immoral teachers, sometimes you will find the idea that nature is devoid of intention and thus that everyone is free, and sometimes the idea that our duty is to follow the intentions of nature which, as we can see just by looking at beasts, celebrates the law of the strongest. By the same token, there are times when Juliette agrees to the abuse she is subjected to and actually derives pleasure from submission, and others when she says things that no Femen activist would object to. The character of Juliette stands in stark contrast to Justine's Christ-like steadfastness, with her constant wavering between indifference and a certain taste for evil, between insensitivity and pleasure.

## **You refer to Sade as a shadow of the Enlightenment. Wouldn't you say there is a certain vitality to his work?**

The complete absence of taboo in the Marquis de Sade's work often leads to a sentiment of disgust and surprise. His reader will often be unsettled by this triumph of our lowest instincts; the idea that virtue isn't always rewarded, that nature commands us to be selfish. But the illusion that crime does not pay is almost a requirement for life in society. To say that nature is amoral (or even the mere possibility that vice could be rewarded and virtue punished) is unacceptable. For instance, he says that the only role of morals is to stoke the desire of those who flout them. One shouldn't try to "save" the Marquis de Sade. If there is a vitality to his work, it comes from its bottomless darkness. His work may elicit laughter sometimes but never afraid to go to some very dark places. Sade painted the Enlightenment a beautiful black. He explores the flip side of the idea that technical progress is synonymous with moral progress, that education allows man to take control of his own fate and to become autonomous. The Enlightenment is about freedom; Sade responds by invoking the law of the strongest. The Enlightenment is about the knowledge of natural mechanics; Sade responds with de-deification, and thus the loss of any moral reference. He keeps holding up a faithful and shocking mirror to them. He is the ugly duckling of the Enlightenment, inseparable from them just like shadow is inseparable from light.

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Interview conducted by Marion Canelas / Translation Gaël Schmidt-Cléach

## **THE MARQUIS DE SADE**

Born in 1740, Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, better known as the Marquis de Sade, leads a life of debauchery that leads to a first series of trials and condemnations. While a prisoner at the Bastille, he writes his first works, including *The 120 Days of Sodom*. After his liberation, he divorces his wife and starts writing moral dramas, but in 1793, his *Discours aux manes de Marat et de Le Pelletier (Eulogy for Marat and Le Pelletier)* lands him in prison again. After this second stint in jail, he publishes *Philosophy in the Bedroom* in 1795, before being incarcerated one last time under Bonaparte as the author of *Juliette, or Vice Amply Rewarded*.

*Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu* is published in French by éditions Gallimard, collection L'Imaginaire. *L'Histoire de Juliette ou les Prospérités du vice* is published by éditions 10/18.

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