

## AND...

BROADCAST ON ARTE, July 14 at 22:20,  
then available on arteconcert during one year

## READING

*Gagneuses* by François Esperet, with Chloé Dabert,  
July 10 at 11:00, Maison Jean Vilar

## THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Dialogue artists-audience with Chloé Dabert, July 11 at 16:30,  
site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon  
Encounter Research and creation in Avignon, *The game and the rule!*  
*Games of balance, gods, power, and sacrifice*, with Chloé Dabert,  
National Agency of Research, July 11 at 10:30, cloître Saint-Louis

## NAVE OF IMAGES, église des Célestins

– *Orphans* by Chloé Dabert (2014), July 14 at 15:30  
– *Iphigenia* by Chloé Dabert (2018), July 18 at 14:30

FAITH AND CULTURE ENCOUNTER with Chloé Dabert,  
July 13 at 11:00, Chapelle de l'Oratoire

## PEDAGOGICAL FILE

*Pièce (dé)montée* produced by Canopé, available on festival-avignon.com

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- February 18 to 22, 2019, T2G, Théâtre de Gennevilliers
- February 26 to March 2, Le Quai CDN Angers Pays de la Loire
- March 5 to 10, Les Célestins, Théâtre de Lyon
- March 14 and 15, Théâtre populaire romand, La Chaux-de-Fonds (Swiss)
- March 19 and 20, La Passerelle Scène nationale de Saint-Brieuc
- March 23, Théâtre Louis Aragon, Tremblay-en-France
- March 28 and 29, Les Salins Scène nationale de Martigues
- April 2, Théâtre Anne de Bretagne, Vannes
- April 5 and 6, Théâtre de Saint-Quentin en Yvelines
- April 9, Théâtre de Chelles
- April 12, L'Espace 1789, Saint-Ouen
- April 16 to 19, ThéâtrédelaCité CDN Toulouse Occitanie
- April 29 and 30, Le Trident, Cherbourg
- May 10, L'Archipel, Fouesnant
- May 15 to 22, Théâtre national de Bretagne, Rennes

72<sup>th</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.

FESTIVAL-AVIGNON.COM



#FDA18

## IPHIGENIA

The Trojan War has begun, and the fleet of Greek King Agamemnon has been stuck in the port of Aulis for three months. The oracle is called on, and the oracle says that for the Gods to show clemency, Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia, must be sacrificed on Diana's altar. The Greek King does as he is told and continues with his war... Questioning actions accomplished out of duty, the legitimacy of sacrifice, and the tension between love and ambition, Chloé Dabert uses Racine's exact text, dives into the words of the 17th century, and explores the moral meaning of this ceremony. On a campsite halfway between the beach and the sea, the surrounded protagonists of the play make theirs this tragic poetry, tell us that actions are made first and foremost of words, that the desires of the Gods are the origins of all forms of submission, that women are the victims of all disputes... ceaselessly coming back to us and to those choices that are beyond us in this quest for a return to calm and the cooling off of tensions.

## CHLOÉ DABERT

After graduating from the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique, Chloé Dabert performed for Joël Jouanneau, Jeanne Champagne, and Madeleine Louarn, before turning to direction. In 2012, she created the company Héros-limite with Sébastien Eveno, and directed Denis Kelly's *Orphans*, which won top honours at the Festival Impatience in 2014. Focusing on contemporary writing—such as Jean-Luc Lagarce's *I was in the house, waiting for the rain*, which she directed this past winter at the Comédie-Française—she questions the language of theatre methodically and almost mathematically, in order to better highlight the poetic structure of the works she adapts. She also regularly hosts drama workshops for teenagers, in particular at the Théâtre de Lorient, where she was artist-in-residence.

## JEAN RACINE

Orphan from a modest family, Jean Racine knows a huge social rise and becomes an iconic playwright of the century of King Louis XIV. He is inspired by the great tragic poets of antiquity.

*Iphigenia* by Jean Racine, edited by Georges Forestier, published by éditions Gallimard, is on sale at the bookshop in the Maison Jean Vilar.



## INTERVIEW WITH CHLOÉ DABERT

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**Racine. Saying that name alone is already delving into the history of French theatre and culture. Were you interested in confronting one of the greats, or did you step away from this idea to find the independence of your generation in it?**

**Chloé Dabert:** *Iphigenia* is a text I've been obsessed with since adolescence, and to which I come back regularly. Directing this play was an obvious choice, especially for the Festival d'Avignon. *Iphigenia* takes its full meaning when performed outside. Its protagonists are "stopped, stuck" in a military camp halfway between the beach and the sea, and they're waiting for the wind to rise so they can go to war. My choice also has to do with the dialogue between this kind of founding myth and our own times. What does it mean to sacrifice a young woman for an idea, for the state? What underpins one's submission to an oracle? What does it mean to "believe the oracle?" Racine's *Iphigenia* speaks to us through time, holds up a mirror to the present. People no longer think about the death of their fellow human beings. They act and accept to sacrifice one of their own in the name of the common good.

**Great female figures like Antigone, Iphigenia, Penthesilea are often the kind of characters who allow readers and audiences to enter the world of theatre. They are beautiful mirrors.**

Iphigenia is a king's daughter. She perfectly embodies her role as a princess, and soon as a sacrificed subject. Her education prevents her from questioning authority, she accepts her fate, she "believes" the oracle. In a way, she's been conditioned to accept to be sacrificed. She fights with whatever weapons she has, that is, with her body, which she offers out of love for her father and her sense of duty. We are here in an epic drama, a genre we find nowadays in very diverse forms, including in TV series like *Game of Thrones*, whose global success shows how deeply modern culture is anchored in myths. It's no coincidence that one of the episodes features a man who has to sacrifice his daughter if he wishes to claim the throne. He accepts out of a mixture of ambition and exhaustion, and under duress. I have led many workshops with teenagers and young adults, and this kind of resonance is a source of reflection and inspiration. It echoes the story of Racine's *Iphigenia*, which he in turn borrowed from Euripides. What does that story tell us of our own relationship to expiation, to a return to peace and quiet, to the end of a cycle? Why is it about sacrificing young women? I don't have any answer, I never try to give the audience answers anyway. What matters to me is for all of us to come together and face this reality, to ask ourselves the question of our own limits, of our value systems, knowing that in the end there will be a sacrifice and the wind will indeed rise.

Which brings us to another question: what moral meaning can we give to Racine's conclusion? Does the play justify the action? Theatre is here to question and shake us. Personally, I would have liked the wind not to rise. Beyond the relationship to beliefs and power, the play also questions the figure of the woman in its relationship to the private sphere. Through those three women who enter the camp—Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, and Eriphile—while fully knowing their place isn't there, we see all three of them fighting with whatever means they have at their disposal. Those characters make me question the place of the bodies in the play, and tackle the question of desire. Iphigenia and Eriphile love the same man, Achilles. Eriphile's sacrifice at the end is driven by her desire to exist in the eyes of the men, to be Iphigenia's equal in Achilles's eyes by "being worth" as much as her... In the Euripides original, a doe ends up being sacrificed instead, but I think there's something very modern in the way Racine resolves the play by discarding any supernatural element and concluding with a human sacrifice. It's a violent reminder of our modernity.

**Once the story, like the camp, has been set up, how did you decide to take on Racine's language?**

Racine's language, and the perfection of his Alexandrines, are very demanding. We did a lot of readings at the beginning of rehearsals to focus on the rhythm and punctuation. I pay very close attention to the score, so to speak, I have an almost mathematical relationship to writing, there's a shared rhythm, a pace we have to find, in order to enter the text together. I have a lot of respect for authors, my entire practice of theatre starts with the need to make people hear their texts to the word, to the comma even. It's about hearing a language and fully entering the structure of a text. The first step in rehearsals was therefore mostly dedicated to working on the punctuation, on line breaks, with no elision. It's only after this structure has been set up that the actors can find a form of freedom. That's when acting can almost become a game. We then have to ask the question of incarnation. How do you embody a character without trying to *be* that character? With the actors, we strive to maintain a certain distance: to be engaged in the performance while not adhering completely to the codes of realism. I came to Racine after working on plays by Denis Kelly and Jean-Luc Lagarce, where the action is also in the words the characters say. We're at the heart of a tragedy, told onstage, while the action happens offstage... I have a deep attachment to that kind of theatre, a theatre of the word, formal and very rhythmic, using a meticulous and precise language.

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