

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE

with Julie Duclos, July 5 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

SHOW

Republic of the bees, based on Maurice Maeterlinck, Céline Schaeffer, July 16 to 22, Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs

ACCESSIBILITY

For people with hearing loss, La FabricA is equipped with a magnetic loop.

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- October 16 to 18, 2019, La Comédie Centre dramatique national de Reims
- November 13 and 14, Centre dramatique national de Normandie-Rouen
- November 27 to 30, Théâtre du Nord
Centre dramatique national Lille Tourcoing Hauts-de-France
- December 17 and 18, Centre dramatique national
de Besançon Franche Comté
- February 4 to 8, 2020, Théâtre national de Bretagne, Rennes
- February 13 and 14, La Filature Scène nationale, Mulhouse
- February 22 to March 21, Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Paris
- March 25 to 29, Célestins - Théâtre de Lyon
- April 2 and 3, Théâtre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Scène nationale

PELLEAS AND MELISANDE

Melisande is a young woman on the run. To prince Golaud, who finds her crying in the woods and tells her of his status and lineage, she says she comes from far away. And it is with this person—and not with a story—that Golaud falls in love, taking care of her, marrying her, and bringing her to her grandfather's castle. There, Melisande meets Pelleas, the prince's half-brother. And that says it all. Or rather, all is unsaid, suggestion, and projection... What a fertile ground for forbidden love and the violent end it can but lead to. A structure halfway between heaven and earth, and which Julie Duclos wanted to inhabit. Because like Maurice Maeterlinck's writing itself, the characters are "concrete and poetic," and often silent. To try to understand them, the director imagined a scenography mixing theatre and cinema, multiplying shots, axes, and angles. A dramatic process which leads to many revelations and elevations, and which reminds us that the Belgian symbolist always tried to see the world beyond appearances.

JULIE DUCLOS

An actress who trained at the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique as well as an avid cinephile, **Julie Duclos** began her career as a director by working on improvisations with her company (*A Lover's Discourse: Fragments, Masculin/Féminin [Male/Female], Nos Serments [Our Oaths]*). She then directed a contemporary play, Dorothee Zumstein's *MayDay*. An associate artist of the Colline – Théâtre national until 2017 and of the Théâtre national de Bretagne, she is coming to the Festival d'Avignon for the first time with *Pelleas and Melisande*.

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.

Pelleas and Melisande by Maurice Maeterlinck,
published by the editions Le Livre de Poche and Espaces Nord,
are on sale at the bookshop in the Maison Jean Vilar.

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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INTERVIEW WITH JULIE DUCLOS

Your first directions (*A Lover's Discourse: Fragments, Masculine/Feminine, Our Oaths*) were based on improvisation sessions with your actors. You then directed *MayDay* by Dorothée Zumstein, a contemporary text. Why did you now choose to direct this classic of symbolist literature?

Julie Duclos : My first three projects are inseparable from a group of actors I met at the conservatory, and with whom I invented my research tools, my way of working and of directing. To begin with a theme, a film, or a non-dramatic text meant beginning a process in which, through improvisation, we'd come up with a text that would be our own. I then directed Dorothée Zumstein's *MayDay*, a play inspired by actual events about childhood and memory, a journey back into time through several generations of women. That project was the first time I tackled a play that already existed. When you're improvising with actors, the writing happens as you invent things, it's the rehearsals that lead to the writing. When you're dealing with a pre-existing work, the process is different, the writing is already there and offers you a dream, leads to visions. It's always the opposite movement. Unfolding the images of Dorothée Zumstein's text led to a sort of aesthetic turning point in my work. Directing *Pelleas and Melisande* today is part of this continuity, it seemed obvious to me. I've lived with this play a long time. Maurice Maeterlinck's writing is full of spirituality. That's what called to me first, that and its poetic dimension. I see it as a challenge when it comes to directing it.

For this elliptic play, considered by many impossible to perform, you've chosen to use at once a mobile space and video.

I can only talk about the dreams that precede an as-yet unexplored work, since at the time of this interview, we have yet to begin rehearsing. My first visions were about the space, probably because the question of location is key in the play. Maeterlinck moves us in one instant (like at the movies) from a room in a castle to a fountain in the forest, or a cave, or a tunnel. The story of *Pelleas and Melisande*, until its tragic end, is part of that world, as if the fate of the characters was inseparable from the places they explore. The work we did on scenography was important to create a space that could be at once concrete and metaphorical. Everything seems to be happening in a ruined and abandoned world on the verge of collapse. It's almost an atmosphere of end times, echoing Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, or the films of Tarkovsky. With scenographer Hélène Jourdan, we tried to create a space full of possibilities, which could play with what's hidden or shown, because that's the way Maeterlinck's world works: full of unspoken things, it is permanently bathed in mystery. We will use the space, but also sound, video, and lights, to make the audience perceive what is left unsaid, or what is said beyond the words that are actually spoken, to accompany the inner world of the characters. This work is an invitation to connect to everything that is invisible.

Maurice Maeterlinck's writing is very musical. His "melody" reportedly inspired Claude Debussy's opera. How do you intend to work on it?

The almost recitative style chosen by Debussy, combined with the instrumental score, allows Maeterlinck's lyricism to soar. Tackling the text "naked," as it is written, is another approach. When you read the play, the writing is surprisingly simple and concrete. It's also in a permanent state of suspension, with a lot of repetitions, which gives it an almost mystical dimension. Maurice Maeterlinck called his writing "the tragic in daily life"; I like this expression a lot, for its paradoxical aspect. Similarly, my work with the actors must take this paradox, or this conjunction, into account: to include the spiritual and poetic dimension of the text, while remaining prosaic. The writing sits between heaven and earth. If it is embodied with that meaning in mind, the audience will be able to hear it that way. It's an experience we're offering, a journey through the tragedy of life. Not because the events will be tragic, but because each sentence expresses all the depth of the life of the one saying it, unbeknownst to him or her. All the tragedy of existence. I'm reminded of something Maeterlinck said, whose desire to rethink theatre was a way to rethink life: "*Do we really need to scream like the Atreidae for a God to show through our lives, and does he never come sit under the immobility of our lamp?*"

Melisande is now a classic figure of the lover, whom audiences like to see because it is also a mystery we can't quite grasp.

It's true, *Melisande* is herself an enigma. She's from somewhere else. We don't know where, or which country. We only know that she's been through a lot, that she's seen awful things, things too big for her to process. So big that Golaud doesn't dare question her. She fled, carrying within herself a story we won't ever hear. One can see a poetic and, of course, political metaphor in this exile. The audience is free to understand it that way, that's how Maeterlinck's writing works. But she's also a very concrete piece of data, established in the very first scene. When the play opens, *Melisande* is a foreigner, she's already suffered, probably already loved. Maybe it's her mystery that fascinates *Pelleas* so. What path has led her here? Where is she from? What is she fleeing? She's an exile. If *Melisande* isn't a metaphor, a legendary woman, or a romantic emanation, she could be one of those women we could come across today, somewhere in the world. *Pelleas* and *Melisande*'s love isn't the classic or bourgeois kind, it's a tragic love, in which the lovers seem bound by death floating above them. "*Oh! All the stars are falling!*" *Pelleas* says in *Melisande*'s arms. For Maurice Maeterlinck, love, and the language of love, was a way for the individual to rise. A way to discover, in this dying world, a spark of possibility, even if it ends up being snuffed out.

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