

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE with Stefan Kaegi,
July 17 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- August 22, 2019, Zürcher Theater Spektakel, Zürich (Switzerland)
- September 13, La Bâtie-Festival de Genève (Switzerland)
- September 21, Teatro Metastasio di Prato (Italy)
- September 29, LuganoInScena (Switzerland)
- October 3 and 4, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin (Germany)
- October 9, Vitoria International Theatre Festival (Spain)
- November 21 to 23, Münchner Kammerspiele, Munich (Germany)
- November 29 and 30, Hellerau European Center for the Arts, Dresden (Germany)
- December 4 to 8, La Commune Centre dramatique national d'Aubervilliers, Festival d'Automne à Paris
- December 19 to 21, Onassis Cultural Center, Athens (Greece)
- December 27 and 28, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin (Germany)

GRANMA. TROMBONES FROM HAVANA

Daniel, Milagro, Christian, and Diana, all aged between 25 and 35, live in Cuba with their parents and, sometimes, their grandparents. Like the vast majority of post-Revolution youths, they suffer from the housing shortage. These *familias compuestas* lead, unwittingly, to unprecedented situations: the generation who is now guiding the collective destiny of the island cohabits with the one who determined its future 60 years ago. Daniel, Milagro, Christian, and Diana aren't actors but translators, history teachers, computer engineers, or musicians. Together, they tell a political and social history of their country and of the world. Fears, joys, doubts, desires... *Granma. Trombones from Havana* is made up of personal stories, interspersed with variations on patriotic tunes and stock footage of the Revolution, which challenge our fantasised image of the myth of the Cuban revolution. Faithful to the identity of the Rimini Protokoll collective, Stefan Kaegi, through this exploration of the real, makes sure to question the ability of the western world to build new collective horizons for itself.

RIMINI PROTOKOLL

For almost twenty years, **Stefan Kaegi** has travelled the world and worked with non-actors whom he calls the experts of everyday life. With them, the Berlin-based Swiss director creates documentary plays, radio plays, and space installations in and for the cities he visits. A founding member of the **Rimini Protokoll** collective, his theatrical and multidisciplinary investigations question the real by creating a direct communication link with the audience. Festivalgoers will surely remember the last time the collective came to Avignon in 2013 with *Remote Avignon*, an audio tour of the papal city, and *Lagos Business Angels*.

73rd
EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,700 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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FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 73RD

JULY 18 19 20 | 22 23
CLOÎTRE DES CARMES

INTERVIEW WITH STEFAN KAEGI

Stefan Kaegi, you are one of the founding members, with Helgard Haug and Daniel Wetzel, of Rimini Protokoll, a collective born in 2000. Your projects are defined by a powerful intrusion of reality into fiction. Your work has been described as documentary theatre.

Stefan Kaegi : I met Helgard and Daniel towards the end of the 1990s at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen, a German avant-garde drama school. Back then, theatre was still dominated by the myth of the director as creative genius. Against that, our wish was to work on more interactive shows, with non-actors, by giving members of the audience a part to play. We wanted to create new dramatic conditions for the real to appear in different ways. That's why right from the start we conceived Rimini Protokoll as a label, as an open platform of collaboration. Since then, we've created plays, together or separately, and depending on the project we call on outside collaborators, scientific experts, people who have acquired an expertise thanks to their job, for instance. This collusion between fiction and reality is particularly important for me, with my background in journalism. But it's different from that of news reports, documentaries, or reality TV. My work explores specific situations within a close fictional framework. This strategy, which has become central to my work since the creation of *Remote Avignon* for the Festival in 2013, can also be found in *Société en chantier* (*Society Under Construction*), in which the audience watch construction experts talk about the invisible foundations of a site and, beyond, about what determines the future of the space we share.

At the heart of *Granma. The Trombones of Havana*, the shared space is a room in a house where four young Cubans tell us about themselves. How was this project born?

I wanted to explore the relationships between two generations. One which was able, for sixty years, to take radical decisions, thus determining the life of the collective but also the rise of a new man. The other, with its sometimes very different motivations, which wants to prolong this revolution and is determined to take charge of its own future. Generations which most often coexist under one roof within reconstituted families, due to the housing shortage. In February 2018, we listened to the stories of over 60 of those young people. They talked both about themselves and about their grandparents. We chose four of them. From where I stand, what matters when I decide to tell the history of a country through biographical stories, is to show the contrasts of this society through the family and social background of the characters.

Can you tell us more about each of them? About their personal histories against the backdrop of History, and about the music, photos, and videos they brought to the show?

Daniel, 36, grew up with his grandfather Faustino Pérez. His father was a minister, an ambassador, and was in charge of the coming of revolutionaries from Mexico to Cuba in 1956, aboard the ship *Granma*, but the system he helped create started drifting away from his ideals, which were closer to those of intellectual José Martí.

Daniel makes a living translating a Canadian website about maths. In a way, he continues the literacy campaigns that were part of the project of communist internationalism, and his bank account is indeed international.

Milagro, 25, has a degree in history and comes from a Jamaican family of former slaves. She lives in her grandmother's house, which has fallen into disrepair. She'd like to become a teacher, but it would be difficult to survive with an average salary of 30 euros. Her neighbourhood is gentrifying. Art galleries sell paintings next door to stores where people buy eggs with ration cards. Yet she'll defend the successes of the Cuban revolution.

Christián, 25, wanted to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather Rufino, 79, who fought during the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, then in Angola to help anti-colonial uprisings. Christián failed the psychological tests to get into the army because he wasn't obedient enough. Today, he thinks that the sacrifice of his grandfather, who gave his life to the revolution and has to keep working to survive, was never recognised.

Diana, 30, is a musician who lives in her grandmother's house. Her grandfather was a famous Cuban singer. For *Granma*, she taught Daniel, Milagro, and Christián to play the trombone according to the model of the micro-brigades: one person who knows how to do something teaches others how to do it. In Cuba, this structure allowed people to build collective buildings in which they could then live, for instance.

For a year, those four young people worked together on the show's music. Composer Ari Benjamin Meyers wrote songs that will punctuate the show, inspired by Cuban military and patriotic songs. And now they'll perform it, thanks to what they've learnt to do with their instruments. Meanwhile, we'll also be projecting some very different images: images of the revolution, of the *Granma*, of the Bay of Pigs. Images of the summer of 1968 in Paris or of Woodstock as seen by the Cubans, of the fall of the Berlin Wall, of Barack Obama... Thanks to the theatre, four characters who come from very different realities can tell their stories in a collective movement to create a single present.

In your notes, you clearly wonder how closely western audiences will be able to identify with their vision of the history of the revolution...

Indeed. In *Granma. The Trombones of Havana*, it is as much the Cuban revolution as the hopes it created in Europe which interest me. Because in truth, the play is about the shift of the revolution towards Europe, where it was a source of much fantasy. Or, more accurately, the shift from a Cuban and pluralist historical perspective to Europe. It created a sort of myth of the Cuban public project (health, education, the organisation of the public space), with all the hopes it entails. For that matter, the show comes at a moment in history where the left is going through a rough patch in Europe. This play explores the way the Cubans are now using the ideals of a 60-year-old revolution to build the world of tomorrow. What can we learn from that? That's for the audience to decide!

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Interview conducted by Francis Cossu and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach