



# THE SKY, THE NIGHT AND THE GLORIOUS STONE

## INTERVIEW WITH LA PICCOLA FAMILIA

**Your show is a collective project of the company Piccola Familia, a project with an eye towards history?**

**La Piccola Familia:** This project is a response to Olivier Py's desire to have the history of the Festival d'Avignon be present at this 70<sup>th</sup> edition, to have the previous 69 years be told without it being a solemn commemoration or a boring chronological unfolding. It's a project that will be built in the present, taking the past into account of course, and that will try to reach for the Festival's future. Like the Festival, it's become a collective project in which everyone has a particular role to play, with different project managers working from a common historical foundation. We'll be working very closely with Antoine De Baecque, whose *L'Histoire du Festival d'Avignon*, which he co-wrote with Emmanuelle Loyer for the 60<sup>th</sup> edition in 2006, is being republished this year. This new edition will of course include texts about the editions of the Festival between 2006 and 2016. This book is our starting point, kind of our Bible, but we're also gathering material (newspaper clippings, essays, reports, testimonies, videos, sound clips, etc.) to have the freedom to choose, even at the last minute, what we think is important when creating episodes.

**Should we expect a show built like a play?**

Absolutely not. It will be a series made up of 16 episodes presented day after day throughout the Festival. We want to write this "series" like a canvas that can be changed, integrating the past life of the Festival, but also its present as it unfolds in 2016, and the idea we have of its future life. We think that each episode could take a different form, with performances and improvisations... This daily chronicle could alternately take the form of a debate, an outdoor play, an archive report, a testimony, a short summary of some of the great works that have made the history of the Festival... We want to come up with something that feels alive, and not just a historical report. Each episode will cast a different light on the 70 editions of the Festival and focus on specific themes. We want people to see the beauty and the fragility of the Festival in those episodes, we want them to see this intransquillity which stems from the fact that it is a sound box for everything that's happening outside of it, an amplifier of the convulsions of history.

**Can you tell us about how you work? Will everything be prepared before the Festival starts?**

We usually base our work on "mini shows," when we start working on a play the goal is to learn as much as possible about its context, its author, its historical references, what it echoes, etc., and from there, in small, autonomous groups, we spend a few hours building a pedagogical show to share the knowledge we've amassed on a given theme with the rest of the company. This way of working will find its way into the creation of this series. The goal will be to use the material we'll have accumulated during our research, encounters, and readings to create dramatic forms in order to transmit that material and have fun with it. Because we don't want to come up with something that would only be pedagogical; what we want is to create a playful and festive object that will hold part of the Festival's soul, of the Festival as bountiful, explosive, and even fragile sometimes. A large part will have been created before the Festival, but we're also planning on building some episodes there. We want there to be a feeling of immediacy... We'll be rehearsing for three weeks before the Festival, and we'll keep working during it, to find our place in the present of this 70<sup>th</sup> edition, to feel its mood, but also because urgency makes things feel more alive, more vibrant, and because it seems to fit the object we imagined. It'll probably look a little like a segment from a daily cultural show that would travel through history, through the present. We're thinking of a sort of "live show" similar to television, with all the mistakes and snafus that entails, something that would last between 45 minutes and an hour... We'd like every episode to be a daily surprise for those who come see us. A daily rendezvous at noon, after the bell tower next to the Ceccano garden strikes twelve, open to all and free.

### Does that general canvas already exist?

Yes, we've chosen the form and the different perspectives we want to focus on. Among the themes we've chosen are: the audience, the venues, the critics, the great shows, the relationship to politicians and to subventions, Jean Vilar, the revolution of 1966 with the arrival of dance, cinema, and music, the cancellation of the Festival in 2003 and the different crises having to do with the treatment by successive governments of part-time performing arts workers, the creation of the Off Festival. We're also thinking about the shows that were imagined but never created. We've been thinking about a picnic that would bring together all the directors of the Festival to talk about "their" Festival, which would be based on the programmatic texts they published year after year. We don't want to restrict ourselves; we might interview spectators—those who live in Avignon and those who come for the Festival—actors who took part in the Festival, guests who'll come to talk about a subject in particular. We want this intimate relationship that the actors, the technicians, or the audience have to the Festival to play a part. This individual history, which is often passionate and more sensitive, has to play a part next to the "official" history of the Festival. That's why there won't only be actors from the Piccola Familia on the stage. We'll work with amateur actors for some episodes, especially for the one about "the Festival's audience." As for the episode about "the future of the Festival," we'll create for the duration of the Festival a writing workshop with children from Avignon. Not everything has been decided yet... We'll build a dreamscape whose holes we accept. For the goal isn't to talk about everything that has made the Festival from its creation to today—we wouldn't have the time or the means to do that—but to give a vision of its history, a general yet detailed sensation, with the hope of giving people to see a little of what makes the Festival's soul, with both joy and seriousness. Free to invent, but desirous to report on a slice of history.

Interview conducted by Jean-François Perrier

Translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach



**JULY 6 TO 24, 2016**

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