

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- September 29, 2018, Festival Poésie en Ville, Geneva (Switzerland)
- April 30, 2019, Le Train Théâtre, Portes-lès-Valence
- May 2 and 3, Le Liberté Théâtre de Toulon

AND WHY SHOULD I SPEAK LIKE YOU?

People thought they were simple, deranged. They were just resistant to norms, or more receptive to certain channels of the mind. During their years of imprisonment, they wrote letters, so people would remember them. Words of hope, love, confession, reproach, incomprehension, and mad desire, their so-called raw art texts are true songs of life. *"I don't want to be removed from circulation,"* wrote Daiber Samuel Ernest, whom no one had read until today. Most often, those men and women didn't know why they had been institutionalised, and none of them, of course, thought they were creating art. And yet. *"It's art in its very infancy,"* according to Anouk Grinberg who, with the help of Nicolas Repac, has decided to give voice to those stories never before heard from which explode words of absolute power, full of linguistic invention. By joining their "voices" as actress and musician, they put those unknown authors alongside poets such as Henri Michaux, Emily Dickinson, or Ingeborg Bachmann. Because what matters is to *"take those texts out of the ghetto of insanity, and to embrace the life they contain. It's always happy, even when it is sad. Because in them, we find our brothers."*

ANOUK GRINBERG

Anouk Grinberg began her career in cinema at age 13, and has since appeared in films by Bertrand Blier, Philippe Garrel, and Jacques Audiard. She has worked with Jacques Lassalle, Didier Bezace, and Patrice Chéreau, and in 2018 with Alain Françon (*Turgenev's A Month in the Country*). Her work has always pushed her towards texts full of humanity. She started painting over ten years ago, and regularly appears in exhibitions.

NICOLAS REPAC

A close collaborator of singer Arthur H for the past fifteen years (*L'Or noir*, *L'Or d'Éros*), guitarist, composer, and arranger Nicolas Repac has worked on many musical projects (*Swing Swing* with Malian singer Mamani Keita; *Black Box*, which returned to the origins of blues). He is particularly adept at bringing together genres and people, and is always on the lookout for new artistic collaborations.

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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FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 72°

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LA CHARTREUSE-CNES DE VILLENEUVE LEZ AVIGNON

INTERVIEW WITH ANOUK GRINBERG AND NICOLAS REPAC

Jean Dubuffet defines *art brut* (outsider art) as anything created by autodidacts, outside of any artistic commodification. How did you discover these texts, and would you say they fit that definition?

Anouk Grinberg: The people who created those texts did so with no artistic culture. They knew nothing of the world of culture. For the past thirty years, I've been going to the Musée d'Art brut in Lausanne, or to exhibitions in France. As for how I discovered those texts, someone told me about them, I pulled back the curtain, and it opened on an entire cave. Contrary to our preconceived ideas about "crazy" people, who we assume would create things obsessed with death, what I love about them is their vitality, their creativity. As I discovered their creations, I often thought that we must be the disabled ones, because we've been educated, because we have artistic ambitions, because we're civilised people, the *crème de la crème*. In outsider art, there's something of an inner fire—like a neon light. I wanted to pay homage to those people. Here, it's about letting people hear what they wrote.

How are those texts different from the ones "mixed" to plastic works?

Anouk Grinberg: What people notice in the plastic works, in general, is the written form. But even when it's important, you can't really read it. The authors I'll be reading during the show were often locked away in hospitals, which were closer to prisons. They were only given one sheet of paper a week... and they had a lot to say. They wrote everything little by little, sometimes one thing on top of the other. It's an entirely unknown part of literature. I was able to collect it thanks to many meetings with gallery owners and specialists in outsider art. It was a considerable mass of texts.

Nicolas Repac: We feel empathy for what those people went through, their suffering, the injustice of their situation... Some of the texts clearly show their pain, but also their irrationality, which expresses itself in surprising ways. You can feel the struggles happening within their minds. It gives birth to things we can't imagine. For instance, one of the texts is full of neologisms. It's amazing! We shouldn't be able to understand a word, and we understand everything! It's a true literary invention...

Right away, we're struck by the power of their language. What do you think would be their place, against what we call literature? Even if there are similarities, we're not talking here about Queneau, Michaux, Dubuffet, or Prigent...

Anouk Grinberg: It is tempting to pit those two types of literature against each other: one raw and the other educated, uncooked, so to speak. The matrix is the same: how to break free and express ourselves differently? Some of them spent twenty or thirty years locked up. Imprisoned and desperate, outsider artists found something... They didn't know they were creating... they did it so as not to die... they created to free themselves.

As for us, we're not locked up. Well, we are, but in a different way. We're prisoners of our social lives, of images, of the way we were educated, of our beliefs... We say we're free; we put up floral wallpaper on the walls of our cells; we create art while looking at ourselves—a little or a lot—in mirrors. They didn't have any wallpaper, any mirror. Every time, I wonder: how did they do it? They didn't have anything left. Well, when you have nothing, all you have left is life. Life in its rawest state is funny: it creates languages. They weren't thinking: I'm going to invent a language in my tiny cell! They make mistakes as they write, spelling errors, which gives great poetic power to their work. They form a brotherhood. Human brothers. Brothers in sensations.

Writers have a tendency to impenetrability. That's not the case with outsider artists. They have no desire to "create literature"...

Anouk Grinberg: Most of those people would have never thought they'd end up in a book or on a theatre stage. They were no longer seen as citizens. Most of them wrote letters to their families and friends to remind them of their existence! Hospital directors thought those were uninteresting. They stashed them away. Most families never received those letters, so it's up to us to receive them now.

Nicolas Repac: I feel a sort of pride at doing this show. They're unknown people, totally unknown. They're not in the camp of great writers... Helping them step out of the shadows is important for me. Hearing them means having to face an emotional charge, as if we were laid bare and shot at. With those texts, we don't feel safe, the way we do when we read Aimé Césaire or Victor Hugo.

Why are you putting those texts alongside others by writers and poets?

Anouk Grinberg: I chose authors I've read many times. We don't know who's holding out his or her hand to whom, who's helping whom across the river. All those writers, Bachmann, Dickinson, Michaux, Tzara, Elythis, were seen as different. It's like a round dance. It's only when I get to the end of a text that I say who wrote it. The internment of those "crazy" people was such a misunderstanding! And they are misunderstood. We sometimes give brief biographical indications. It was just a regular woman, a regular man. At some point, one of them, Aimable Jayet, asks questions which seem at first absurd, but we end up thinking: that's right, why are things that way? Why is that thing called that? Why do we repeat those words? Why do men go with women? Why does the sea go all the way there? There's this woman, Marguerite de Pilonel, who writes a letter to her husband, a love letter, well... a porno letter! It's beautiful. She just wants to taste life. She also tells him: send me sweets, oranges, little things like that, it's an orgy of food, almonds, too, it's like a river of life. She writes from her cell, and it feels like she's in that river... I'd spread those pages out in my apartment, and I stumbled upon this Emily Dickinson book, *Will There Really Be A Morning?* I went looking for the text again. The presence of those writers side by side with those outsider art texts felt natural then.

Interview conducted by Marc Blanchet and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach