

## AND...

## SHOWS

with the students of the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique

*We'll have everything*, Christiane Taubira and Anne-Laure Liégeois, July 8-23, Jardin Ceccano

*Impromptu 1663*, Clément Hervieu-Léger, July 17-19,

Gymnase du lycée Saint-Joseph

*Claire, Anton and Them*, François Cervantes, July 17-19,

Gymnase du lycée Saint-Joseph

*Juliet, the beginning*, Grégoire Aubin and Marceau Deschamps-Ségura, July 23-25, Gymnase du lycée Saint-Joseph

## WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Research and creation, Process of creation – ANR, with in particular Yann-Joël Collin, July 12 at 10:00, Cloître Saint-Louis

**Roberto Zucco** by Bernard-Marie Koltès, is published by Éditions de Minuit. **Prologue. Sur le théâtre** and **Lalla (ou la terreur)** by Didier-Georges Gabily is published by Actes-Sud papiers.

## ROBERTO ZUCCO AND PROLOGUE ABOUT THEATRE

"I've looked for you, Roberto, I've looked for you, I've betrayed you, I've cried for you, cried to the point that I've become a tiny island in the middle of the sea, about to drown under the last waves. I've suffered so much that my pain could fill the chasms of the earth and make the volcanoes spill over," says the Girl to Roberto Zucco, a character based on an actual serial killer, exalted by Bernard-Marie Koltès's words. A murderer without a motive, he decimated his own family, killed innocent citizens, and executed policemen. On his quest to find himself, he meets a rebellious young girl with no identity, who falls in love with him: the Girl. Her rage will lead her to lose herself for him in a place with the fateful name of Little Chicago. Around them, society growls and rumbles, even though it has shown itself to be incapable of containing the violence it creates. How could it condemn what it has given birth to, adrift mothers and melancholic detectives, virginal big sisters or pimps for brothers? So Zucco destroys, without any further excuse. For this story inspired by a much too real tragedy, for those incomprehensible actions and through this character who commits more and more crimes, Yann-Joël Collin wanted every one of the students of the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique to become a part of this monster. On the stage, they'll present this desperate attempt at identification, which shines a light on what makes the human.

## YANN-JOËL COLLIN

Yann-Joël Collin and Jean-François Sivadier once met writer and director Didier-Georges Gabily, who would play a fundamental role in their artistic development. With him, they created the T'chang'G! group, whose emblematic project remains the diptych *Violences I and II* in 1991. Meanwhile, Yann-Joël Collin joined the school of the Théâtre National de Chaillot, then directed by Antoine Vitez, where he forged lasting friendships. Those would form the foundation, in 1993, of the company La Nuit surprise par le Jour (Cyril Bothorel, Éric Louis, Gilbert Marcantognini). Together, they took part in *The Snowmen*, directed by Stéphane Braunschweig, before creating exceptional artistic and human adventures, including Bertolt Brecht's *Man Equals Man* and *The Elephant Calf*; William Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (Avignon 1999, in the Cloître des Célestins) Yann-Joël Collin has also appeared as an actor in plays directed by Anointer Vitez, Daniel Mesguich, Claire Lasne-Darcueil, Éric Louis, Wissam Arbache, Olivier Py...

## BERNARD-MARIE KOLTÈS

Bernard-Marie Koltès wrote the play *Roberto Zucco* in 1988, following the arrest of serial killer Roberto Succo. The last play of a prolific career, it obeys the same ideals of rebellion and liberty the writer defended throughout his life. From his brief stint as stage manager at the Théâtre national de Strasbourg to his encounter with Patrice Chéreau, from his travels in Africa, the United States, and the USSR to his drug addiction and his admiration for Rimbaud, Koltès left his mark on the 20th century with his writing "full of anxiety," until his death from AIDS in 1989. His plays, such as *Quay West*, *Struggle of the Blacks and the Dogs*, *Salinger*, *Night Just Before the Forests*, translated and performed throughout the world, remain, by their violence and intensity, perfectly modern.

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# INTERVIEW WITH YANN-JOËL COLLIN

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**How did you work with the students of the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique? Why did you choose to do this play with them?**

**Yann-Joël Collin** : I brought the students together last summer to talk about what they wanted to do. I needed to hear their opinion. As for me, a few years ago, I'd started thinking with my friend Laurent Pavlovsky (a film director) about staging *Roberto Zucco*. If I then offered to do that play with them, what I wanted was for everyone to be involved. I quickly realised that it didn't make sense for only one actor to play Roberto Zucco because, on the one hand it wouldn't have been fair, and on the other I'd realised while re-reading the text that every tableau works like an interrogation about Roberto Zucco. Seeing him as a multiple character became troubling. It all came together to create the impression that any young man suffering from the same kind of identity loss could become this monster that no one can understand. He find himself beyond any kind of consistency that would explain them, be it psychological or social. That's what fascinated Koltès, and what he tackled by writing that play and opposing Roberto Zucco to our society. Zucco is the failure of its functionality. There's a reason why he's the only one to have a name, while all the others are called Warden, Whore, Mother, Sister, Big Brother, Pimp, Matron... Every scene of the play is a failure of "function," and it's often Roberto Zucco who finds himself lost in that world. To try to be that role is a desperate attempt at identification, which lets you shine a light on the human. To ask the question of identity/identification to young actors is to force them to ask the question for themselves. I like to work with what they are. I don't deny the reality of their individuality. "You have to make do with it," as Gabilly said, and that's what allows me to bring about the story of the character and to lead them as far as possible. The more they reveal about themselves, the more they own what's at stake in the performance and defend their own *raison d'être* onstage.

**Speaking of Didier-Georges Gabilly, why did you add this *Prologue about theatre, a painful text about an infanticide that seems to be a female answer to Roberto Zucco's violence*?**

I needed some complementary material that would allow me to shine a light on the words of women without breaking up the linearity of Koltès's text. It would allow me to push the actresses to be more than just themselves. This monologue is an excerpt from a novel Gabilly wrote, *Physiologie d'un accouplement (Physiology of a coupling)*, and which he reused verbatim in the play *Lalla (ou le terreur) [Lalla (or the terror)]*. It allows the actresses to "give birth" to words, and it's a process that exists in *Roberto Zucco* as well. It's a recurring motif in Gabilly's work, the attempt at reconstitution to talk about violence. He's not interested in judgment, the person who tells the story isn't the one the story's about. And yet simply through the movement of language, something happens. Someone calls for help. The character of the Girl in Koltès could be an extension of that role: she doesn't have a name, she refuses her own identity. She's not a girl at all, actually. She's raped by Zucco, and that turns her into a "female," a womb to ravage.

**How do those two discourses respond to and confront each other?**

There's a certain lyricism to Gabilly that arises from the actor "giving birth," while Koltès is in a confrontational mode. He says all that he thinks. The movement of the text allows the actor to find the situation. It's a form of physiological writing that leads the actor to the place of accomplishment, but also of failure. Those two writers had a relationship to writing that was closer to an urge. They physically struggled with their language, to make it uncomfortable and see how far they could go. Writing becomes carnal, because it is projected speech that needs to be made to face its own violence. In Gabilly's work, it starts very small: "If only it could shut up..." and then all of a sudden, the dam breaks down, and the actor is given the opportunity to embody a character. They also share this quest for identity. They both ask the same question: "What do we do now?" And that's a question I want to ask the audience, the actors; I want the stakes to be high for everyone, and to recreate the experience of theatre. Together.

**This question of transmission seems very important to you...**

My work with the students consists in bringing them to face themselves and the audience within the present of the performance. It's an active process. Wondering how we're going to make theatre is a full-fledged part of my pedagogical approach, it's a risk I take by asking questions to the actors I work with. I'm here to force them to face that. That's what allows them to become artists. Onstage, I like to show how things are put together, but not in a didactic way. I just want to show, humbly, what it means to make theatre, to be an actor. In a way, that puts them at risk, but they like it! To share that difficulty with the audience, that's what makes us human. This adventure isn't a frozen thing, because anything can happen. Like a tightrope walker who might fall at any moment, we exist within the fragility of what we're doing. There's also this pleasure to seeing fabrication and artifice.

**How did you tackle the question of violence?**

"No one is a witness to the witness." What I mean is that as soon as you try to talk about outside violence onstage, it creates a distance, it even becomes obscene. What you then have to do is deal with the obscene. Violence in and of itself is difficult to deal with, because reconstitution always makes it look tamer than reality. However, you can create ruptures. Koltès forces us to face ourselves. How does society, and therefore the audience, watch everyday violence without being able to respond to it? How can we face our doubts? I don't have an answer when it comes to the violence I see every day. Only questions. But it allows us to look it in the eye and to wonder about who we are, how we work. It is, in a way, a way to oppose ignorance. To see our own flaws in other people's flaws is a promise that we can do something together.

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