

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE with Maëlle Poésy,
July 6 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

THOUGHT WORKSHOPS

Encounter Research and creation - Crossing worlds - Désirs d'ailleurs : polyphonies, hybridation et utopies,
with Maëlle Poésy and Kevin Keiss July 10 at 14:30, Cloître Saint-Louis

Cultural Intelligence Forum, with Kevin Keiss,
July 11 at 13:45, Cloître Saint-Louis

Discussions artists-spectators with Maëlle Poésy and Kevin Keiss,
July 12 at 17:30, site Louis Pasteur Supramuros - Avignon Université

CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

Encounter with Maëlle Poésy after the movie *The Edge of Heaven*
by Fatih Akin, July 9 at 14:00, cinéma Utopia-Manutention

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 28 to December 7, 2019, Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne
Centre dramatique national
- December 17 and 18, Le Granit, Belfort
- January 10, 2020, anthéa antipolis théâtre d'Antibes
- January 17, Châteauevallon Scène nationale, Ollioules
- January 22 and 23, Scène nationale du Sud-Aquitain, Bayonne
- February 5 and 6, Centre dramatique national de Normandie-Rouen
- February 12 au 14, Les Théâtres, Marseille
- February 25 au March 1st, Théâtre Firmin Gémier/La Piscine,
Châtenay-Malabry
- March 13, Équinoxe Scène nationale de Châteauroux
- March 25 and 26, Le Théâtre Scène nationale de Saint-Nazaire
- March 31 to April 4, ThéâtrédelaCité
Centre dramatique national Toulouse Occitanie

UNDER DIFFERENT SKIES

Aeneas must flee and leave a burning Troy behind with some of his loved ones. Guided by the Gods, pursued by Juno's wrath, he begins his quest for a hospitable land where he can found a new city. Of the journey told by Virgil in the *Aeneid*, Maëlle Poésy and her accomplice, playwright and author Kevin Keiss, chose to keep only a few fragments from the first six books of the epic poem. Together, they imagined a narration of the memory, punctuated by departures, arrivals, and shipwrecks. A space and time where the past and future forever interlock with the present. A research into the perceptible and the physical, with both actors and dancers, and which explores the relationship of exiles with their journey and with memory. A play which keeps transforming, in which the dead talk to the living and gods talk to men, in which the sets fade away and the past resurfaces in the present, turning exile into a world between worlds, a state of stateless waiting.

MAËLLE POÉSY

An actress and director, **Maëlle Poésy** studied at the École supérieure d'art dramatique du Théâtre national de Strasbourg. After graduating, she founded the Crossroad company, with which she has explored what she calls a "theatre of confrontation" revolving around movement, a "rhythm factory" which questions society and its individual components.

KEVIN KEISS

A doctoral student in classical literature and a specialist of ancient theatre, **Kevin Keiss** is a writer, translator, playwright, and director. He co-wrote *Those who wander aren't wrong* with Maëlle Poésy, which played at the 71st edition of the Festival d'Avignon.

VIRGIL

A poet who lived through the end of the Roman Republic (70-19 B.C.), **Virgil** created a body of work at once clear and pure, still seen today as the most powerful of all Roman Antiquity.

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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CLOÎTRE DES CARMES

INTERVIEW WITH MAËLLE POÉSY AND KEVIN KEISS

***Under Different Skies* is loosely based on Virgil's *Aeneid*. Why did you choose to work on this epic which focuses on the aftermath of the Trojan War from the point of view of the losers?**

Maëlle Poésy : The journey of Aeneas and his companions after the fall of Troy isn't the return of the victors, as in *The Odyssey*, but the escape of the losers... Aeneas flees a ruined city with his father and a small group of Trojans. They cross the Mediterranean looking for hospitable land. He stubbornly persists on his journey in spite of the gods' will. It's a journey full of encounters, loss, and traps, it's a trail to blaze, a quest to follow... By using the first part of *The Aeneid*, which focuses on the journey, as a starting point for this new show, I wanted to work on questions of exile and memory, by building onstage a narrative which would borrow from the way memory itself works. To evoke the journey of Aeneas and his companions after the fall of Troy, we explored a narration by fragments, disjointed and shattered, halfway between dream and nightmare, a space-time where the past and the future are constantly intertwining with the present. That's what this journey evokes in me, the sensation of living in a halfway state: between present and reality, between memory and the past, a sort of "no man's land of the stateless". The idea that those characters find themselves at the border between several spaces, several times. Aeneas' journey is built via those layers of accumulated memories which tell at once of the evolution and transformation of one person's identity through their experience of the journey, and of their memory of it. It's this shifting identity, between past and present, which I want to delicately explore in this new project.

Is revisiting the story of an exile through the memory of the one who experienced it a way to talk about current events? Who is Aeneas for you?

Kevin Keiss : Virgil's poem is a score which could be put to music, performed and danced by an archimime, a sort of virtuoso expressionist dancer of the time. It's this playful aspect which was at the heart of my work as a writer and translator. Virgil is constantly calling on our memory of Ulysses' journey. But Aeneas is a sort of anti-Ulysses. Unlike the Homeric hero, who fights the gods to return to his beloved Ithaca, Aeneas is a stateless man who wanders the seas looking for a hospitable land where he could found a new city. Our anthropological reading of the poem shines a light on the question of the performance, on the challenge to represent the journey, the storms, and the gods, ghosts, and the dead Aeneas encounters onstage. The narrative isn't linear. Juno's wrath or Mercury crossing the sky are first and foremost theatrical motifs. What I'm interested in is the way Antiquity "acts" on our modernity, what it "does" to it. Antiquity—precisely because it's so far from us—allows us to think differently, through those gaps. Every Roman was at once a citizen of Rome and a citizen of the town that was his *origo*, even if he had never lived in either of them. *The Aeneid* upsets our certainties about the question of identity. Aeneas' identity never ceases to change; he's the hero who founds not Rome but Lavinium, but also a stateless Trojan hero looking for his origins. And to change doesn't mean to stop being oneself, but to be oneself in a different way. Maëlle and I see Aeneas first and foremost as the hero of metamorphoses, the hero of mixed identity, always in movement. To be from here necessarily means to come from somewhere else. Even in fiction. Just like our memory, which is constantly reinventing itself.

Maëlle Poésy : I don't want to give the poem a specific temporal or spatial context, but rather to create onstage a place in which the story and the representation of the journey meet the imagination of the audience, their subjective vision. It's also the madness of the epic, which is as such very theatrical, which stimulates me: the gods talk to men, the living and the dead meet. The invisible become visible, which can only happen at the theatre. Aeneas is always meeting shadows, not only the shadows of the dead but also immortal and timeless gods, whose shape is always shifting. To represent this polytheism, the gods of the show speak different languages but can still understand each other... The living and the dead, gods and men come together onstage, they're all spectres, witnesses or actors of this wandering.

What other key elements presided to the writing of the show?

Maëlle Poésy : The text always finds its final form during rehearsal, in an exchange with the actors and the artistic team. The way we've chosen to articulate the story based on the poem required us to cut some episodes, to switch the order of others, to introduce elements of narration we came up with to highlight certain elements of Virgil's poem. The show sits at the crossing of three interdependent modes of writing: fragments from the first six chants of *The Aeneid* translated from Latin by Kevin, a few episodes we wrote ourselves, and the changes that happened during rehearsal, which is characteristic of the way our company works.

Kevin Keiss : I translated Virgil into material for the actors. My work as a writer and translator alternates between the precision of Virgil's text and moments where I drift away from it, when it is necessary to render its oral, sensory, and rhythmic power. The text we gave the actors works like blank verse: a series of juxtaposed paragraphs, like so many disparate elements whose coherence and continuity will have to be figured out during rehearsal. I didn't go so far as not to separate words, as they did in ancient texts, but I removed commas and other signs of punctuation as much as possible, in order to give the actors the choice to interpret the meaning of their lines. Units of breath can create a rhythm. A potential rhythm, which can then find its expression in the bodies and voices of the actors.

For the first time in one of your plays, actors will share the stage with dancers. How is the narration split between them?

Maëlle Poésy : It seems crucial to me for the narration to be built not only on the text, but also on the bodies of the performers. But in the show, there's no clear delineation between the roles, they all carry the story. There's this idea that the group's movement could be the governing principle of the creation, a telling of the journey expressed through a metaphorical translation, a rhythm, and a continuity which would create the notion of an infinite cycle in this crossing of the lands and the seas. A journey which, even after it is over, is forever being experienced again in the memory of he who left, whose spatial and temporal borders are getting thinner and thinner. The journey never ends, it's always ongoing, whether in real time or in dreams. For this group, there's always the idea of going towards somewhere else, to be in transit, on the way from one place to another.

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