

AND...

THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Dialogue artists-audience with Oskaras Koršunovas, July 18 at 16:30, site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

NAVE OF IMAGES

Excerpts of *Roméo et Juliette* (2003), *Visage de Feu* (2001), *Le Maître et Marguerite* (2000) and *Hôtel Europa* (2000) by Oskaras Koršunovas, July 17 at 15:30, église des Célestins

ENCOUNTER FAITH AND CULTURE

with Oksaras Koršunovas, July 20 at 11:00, Chapelle de l'Oratoire

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 14 to 16, 2019, Festival Les Boréales, Caen
- November 20 to 22, 2019, Next Festival, Lille

TARTIUFAS

On the stage, a maze of plants represents a modern, bourgeois interior caught in an electric storm. A huge troupe from Lithuania gets lost in enthusiastic monologues, mad choreographies, mischievous retorts, and other shameless declarations. The tone is set, the audience warned: this Tartuffe is explosive. But what if the actors hamming it up weren't only pulling each other's strings, but also ours? What if Oskaras Koršunovas turned the character of the masked hypocrite into a modern snake-oil salesman, a master of communication? Are we at the theatre, in a video game, or on a reality TV show? Maybe a little of each, and much, much more! Our reality is roughed up, distorted by the cameras filming onstage and backstage. Comedy of manners, political satire, social farce... Molière's theatre took on religious hypocrisy. Kosunovas's is an assault on our society, corrupted by those modern fakes who only care about the money god and use propaganda, manipulation, and corruption to reach their goals.

OSKARAS KORŠUNOVAS

Born in 1969 in Lithuania, Oskaras Koršunovas is a director for the theatre and the opera. He has directed over 60 shows, adapting Russian authors like Bulgakov or Daniil Kharms, modern writers like Sarah Kane or Marius von Mayenburg, and classics. He founded the independent theatre Oskaro Koršunovo Teatras (OKT) in 1999. He sees his nervous and physical approach to theatre as a mirror to life, a tool to know oneself and society. This will be his fifth appearance at the Festival d'Avignon.

MOLIÈRE

Although it would become Molière's most-performed play, *Tartuffe* didn't have the most auspicious start. Performed for the first time in front of Louis XIV in Versailles in 1664, it caused a scandal due to its attack on hypocrisy and false piety. Its first two versions were censored, and it is only with its third version, in 1669, that it met with real success.

72th
EDITION

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

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INTERVIEW WITH OSKARAS KORŠUNOVAS

Why did you choose *Tartuffe* to adapt among Molière's many plays?

Oskaras Koršunovas: I think this is one of Molière's spiciest comedies. Historically speaking, I don't think any other play was ever as controversial, to the point that it sowed discord between the two greatest European powers of the time—the Vatican and the French King Louis XIV. Hypocritical faith is the worst of all evils. Jesus himself said it when he attacked the Pharisees. The world has become more secular, but the problem hasn't gone away. New ideologies appear and can be a godsend for all sorts of crooks. The system depicted in *Tartuffe* is still alive and kicking. The more radical an ideology, the more active the modern tartuffes. I remember full well the soviet period and the communist tartuffes. On the one hand, you had complete paranoia, and on the other, it proved the effectiveness of the system. We don't have any weapon against fanatical moralisers. When those tartuffes realise it, they become invincible. After 1990, I saw communists quickly turn into zealous liberals, and people immediately believed them. Everybody believes preaching politicians, and politicians know it. Recently, it took another turn. Facebook and social media are a new arena for hypocrisy. I don't think there was ever a time in history where the tartuffes of the world had so many weapons at their disposal.

What did you keep of this great work of classic comedy in verse? Did you choose to modernise it? What impact can such a text have today?

The text is more meaningful than ever, and can only seem dated at first glance. That's why we didn't try to modernize or rewrite it. We might use a more modern dramatic language in the style of the performance and the way we play the characters. Molière's verses are very powerful, and not only from the point of view of literature. It's like a score which tells you how the music should be played, the text includes a code on how to perform it. It was very important for us to go back to the source of *commedia dell'arte*, the source of the actor's performance, and to do it through Molière's text. As is the case with all my productions, theatre and the origin of performance are particularly relevant elements. When we work on a show, we use a modern dramatic language—using video, for instance—but we don't need to change or make cuts to the text to do so. It's the text, with its own rhythm and its references, both implicit and explicit, to the performance, that becomes our starting point.

How did you come up with the idea for your baroque-inflected, but also very modern, direction? How did you create the scenography and invent this maze?

Inspiration came from the material we were working on. I'm always interested in the relationship between the past and the future. The text is full of moral mazes, and Orgon gets lost in them. The very first performance of *Tartuffe* was in Versailles, in 1664, and I've always associated Versailles to mazes, to ingenious systems inspired by modern technologies. It's first and foremost a picture of French classicism, but it also reminds me of virtual spaces, it's a game, a place where we can get lost and where our imagination gets to unfold. We're also using live streaming to draw a parallel between the mask of theatre and the masks of video and television. Screens, smartphones, computers, TV sets, and billboards have replaced God in our modern society. We can't communicate with one another except through a screen. Screens therefore play an important part in the show. Our lives are so full of screens that video images often seem more real than reality itself. I tried to understand the interaction between the masks of video and those of theatre. They're both social masks. They're both instruments of hypocrisy. Actors may sometimes act in ways that seem abnormal, and yet video can make them seem natural. It's but another theatricality.

Marius von Mayenburg's *Martyr*, which you directed in 2015, is a play about the place of religion in our societies and its possible excesses. Your vision for *Tartuffe* here moves away from religion and towards politics. Can you explain this thematic shift?

Religious themes have come to absorb politics and new societal questions. More precisely, the modern world copied the structures of religion. Our modern society did away with God and faith, but it kept the underlying religious patterns. Today, they work mechanically, in an even more ruthless manner. They're soulless machines. *Martyr* was already about the rise of secular puritanism and of right-wing politicians in our world. I wanted to make *Tartuffe* a satire of the society we live in. Theatre must have a political dimension. *Tartuffe* is a plague which is constantly reinventing itself, the image of a form of radical populism which is spreading throughout Europe and the world. This plague has nothing to do with faith and human values, but it has mastered the rhetoric of propaganda and has taken root in immutable values like God, the motherland, family, the nation, etc. My work is inspired by the reality of my country and by the political *tartufferie* that has taken hold there. In Lithuania, theatre plays a very important role. It's a very small country, but a single play can change a lot of things.

Interview conducted by Malika Baaziz translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach