

## AND...

## THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Dialogue artistes-audience with Lemi Ponifasio, July 9 at 16:30,  
Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

## NAVE OF IMAGES (screenings)

*I AM* – Lemi Ponifasio (2014), July 10 at 14:30, Église des Célestins

## STANDING IN TIME

Lemi Ponifasio's *Standing In Time* is a work for nine women. The work is built around the call for empathy, a meditation on the violence of human existence and the search for justice through the voice and body of woman. The performance is threaded through iconic allegories including the Lady of Justice, Angelus Novus, and Hine Nui Te Po - confronting the anxiety, scars and hopes of modern human civilisation. Distinctive and with its own genealogy, Ponifasio's radical stage orients the modern individual towards other dimensions of consciousness by way of the decelerated rhythm of his strict aesthetic. His signature stark stage: desaturated, tense, stripped back to the elemental, unfamiliar language, the black and white aesthetic, inverted, dreamlike images, the ceremonial, sacrificial body – a visceral space of sound, light and darkness. The performers are cosmic beings. The stage is a cosmic energy. *Standing In Time* is women returning in ceremony to the ruins of history to pray, to speak; voices no longer suspended or trapped underground.

## LEMI PONIFASIO

Lemi Ponifasio is a Samoan and New Zealand choreographer, dancer, director, designer, and artist, whose work defies conventional definitions. In 1995, he founded MAU in Auckland, New Zealand, in collaboration with communities and artists from all over the world. MAU, in Samoan, is a reference to the quest for truth. His works—in which light and darkness fight each other and black challenges white—plunge the audience into a dreamlike and ceremonial space, into a cosmogonic reflection. His show *Birds With Skymirrors*, created in 2010, testified of the disappearance of the Pacific islands, homeland to many of its performers, devastated by climate change. Among other shows, *Lagimoana* was presented at the Biennale in Venice in 2015, and *Apocalypsis* at the Luminato Festival in Toronto that same year. *Stones In Her Mouth* in 2013 was the beginning of a long collaboration with Maori women from communities whose powerful evocation of life has been transmitted through ancient oratorical songs. Lemi Ponifasio was invited to present *I AM* in the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes during the 68th edition of the Festival d'Avignon.

71<sup>st</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



#FDA17

#COURSTJOSEPH  
#STANDINGINTIME  
#LEMIPONIFASIO

FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 71<sup>e</sup>

JULY 7 8 9 10 | COUR DU LYCÉE SAINT-JOSEPH

## NOTE ABOUT THE WORK BY LEMI PONIFASIO

---

### THEATRE VISION

There is still a major effort to make and to attend a theatre that is a mirror, reflecting who we are. But this is not the aim of my theatre. The purpose of my theatre is to reaffirm that the human is part of heaven and earth and its processes, rather than just humans talking about humans or to humans. We love the enjoyment of life, pleasurable music, graceful ballerinas, the beautiful feeling of letting our emotions flow. But this is the usual aim of everyday life. We also like to repackage the news, dramatic problems of the world, to seek a euphoric or sentimental or intellectual celebration of ourselves - our failings, weaknesses, ugliness, or shortcomings, aestheticised for consumption in a theatre setting. We feel as if we had engaged in something important, political. This has been the case of the theatre since Plato's cave. The theatre is more than the re-representation of the human condition in a social context. We need the theater to connect our human lives with the cosmological perspective. Theatre is part of our human efforts to evolve. The human is not the end of the evolution nor the end of the evolution of consciousness. The theater needs this bigger goal. Otherwise the theater is dead.

### THEATRE LIFE PROCESS

*Standing In Time* is the continuation of the work I make with women whom I have been working with for many years as part of MAU community. They mostly live in communities outside of the main cities of New Zealand and Chile. Why do women like them disappear from the social picture? The project addresses our power relationships, the notion of justice, and how human dignity and harmony could be restored. What you see on this stage is only a very small part of the work. Art is about the improvement of the quality of how we see and hear the world. This is clearer for me working with communities. It gives purpose. The stage performance is not the purpose of our creative lives but a vehicle of transformation and towards the cosmos. To make this performance is not a standard process of creation and rehearsals of usual theatre companies. We travel to many communities around New Zealand and Chile, creating exchange not only with these women but by being in the ordinary process of everyday life with their communities. A lot of communities in New Zealand and Chile, as with most places, are wrestling with problems of drugs, alcohol, suicide, domestic violence, rape, health issues, mental issue, economic and environmental issues. They are also wrestling valiantly with issues of freedom from injustice and disempowerment. The work on stage is a part of ongoing efforts to improve the quality of how communities experience, and can shape, the world.

So, the purpose of this project is to give face and presence to the women in their communities through roles of leadership in language, health, housing, and all aspects of daily life. Before Western colonization, Maori women and Mapuche women were the main composers of songs, poetry, ceremonies. This was one of the ways that they owned their voice and could say whatever they wanted to say to the world. Here in Avignon, the women are not only talking about their communities. As artists, they are also in the world with their creativity, beauty, intelligence, and skills, engaging with the issues of humankind as part of the negotiation of how we shape our world right now.

### THE STAGE

The theatre was born to acknowledge the mystical bond between the human and the cosmos. The stage is a cosmic energy. The performers are cosmic beings. The nature of the stage, time, minimal, unfamiliar language, the black and white aesthetic, is not just a style but also a conscious attempt to overcome cultural prejudices and be free from the limitation of language and biology - to activate cosmic consciousness. We bring our lives, cultures, hurt, ego, fears and dreams to decompose and recompose in the cosmic dimension, to embrace even for an instance our shared flesh. *Standing In Time* is built around empathy, to meditate on the violence of the world through the body and sense of woman. The performance is threaded through iconic allegories including the Lady of Justice, Angelus Novus, and Hine Nui Te Po - reflecting and confronting the anxiety, scars and hopes of modern human civilisation. This ceremony requires your concentration, heart and spirit and openness and empathy. We commit ourselves to be captured by the poetry of existence, in the dimension of our shared genealogy - the cosmos, to make emerge truth and beauty.