

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE with Céline Schaeffer,
July 19 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

PEDAGOGICAL FILE

Pièce (dé)montée produced by Canopé, available on festival-avignon.com

YOUNG AUDIENCE SHOWS

Young Yacou, Yakouba Konaté, July 13 to 17, Collège Joseph Vernet

CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

July 6 to 22, cinéma Utopia-Manutention

VISITS FOR THE FAMILIES

July 7 to 22, departure place du Palais des papes
informations and booking at visitejeunesse@festival-avignon.com

YOUNG SPECTATOR'S GUIDE

available in all Festival venues

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- October 6 to 8, 2019, Théâtre d'Aurillac
- October 15 to 18, Théâtre Montansier, Versailles
- October 22 and 23, Théâtre Maurice Novarina, Thonon-les-bains
- November 13 and 14, Théâtre Forum Meyrin (Switzerland)
- November 21 to 23, Le Grand Bleu, Lille
- November 26 to 28, Le Grand R
Scène nationale de La Roche-sur-Yon
- December 10 to 20, Théâtre Nouvelle Génération
Centre dramatique national de Lyon
- January 10 and 11, 2020, Théâtre de l'Olivier, Istres
- January 14 and 15, Théâtre Le Forum, Fréjus
- January 19 to 21, Scène nationale du Sud-Aquitain, Bayonne
- January 24 and 25, Théâtre national de Nice
- January 29 and 30, Scènes Vosges, Épinal
- February 2 and 3, Créa Festival Momix, Kingersheim
- February 6 to 8, Centre dramatique national de Normandie-Rouen
- March 1st and 2, Théâtre-Cinéma Paul Éluard, Choisy-le-Roi
- March 12 and 13, La Méridienne Scène conventionnée de Lunéville
- April 6 to 10, Théâtre Olympia Centre dramatique national de Tours

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.

FESTIVAL-AVIGNON.COM



#FDA19

REPUBLIC OF THE BEES

For Céline Schaeffer, the space that surrounds us is a world in and of itself, at once matter and colour, image and sound, body and voice, near and fear. It can transform, reconfigure itself, swell with air, or empty itself. Here, the stage is a breathing "super-organism" she calls "the spirit of the beehive," where thousands of beings are in service of a collective intelligence. What is the secret of the bee, seen today as a look-out who can tell us much about the state of the world as well as its organisation? To tackle this question, the director, who loves art as much as she does nature, imagined a documentary tale, performed and danced, magic and mysterious. A show that plays with the sensations of the audience to better accompany them through the life of this hive which, from swarming to the founding of a new colony, revives the cycle of seasons and reactivates our link to the very small in all its greatness.

CÉLINE SCHAEFFER

After training as a plastic artist, **Céline Schaeffer** created her first dramatic installation, inspired by the work of Georges Perec. As an assistant director, she worked with Claude Buchvald, then starting in 1999 with Valère Novarina, in particular on *L'Acte inconnu (The Unknown Act)*, created for the Festival d'Avignon in 2007. In 2012, for the Sujets à Vif of the Festival, she directed Stanislas Roquette in Valère Novarina's *L'Inquiétude (Anxiety)*. Today, she continues her work at the intersection of theatre, language, and painting.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

A poet, playwright, and essayist, **Maurice Maeterlinck** (1862-1949) saw theatre as a place where the soul faces destiny, and symbolism as the poetic form that would allow us to understand the world by looking past appearances. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his work in 1911.

La Vie des abeilles by Maurice Maeterlinck,
published by Abeille et Castor, is on sale
at the bookshop in the Maison Jean Vilar.



FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 73RD

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CHAPELLE DES PÉNITENTS BLANCS

INTERVIEW WITH CÉLINE SCHAEFFER

This is the first time you've directed a show for children. Is there a difference? Why did you choose this text by Maeterlinck?

Céline Schaeffer : I didn't try to create a show for children, but rather a show for everyone aimed primarily at children. In 2005, I read Maurice Maeterlinck's work and discovered *The Life of the Bee*, written in 1901, which tells the story of a year in the life of a beehive: swarming, nuptial flight, creation of the wax city, etc. This text struck me because I found in it the same focus on nature that exists in my relationship to art. I think of land artists like Wolfgang Laib whose interventions aim to show and reveal other visible faces of nature. I also discovered the wonderful world of apiculture, the life of a beehive. It made me want to learn more about the world of bees, about what it says of the relationship between man and his environment. Bees are like sentries, they tell us what's going on in nature. For the past couple years, it's become a much more important subject in society at large; it was the right time to talk about it. I started by bringing together a team to work on the light and the sound, and I tried to read *The Life of the Bee* while thinking about the way the very idea of the beehive touches our senses, our history. Maurice Maeterlinck's writing is very metaphorical, not always scientifically accurate, but it gave me the fantastic feeling of being a child again who is told an incredible and mysterious story over a hundred million years old. Poetry to talk about a beehive, that's what I liked about the text. I like this language full of wonder, beautiful and concrete. He doesn't say much about the relationship between the bees and flowers. Rather, he describes the ideal beehive, with many anthropomorphic figures. He creates a relationship of identification to society, even though it's difficult to compare the organisation of a beehive to that of humanity. I'm more interested in "the spirit of the beehive" and how it allows us to question the way we live together and make decisions for the greater good in an environment that's constantly changing. How is all that organised and controlled? *The Life of the Bee* in a way is an attempt to discover the secret of nature, the secret of life in nature.

You changed the title and replaced the word "Life" by "Republic." How did you adapt this text for the stage? How did you choose what to highlight in what you call a documentary tale?

I started by selecting passages, sentences, and moments which I found beautiful and understandable by children. I also worked on other sources, like those verses from book four of the *Georgics* in which Virgil talks about swarming: "So when the cage-escaped hosts you see/Float heavenward through the hot clear air, until/You marvel at yon dusky cloud that spreads/And lengthens on the wind, then mark them well..." I wrote the show inspired by these different sources: by Maurice Maeterlinck and the people I'd met, my experience, my readings, my research. I wanted to tell the story of the

life of bees over the course of a year of beekeeping, linked to the seasons, unspooling the thread of the story from spring to winter, thus creating a sort of loop reminiscent of nature's cycle. When I read Jürgen Tautz' *The Buzz about Bees*, I realised I also needed to treat the hive as a whole, a super-organism. I chose the word "republic" because of the social dimension of those insects. The hive is a single thing made up of many others. It's a being with its own way of working, its own balance. A super-organism made up of thousands of individuals inseparable from one another. Talking about a republic allows me to talk about the life of the hive and its organisation as a mirror to our society. The spirit of the beehive, the way in which all beings within it are linked together, its collective intelligence, all echo a sort of ideal republic. Ever since Antiquity, beehives were a subject of observation and reflection for intellectuals, researchers, and philosophers. Maybe because the hive is a form of society which can adapt to problems and learn lessons from them to find solutions and escape both climate-related threats and invasions by dangerous Asian hornets. The link to the fairy tale, with its terror and wonder, can be found in the life of the bees itself. That's why I gave the play the subtitle "a documentary tale."

As a plastic artist, your writing always includes a reflection about space. Can you tell us more about the relationship between the text and the scenography?

This show is the result of an encounter with Maurice Maeterlinck, but also with the space of the hive, which is very rich and inspiring from an artistic point of view. All my shows always begin with the scenography. I start with space. I wonder how to represent it. When I look at a beehive, I see space growing and decreasing. There's what you can see and what's hidden. I began by drawing black-and-white sketches of the inside of the hive. Then colour came to tell the story of the life of the bees within the hive. I then asked myself questions about the scenography: how to figure the hive? With a hexagon, with images, with sounds? I wanted the scenography to change in front of the audience along with the story. With my team, I imagined five panels of different shapes and sizes: five very thin metallic structures which allow us to play with transparency and with the movements of the performers within them, but also to show the way a hive empties and fills by adjusting the space. They also serve as support for the projection of lights, of images which depict the inside of the hive, the seasons, the landscape, the wind, movement, noises, sounds... Sound also plays a large part. Whereas images show, sounds evoke, and give the audience more freedom when it comes to interpretation. They make the hive perceptible to the senses beyond the text, and allow us to find a sensory link to nature in a concrete and tangible relationship of shared understanding.

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