

AND...

PRESS CONFERENCE

with Aurélie Lannoy and Karolien De Bleser from Ontroerend Goed,
July 8 at 11:00, cour du Cloître Saint-Louis

AT THE CHARTREUSE-CNES DE VILLENEUVE LEZ AVIGNON

Macbeth Philosopher, Olivier Py et Enzo Verdet with the Centre pénitentiaire
Avignon-Le Pontet, July 17 to 19

A Night of Odysseys, Sonia Wieder-Atherton, July 21 to 23

Reading of his own texts by Laurent Gaudé :

The City of the Malli, last city in the world, July 10 at 11:30

Between those two countries where I have brothers, July 10 at 14:30

Colonel Barbaque, July 10 at 16:00

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 19 to 23, 2019, Théâtre de Namur (Belgique)
- November 29 to December 1st, Théâtre Nouvelle Génération - Centre dramatique national de Lyon
- January 9 and 10, 2020, Théâtre de Châtillon
- March 21, Théâtre Jean Marais, Saint-Fons
- March 26 to 29, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Charleroi

£¥€\$

On a stage bathed in dimmed lights, halfway between a shady dive bar and a trading room, seven of you sit down around blackjack-style wooden tables. You trade hard cash for tokens, and now it's time to invest, sell, outbid each other, and stretch your limits! Whether you're a winner or a loser, whether you pronounce it *Lies*, *eyes*, or "Pound, Yen, Euro, Dollar," £¥€\$ is all about money. Trying to reproduce the laws of the market, the Ontroerend Goed company invites you to a high-stakes interactive experience! Their daring gamble: to select eighty members of the audience during each performance and introduce them to the select world of the "1%" richest people on the planet, of the bankers and traders. Their goal: to better understand the global financial system and to make us realise how it impacts our lives. If money can't buy happiness, doesn't it rule the world anyway? "*The best way to rob a bank is to own one*," as William K. Black, deputy director of the savings and loans department of California, once put it.

ONTROEREND GOED

Founded in 1994 in Ghent, the Flemish company **Ontroerend Goed**, with Alexander Devriendt as its artistic director, writes and produces shows in which every contributor becomes "co-owner" of the work, always on the border between theatre and performance art. Incisive, unpredictable, and often interactive, their creations (*A Game of You*, *Fight Night*, *Are we not drawn onward to new erA*) tour the world and explore the place and relationships between individuals in our societies. This is Ontroerend Goed's first appearance at the Festival d'Avignon.

73rd

EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,700 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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#FDA19

FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 73RD

JULY 5 6 7 | 9 10 11 12 13 14
LA CHARTREUSE-CNES DE VILLENEUVE LEZ AVIGNON

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER DEVRIENDT AND AURÉLIE LANNOY

Your creations always explore spaces halfway between theatre and performance. *£¥€\$* is an interactive show. Why this unusual dramatic and scenographic choice?

Alexander Devriendt : Even in this format, the possibilities of theatre remain. There is no difference for us between our more “normal” projects, our plays, and this type of creation. For us, the best theatre is always a theatre of immersion. It’s what moves it into the 21st century. We use interactivity when it is essential to what we’re saying. For *£¥€\$*, we had to. We didn’t specifically want to make a show for people who love interactive theatre, but a show about money, by finding the form that would speak to as many people as possible. During the last financial crisis, I had this feeling that I couldn’t do anything about what was going on, that I couldn’t interact with it. That’s why, in this show about finance, I wanted to put the audience in the driver’s seat, to give them the role of those who control everything: traders, bankers, the infamous “1%.” We wanted to create an atmosphere of casino, because we realised during our research that many bankers handle money as if it were a game. The idea being to always make more money to have more money. We wanted to make the audience see the reality of the world of bankers, to make them experience it. We also discovered that bankers aren’t as knowledgeable as we thought they were. They’re often reacting to what’s going on, and sometimes lose track of reality. They forget that actual people, actual lives are at stake... The casino atmosphere reinforces the idea that money is immaterial, virtual: we’re using tokens here, not real money. We’re so drawn into the game that we lose all sense of reality.

You create a relationship of trust with the audience, you like to play with their emotions, which leaves a lot of room for the unexpected. How did you create the character of the croupier, and how do you work to build a relationship with the audience?

Aurélie Lannoy : With Ontroerend Goed, us actors are always in a different reality. We’re not playing characters, strictly speaking. Here we’re croupiers, that is, versions of ourselves in this situation. There’s a narrative, but nothing is fixed. As we exchange with the audience, questions and, sometimes, unexpected reactions can come up. After many trials, all those elements led to the creation of a more complete script, with many possibilities. We learn new things with each performance, and are always sharing tips and tricks between actors to make the next game even better. It’s becoming more and more precise. We learn as much from the audience as they do from us. For a real relationship to be built, we have to show empathy. You have to like people, to like playing this game. We are benevolent guides here to create trust and the greatest transparency we can.

Some people are suspicious at first, others project all their anger onto us; money is a complicated subject which doesn’t bring out the best in people. You have to be subtle to draw everyone into the metaphor we’re using. Even if we’re in control of everything, the audience must feel that they’re the ones making the decisions, that they’re the ones responsible. For the croupier, it’s a balancing act.

The subject of *£¥€\$* is universal and very political. It’s about the world of finance in a society that’s becoming more and more globalised. The title, which can be read as *Lies, Eyes*, or as a series of currency symbols, carries the idea of mistrust, of anxiety...

Alexander Devriendt : The concept of money like the concept of democracy are always cause for mistrust because they’re too “big.” We can only trust what’s close to us, but at the same time we’re so connected to others that we have no choice but to trust them.

Aurélie Lannoy : I think the most powerful line in the whole text is “If trust is real, money is real.” Everyone must believe that. If suspicion settles in, we can no longer know where we’re going, it’s chaos.

Alexander Devriendt : I didn’t want to show only the bad side of the financial system. To be honest, I was more of an anti-capitalist when we began working on the project than now. The idea of growth made a lot of things possible. I find the invention of money beautiful, it’s absurd but amazing. The problem today is that growth is too fast, so the system collapses at regular intervals. In the show, there comes a time when the investments and the risks that are taken are no longer sensible. Introducing the ideas of credit, hedge funds, and derivatives allows us to show that it’s going too far. In a way, capitalism works, some structures make sense, but we have to think about what needs to be changed. I don’t know what exactly, nobody does. Trying to understand is but the first step. We all believe in money, regardless of our origins or beliefs. It’s a universal religion of sorts. It was fascinating to realise that I knew so little about a subject so present and important in our lives. If we want to change things, we have to look into it.

Aurélie Lannoy : People who don’t know anything about the world of finance and the way money works come out of the show having experienced something powerful. They’ve learnt things, and not only on an intellectual level.

Alexander Devriendt : I believe that any good creation must have an emotional part, but also be a challenge. While I do enjoy works that don’t challenge my tastes, my beliefs, or the way I see the world, I love those that upset me, that force me to think differently. If art isn’t a challenge, it’s not worth it.

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Interview conducted by Malika Baaziz and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach