

## AND...

## THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

*A poetics of civilisation ? – Le Monde*, with Christiane Taubira and Edgar Morin, July 8 at 14:30, Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

Encounters Research and Creation in Avignon, *Crisis and catastrophe/order and disorder in society* – ANR, with in particular Anne-Laure Liégeois, July 11 at 14:00, Cloître Saint-Louis

Dialogue artists-audience with Anne-Laure Liégeois, July 16 at 16:30, Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

## READING SALON

*The Library of ideas*, bibliothèque Ceccano

## EXHIBITION

*70 years of Festival through bookbinding*, bibliothèque Ceccano  
July 6-26, Monday-Saturday, 10:00 to 18:00

## WE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING

No emancipation can happen without the use of language, that most precious of common goods. When the fight for ideas becomes poetry, when turns of phrase draw the attention and scansion hits the audience in the heart, the orator has won. Of course, one must act—rights require more than words to defend them—but the non-violent power of public speech, when it is rich and beautiful, is enough to strengthen dignity and equality. Placed by Christiane Taubira in a place beloved by the greatest writers and turned into a series by Anne-Laure Liégeois; actors, inhabitants of Avignon, and the students of the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique give voice to texts originally said or published during the most noble of fights. Articles, poems, essays, fiction—writing takes many forms when men and women, scholars or politicians, philosophers or lawyers, have a goal in mind: the inscription into law of a new liberty. Someone steps in front of others to speak. Auditoriums, amphitheatres, tribunes, or stages: politics and theatre take place in the same locations. The Ceccano garden, this public place, once again becomes the stage and agora where unfolds the story of the fight through words, a struggle which has more often than not determined the very organisation of society.

## CHRISTIANE TAUBIRA

If Christiane Taubira refuses to call herself an author, she has always experienced, within the political fights that have been the foundation of her life, an irresistible pull towards writing. Other people's writing at first when, as a child, she devoured texts that made dignity and open-mindedness the pillars of her life. The writing of poets, too, which often comes back to her when she has to speak in public or give an argument, and serves as a springboard to give further resonance to the convictions she aims to defend or share. Her own writing, finally, when, seized by what she calls a "vital summons," she writes urgent and candid essays (*L'Esclavage raconté à ma fille*, *Mes météores*, *Rendez-vous avec la République*, *Nous habitons la Terre*) to oppose elements of understanding to a world in upheaval and to remind us, through the power of words, of the existence of a community of humans.

## ANNE-LAURE LIÉGEAIS

After studying classical literature, Anne-Laure Liégeois joined the world of theatre by translating and directing a play by Seneca, *The Feast of Thyestes*, which gave its name to the company she founded in 1994. Wanting to explore new places and to bring together many artists, she created Christian Rulliers *Le Fils (The Son)* for fifty actors in closed-down industrial spaces; *Ça (It)*, which brought together writers and actors in open-air chambers; and *Embouteillage (Traffic)*, staged in actual forests and along cliffs, which brought together 27 writers and won over the audience of the Festival d'Avignon, watching from their cars... Appointed as director of the Centre dramatique national in Montluçon in 2003, Anne-Laure Liégeois alternates between directing great classics and close collaborations with contemporary writers. She not only creates the scenography and costumes for her shows, but she also works on the music. Since 2011, she has been invited four times to direct the troupe of the Comédie-Française, and has become associated with Le Volcan, in Le Havre.

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.



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JARDIN CECCANO

# INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIANE TAUBIRA AND ANNE-LAURE LIÉGEOIS

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**In the fight between political ideas that you propose, words seem to be the main material. Why?**

**A-L.L.** : We need language, we need literature, we have a sincere need for them in our discourse, the discourse of the fight for political ideas. We need those exhortations, that theatrical élan that makes the speaker shine. Elections are now over in France. We have been force-fed speech after speech after speech, but did those have the spirit of the speeches by Hugo, Condorcet, or Lamartine? Were they be as powerful, as exhilarating? Words we find in poetry, in philosophy, in literature, in theatre, we need the specificity and beauty of their words, we need public discourse to be able to interpret those languages, to know how to use them for its own aims and purposes. Christiane Taubira knows how to play with words, how to give them meaning, and thanks to her playful side, she knows how to make us hear their rhythm, their music. More than a few of us listen to her speeches as much for their style as for their substance!

**What's the thread that unites the different themes you'll tackle?**

**C.T.** : Every day will have its own topic, but there will be some thematic overlap. Women's rights, social conquests, public liberties, and the various forms of State violence all form sequences—each of which could easily last two months! Another branch is called “secularisation of power and laicisation of society.” Those categories have to do with a series of hard-won liberties. French society built its great laws of liberty over a little over two centuries, with most of them being passed within a thirty-year period. I called that theme “secularisation” because all those liberties had to be wrestled away from the domain of religious power. From that point of view, one could see the 1905 law on *laïcité* as an apotheosis. For the first time, the separation between the Churches and the State was written into law.

**If 1905 was an apotheosis, are today's struggles a step back?**

**C.T.** : It's clear that *laïcité* is once again a point of contention, which has been instrumentalised to exclude some people. During the debates in 1905, you had very different people with very different personalities, and therefore very strong tensions in both camps. Some were trying to find an order that would make society more peaceful, that would really separate spiritual authority from temporal power; but some were truly at war. Among those, some almost turned *laïcité* into a religion. That's what's been happening in France in the past quarter-century: people brandishing *laïcité* with the same intolerance as those who brandish crucifixes. It would be a good idea to compare modern speeches with the opinions expressed in 1905, to show their similarities and differences. Some of the most uncompromising defenders of *laïcité* fail to understand that its goal is to bring concord and harmony. It's not a witch hunt against religion.

**Within that context, don't modern words seem weaker than those of a century ago?**

**A-L.L.** : Not necessarily. To talk about one of our themes, work, Leslie Kaplan in *Excess—The Factory*, François Bon in *Sortie d'usine [Outside the Factory]*, or Falk

Richter in *Under Ice*, for instance, talk about that theme today. Their words aren't any less taut, less inspired. They are as powerful as those of Lamartine or Seneca on the same topic.

**C.T.** : I have in mind public speeches, of course, because their specificity is to be presented as legitimate and thus to crush society under their weight. But there are beautiful texts about *laïcité* today. In 2004, some vile things were said. I don't want to say them because I don't want to give them the slightest resonance, because I think they are dangerous for society. I accept debate, controversy. But if words lead to a fracture in society, I refuse to echo them.

**A-L.L.** : With the theatre, and particularly here at the Festival, we're in a space of language. Careful, though: language can be made up of gestures, of music, of silences. The absence of words is also a word! But it's an empty word, it doesn't participate in the building of a language, no one will remember it. I say no to empty speeches and to hollow words!

**Doesn't poetry, as soon as it is public, become political as well?**

**C.T.** : No. Fortunately, poetry is undisciplined. Politics always has a goal, hopefully a noble one, but it always has a goal, including when the words are beautiful and the rhythm musical. Political discourse aims to convince, it talks about a specific topic. Hugo and others were indeed able to clothe it in the beauty of poetry.

**A-L.L.** : This game of public discourse, it's also the game of theatre. Theatre inherited from poetry that awareness of a pre-written speech that nonetheless likes to pretend it appears in the instant. In that awareness resides the gap between theatre and reality. That's what makes it poetry.

In politics, that can't be your aim. Politics is dealing with the life of society, so you have to give people beauty, but the struggles remain at the forefront. When we're talking about preserving or recognising a liberty, you can call on beauty, but your end goal is to make people understand that that liberty is necessary, to turn it into a legal right. In a way, this goal might be the difference between poetry and politics. But I think they should—I truly think they are—intimately linked. Someone said it before me, and very well at that: it was Edouard Glissant, who systematically talked about them together.

**This summer, aren't you proposing to follow the same way in the opposite direction? Isn't the beauty of the words what will lead us to delve into the political thoughts they express?**

**C.T.** : Yes because, in the Jardin Ceccano, we're not in a political arena, we're not in the moment of struggle: what we're sharing are the traces of those struggles. Whereas the political speeches made in the National Assembly are written in the moment of struggle, in an attempt to convince people, to confuse an opponent, or to reduce him to the inconsistency of his words. It happens in the moment those speeches are made. When we come together today to make those speeches ours, we aren't taking part in the same process: we're sharing something beautiful whose goal has already been reached—because if those are texts that led to votes, to debates, and to the consecration of new liberties, it is because they succeeded. We can indeed stay within beauty, we have the right to choose only beautiful texts because no one's trying to convince anyone, we just want to share their power and beauty.

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Interview conducted by Marion Canelas and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach