

## AND...

## CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

*Le Tribunal sur le Congo* by Milo Rau, encounter with Milo Rau,  
July 8 at 11:00, cinéma Utopia-Manutention

## NAVE OF IMAGES, église des Célestins

Excerpts of *Hate Radio* by Milo Rau (2013), then  
*The Repetition – History/ies of theatre (I)*, July 10 at 14:30

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- July 29 and 30, 2018, Festival Grec, Barcelona (Spain)
- September 1<sup>st</sup> to 4, Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin (Germany)
- September 22 to October 5, Théâtre des Amandiers, Nanterre
- October 25 and 26, Gessnerallee, Zürich (Swiss)
- October 31 and November 1<sup>st</sup>, Frankfurt (Germany)
- November 9 to 11, Romaeuropa Festival, Roma (Italy)
- November 16, Théâtre Chur (Swiss)
- January 9 to 11, 2019, le Lieu Unique, Nantes
- January 16 to 19, NTGent Stadstheater, Gent (Belgium)
- February 5 and 6, Comédie de Reims
- May 8 to 5, Piccolo Teatro, Milan (Italy)

## THE REPETITION. HISTORY/IES OF THEATRE (I)

Milo Rau's *La Reprise – History/ies of theatre (I)* is another expression of the German-speaking Swiss director's desire to explore what the theatre can do when faced with reality. The product of collective work following a shockingly violent true story (the murder of a gay man in Liège in 2012 by four young men), it is for Milo Rau a way to tell the origins of a modern tragedy. And he challenges the audience about the representation of this tragedy, and the questions it asks: How to bring a victim to life on the stage? How to tackle History head on? How to represent violence on the stage? What is emotion, truth, presence, artistic engagement? With this deep, intense show, Milo Rau tries to use those questions to define the essence of the theatre as art: to use reality as a source, not to imitate it on the stage, but for the performance to "become real," and lead to true catharsis.

## MILO RAU

Born in 1977 in Switzerland, Milo Rau has spent the past fifteen years creating performative plays with his production company, International Institute of Political Murder. Whether he is talking about the downfall of the Ceaucescus, of the Rwandan genocide, of the war in the Congo, or of the Dutroux affair, he always turns the stage into a place of experimentation and exploration, which reflects his constant desire to confront the real and to consider the time of the performance as catharsis. He has recently been appointed director of the Ghent National Theatre, starting with the 2018/2019 season.

72<sup>th</sup>  
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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GYMNASÉ DU LYCÉE AUBANEL

## INTERVIEW WITH MILO RAU

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**Your work as a director cannot be separated from a reflection about theatre. In that sense, the name of your production company is significant...**

**Milo Rau:** *IIPM (International Institute of Political Murder)* is a company that produces films, performances, exhibitions, books, and plays. Its name hints at my approach to political trauma, affairs, and murders, with shows like *Hate Radio* (about the Rwandan genocide) and *The Last Days of the Ceausescus*, or the film *The Congo Tribunal* (which is more about economic murder). I write in various media, it depends on the project: sometimes it's a film, sometimes a more classic play like *Lenin*, sometimes an avant-garde play like *Five Easy Pieces*, about Marc Dutroux, with seven children. The basic set-up remains in general a classic one, though: actors standing on a stage, with an audience watching them.

**In *La Reprise*, you mention the murder of Ihsane Jarfi. What does it have to do with a “history/ies of the theatre”?**

We consciously chose to use the plural, like Godard did: “histories of the theatre”. I began my research for this play with three actors, Sara De Bosschere, Sébastien Foucault, and Johan Leysen, with whom I've worked for a long time. Tom Adjibi then joined us after a series of auditions. And at the end, almost by chance, dog keeper Suzy Cocco and warehouse clerk Fabian Leenders, both amateur actors, joined us as well. Together, we asked ourselves a number of questions: Why do we do theatre? How? For what purpose? I realised that if I didn't want to fall into the trap of autobiographical truths, I needed the show to be based on something else, something objective. Ihsane Jarfi was tortured by a group of young men for hours and then killed for no reason. He hadn't done anything to them, he was just coming out of a gay bar as they stood on the street and started talking to him. What happened then can only be reconstituted based on the testimonies of the murderers, one of whom we met in prison. Their actions were extremely brutal, but how can we stage this story? How can one play a murderer? What's mourning? How can one beat somebody?

***La Reprise* is also the French title of an essay by Søren Kierkegaard (known as *Repetition* in English). What does repetition mean for you?**

Repetition has played a very important role in my work for almost 15 years now. Even though only two or three of my 50 or so plays, films, and essays are actual reenactments, this word has been almost automatically linked to my name. So I wondered: why not open the show about the “histories of the theatre” with a case study? What I find interesting about this format is that many of the things that interest me about theatre converge there. For instance, the fact that—especially in a murder case—statements can be drastically different. A testimony, a memory, or a defence don't refer to historical truth, they're what Kierkegaard called “recollections”: the mother of the victim, but also the murderer, or the victim's ex-boyfriend, all of them try to make sense of the event on an existential level. They remember it, but at the same time they repeat it according to their respective—and most often unconscious—intentions; it is, according to Kierkegaard, a “forward” repetition.

**Your shows are the result of a montage or experimental work with the actors. Can you describe how you work with them?**

There's usually a first step during which we do our research more or less together, we do read-throughs either on the stage or not. Then we begin building the project, and after that I create a version of what we've worked on on my own. This is followed by a second step of “rehearsals”, during which we write the theatrical text; we “turn it into a play”. In any case, I never have a text ready before the first rehearsal, it's almost a dogma. Right from the start I know who will be on the stage, whereas the text, the story, the themes can change drastically. In *The Civil Wars*, I'd chosen accounts by jihadis. I started working with the actors... and in the end, we told the actors' stories. For *The Moscow Trials*, I wanted to do a play about the Bukharin trial in 1937. I went to Russia, where I met Pussy Riot, before they were sued by the authorities. I decided to work with them to create a “trial” against Putin. When I work on a play, the story ends in a different way than what I expected. When I write a book, sometimes it ends as a play, a project for a TV series, or an exhibition. Everything changes along the way. The journey is extremely important.

**How do you feel when some of your plays cause a scandal?**

Since many of my plays deal with trauma, imagination can take over, and their themes become scandalous. For instance, for *The 120 Days of Sodom*, based on the Pasolini film, I had twelve handicapped people and four actors on a stage in Zurich, torturing each other, with fifteen minutes of live sex, etc. But it's actually a play about the sadness of death, the tenderness between human beings, all those things. Those plays are the antithesis of how they start: something provocative at the beginning and very tender at the end. I always start with the actors on the stage, I come with some ideas, without knowing what we'll do with them. If the subject is very provocative or violent, like the Marc Dutroux case or the Jarfi murder, the way people work on it becomes the subject of the play, in other words, it becomes about how we deal with it. The actors represent that process.

**If the stage creates questions, and spectators are particularly active...**

For the audience, watching is real work. I don't really like the idea of performance as it was done in the 1970s, where people were asked to vote, to go onstage, etc. I think it makes impossible the work of the audience, that is, to watch, to listen, to imagine what's happening: to commit on an existential level. The spectator is a witness. They're the most important person on the stage. True action happens in our collective imagination, in the space between the audience and the one who plays. After that, it's possible to come back to another reality. The spectator and the actor have to create the real together. It's that moment of sharing I'm interested in, it's where the political can arise.

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