



A LOOK BACK AT THE 67th FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON

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The 67th Festival d'Avignon ended on Friday 26 July 2013.
Certain Off venues will continue until Wednesday 31 July.

Conceived with two associate artists, Dieudonné Niangouna and Stanislas Nordey, the 67th Festival was marked by the encounter between artists working in Africa and Europe. Together, they offered performances of the world displaying a genuine faith in art. The strength of poetic speech resonated on the stages, notably with Peter Handke's *Walk about the Villages*, staged by Stanislas Nordey, or with *Shéda*, written and directed by Dieudonné Niangouna.

For the most part created for the Festival d'Avignon or presented for the first time in France, the shows displayed the extraordinary multiplicity of contemporary writing and the vitality of the performing arts. The programming was woven around artists who, for some of them, grew up these last few years with the Festival, and also with the discovery of new personalities, invited to the Festival for the first time. It was decidedly open to the world and queried the future. These challenges were at the heart of Nicolas Klotz and Élisabeth Perceval's film, *The Wind Blows through the Cour d'honneur*. They grasped the spirit of today's Festival through their cinematographic view.

Combining reflection with the stage, the Theatre of Ideas created with Nicolas Truong and the publications it generated, underlined the complementarity between philosophers and artists to think about our society and its future.

Increasingly involved in the Festival, the spectators took part in the many proposals offered to them linked to the shows. The strength of their accounts on the place of theatre in their life and on the progression of the shows within each of them was elucidated by the creation *Cour d'honneur* by Jérôme Bel.

We now estimate that the attendance of the 67th Festival d'Avignon will have reached 95% with 128,000 tickets sold to which can be added the 13,000 spectators of free shows, mainly Groupe F's *Open!* as well as the 13,000 entries to the encounters of the École d'Art, the debates and free readings.

A genuine professional forum of the performing arts allowing all the sector's stakeholders to meet, the Festival d'Avignon holds an essential place for them. For the second year, the Maison professionnelle has made it possible to bring together some of the professional bodies and organizations at the Collège Viala. In 10 years, the Festival has actively contributed, in particular through the publication of the "Performing Arts Professional's Guide to Avignon," to the gathering and exchanges of a sector that must fight the reduction in its resources and continue to invent new ways of supporting artists and spectators. The presence of Aurélie Filippetti, the minister of culture and communication who came to the Festival on several occasions, the visit of six other government ministers and the strong presence of elected officials, once again made the Festival d'Avignon a venue for the critical debate on cultural policies. These last few years, the regional administrations have gotten particularly involved in these issues, as is shown by the five debates that they organized at the Cloître Saint-Louis this summer.

The opening of FabricA, the rehearsal and residence venue of the Festival, which handled the project management, keeping to deadlines (construction in 12 months) and budget (10 million euros), also marked this Festival. Simple to use and with a modest operating budget, this venue will increase the Festival's capacity to support artists and will facilitate its role as producer (this year once again, the Festival was responsible for the delegated product of *Walk about the Villages* and *Cour d'honneur*).

In the Monclar and Champfleury districts, at the intersection where FabricA is installed, many projects were undertaken in cooperation with elementary schools and various associative branches that, despite the major difficulties encountered these last few years, are continuing their commitment. The premieres of *The Parable of the Butterflies* and *Open!* have made possible the involvement of these districts' residents in the Festival. Accordingly, FabricA is anchoring the Festival even more firmly in its territory, with which links have been tightened since its executive management moved to Avignon in 2004, then the entire permanent team a few years later.

Along with this insertion in its territory, these three dimensions – creation venue for contemporary theatre and dance, place and role of the spectator, professional forum – have been at the heart of the Festival project led for 10 years by Hortense Archambault and Vincent Baudriller.

If the Festival d'Avignon occupies the place it does today in contemporary creation, it is also thanks to the commitment of the artists who make it, year after year, and notably to that of the associate artists, as attests the success of the program *Artists One Day at the Festival*.

The many actions undertaken over the years to link the spectator to the contemporary creation process and to have him share its risks have, over the long run, borne their fruits. The public increasingly answers the call: at equivalent capacities, the average attendance reached, over the last decade, the never-before-attained rate of 91.6% (the attendance rate of the preceding decade was 76.6%). The public has gotten younger: the average age of the festival-goer today is 40, five years less than in 1996, and the share of youth ticket prices went from 6% in 2002 to 11% in 2013.

Permitting people who will perhaps become spectators to discover the theatre has always been one of the Festival's critical missions. This has notably been continued through two operations launched in 2004: Lycéens en Avignon, which welcomed this year 700 secondary school students and their teachers from 13 French regions, accompanied by the Ceméas and the Festival and, moreover, the partnership with the Avignon-Le Pontet penitentiary, which has permitted prisoners to discover the Festival and its artists each year. In relying on many relays and associations, crossings of the Festival have also been proposed to people who might think that it was not meant for them.

Continuously increasing these last 10 years, the presence of the directors of major festivals and theatre institutions worldwide, like that of the many representatives of the foreign press, have notably strengthened the prescriber's role of the Festival d'Avignon on the international scene.

Hortense Archambault and Vincent Baudriller will end their role as directors of the Festival d'Avignon on 31 August.
Olivier Py will succeed them on 1 September.

The Festival continues its history, ever in motion.

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