

EL SYNDROME

The École supérieure de théâtre Bordeaux Aquitaine has built strong ties with Argentinian theatre. Working with Sergio Boris and Adrian Silber, a director of the new Buenos Aires scene, the students of the third class of the school have dived into the capital, attracted by its vitality and unique identity. Starting with this very real situation—fourteen young Frenchmen and -women and two Argentinians come together to put on a play—Sergio Boris has imagined a dramatic situation and explored the ideological symbols tied to both France and Argentina. Come to study theatre in Buenos Aires, a group of French students get hold back for two years. They're living in an abandoned house, on the banks of the delta of the Rio de la Plata, in the neighbourhood of Tigre. We assist, as the time goes by, the chicken marchand, Sosa; the Delacroix Troupe; forgetting to love; a moving river of the delta; a mirror that one can't see; the forgotten mother tongue...

The show will premiere on 8 July, 2015, at the Gymnase du lycée Saint-Joseph, Avignon.

SERGIO BORIS

The award-winning Argentinian actor, director, and playwright Sergio Boris has long worked for the cinema, most notably with directors Daniel Burman, Ariel Rotter, and Matías Lucchesi. On the stage, he's taken part in shows by Sergio Renán and Luciano Suardi, but also by Ricardo Bartís, with whom he has appeared in *El Pecado que no se puede nombrar* from 1998 to 2000 and in *La Pesca*, which played at the Festival d'Avignon in 2008. He created *La Bohemia* in 2001, *El Sabor de la derrota* in 2004, *El Perpetuo Socorro* in 2008, and *El Cadáver de un recuerdo enterrado vivo* in 2010. *Viejo, Solo y Puto*, created in 2011, has been constantly touring since, and has received numerous awards in Argentina for its direction, lighting, scenography, and acting. Sergio Boris's plays put the actor at the heart of an often-realistic scenography, which lets the atmosphere evolve naturally. Time is continuous, much like in cinematic long takes, allowing for the condensation of a wide range of human experiences. Preferring an accumulation of possible readings and interpretations—social, political, poetical—to the spelling out of an open conflict, Sergio Boris unveils the weight of the expectations, the dreams, the anxieties, and the desires that tie people together.

ÉSTBA

Established in 2007, the École supérieure de théâtre Bordeaux Aquitaine is one of the twelve other French national Drama schools specialized in the pre-professional training in theatre arts. The school is subsidized by the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Aquitaine region and the city of Bordeaux. At the end of the 3-year study program, the young actors will be graduated attesting that they are qualified professional actors and thanks to the grants provided by the Aquitaine region, the alumni will be assisted financially for their artistic projects during the following three years after their graduation. Since 2014, under the direction of Catherine Marnas, the éstba dedicated itself to give an international exposure. Implanted in the core of the TnBA (National Theatre of Bordeaux Aquitaine), the school is the intersection between the professionals (actors, directors, playwrights) and the theatre life.

INTERVIEW WITH SERGIO BORIS

You have been invited to direct a show for the Festival d'Avignon with the actor-students of the École supérieure de théâtre Bordeaux Aquitaine. How did you work with them?

Sergio Boris: This project was the result of a desire from the *éstba* to establish an exchange between the second-year students and Argentinian directors, namely, Claudio Tolcachir and me. The students will spend four weeks in Buenos Aires in February. They'll learn about the city's dramatic production, will attend a workshop with Claudio Tolcachir, and together we will start working on *El Syndrome*, which will be presented at the Festival d'Avignon, thanks to its partnership with French drama schools. After a first session of improvisation at the Espacio Callejón—a seminal location for independent theatre in Buenos Aires - that will last four weeks, we will meet again in June in Bordeaux, to put the last touches on the show.

Have you ever worked with students before, and with such a large group?

I have directed two graduation shows with the students of the National University of the Arts in Buenos Aires. I think that group work provides additional spatial, physical, and dramatic possibilities. An actor's skill can be moving, but only if it fits into a larger system of relationships with the others, and with the stage. A character only makes sense within the language of the whole. I'm interested precisely in the form an actor's expressivity takes, but even more so in his or her relationship to others. Everything I do rests on the idea that bodies accumulate dramatic tension. So I'd say having so many actors would be an asset for me. However, it's the first time I'll be working with French actors, and with such a short deadline.

What choices did you make to deal with the limited amount of time you'll have?

To mitigate this constraint, I established, before our February session, very clear work hypotheses. This kind of intense rhythm, in a short time, can be as beneficial as sessions spread out over a longer period of time. Beyond the rehearsals, I also consider that work on this show began with my first encounter with the students, in November, when they came to see my show *Viejo, solo y puto* at the Théâtre Garonne, in Toulouse. We exchanged ideas, talked about what we would like to work on. The time between our session together in Buenos Aires and the one in Bordeaux will also be a time of work; it won't be a break, but rather a period of maturation, an integral part of the creative process of *El Syndrome*.

What were those ideas for the show you shared with them?

This is what we're working with: a group of French students—seven young men, seven young women—and an Argentinian director, more precisely a director from Buenos Aires, and even more precisely a director from Villa Crespo, my neighbourhood. Knowing that, the first problem we face is how not to fall prey to ideological speculation about the symbols the French and Argentinians respectively stand for. This proposition is first and foremost an obligation to exchange with the other, the foreigner. As a dramatic tool, I put forward the idea that everyone speaks Spanish on the stage, broken

Spanish, maybe, but their own version of it. It allows us to work with a common language, but it also forces them to step out of the comfort zone created by their mother tongue, which is a way to stimulate creativity by getting in the way of our tendency to say everything. It highlights the particulars of the situation and turns it into a dramatic knot.

Will the show be the story of this group?

It's a starting point, but I want to transform it. The show is called *El Syndrome* because in February we will begin improvisations based on the following situation: after living in Buenos Aires for several months or several years, eleven French students realise, without being able to explain why, that they cannot, or will not, go home. Perhaps have they fallen ill and forgotten their mother tongue... They lead Bohemian lifestyles, go through love triangles... On a stormy night, three other Frenchmen arrive, looking for shelter a few months after France has ceased to exist. Things start spinning out of control, and a rally of now-former Frenchmen and -women is organised.

You mentioned playing with the symbols that Argentina and France stand for. Can you tell us more about it?

First of all, to figure the tension between the French characters and their country, one symptom of their illness could be that they cannot go home. What, then, becomes of France in their minds? Does it still exist? Have all French people left the country? And what if they had all become stateless, like the Romani I would like to look at the figure of the French as bearer of hope, study its messianic dimension. I once knew a Frenchman in Uruguay who owned a jeep and would drive us to this idyllic beach on which he lived, free and as close to nature as possible. To reach that place, you had to find the guy they called "the Frenchman," who then became a mythological figure, like Charon ferrying lost souls from one bank of the Styx to the other. We could therefore try to create a mythology of the "Frenchman" (or of the "Frenchwoman"), an uprooted being, a wanderer, with in his or her memory the image of a promised, or lost land. It is also a way to question, through this show, the values of the savage and the civilised, particularly their respective relationship to death, pushed aside by civilisation.

Once you've established those hypotheses, how are you going to work?

All those concepts allow us to start improvising. Signs, concrete gestures are in the end a way to start thinking. I don't want to illustrate predetermined ideas, to act them out on stage, but rather to encourage reflection about what is happening there. The essence of dramatic storytelling isn't narration. It is bodies and what they express that tell a story, a story made up of the accumulation of what we can see and feel on the stage. By choosing not to write a text before we begin rehearsing, but rather to write as we work, we give more weight to those things that aren't expressed by words to make up a story.

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Interview conducted by Marion Canelas / Translation Gaël Schmidt-Cléach

AND...

CINEMATOGRAPHIC TERRITORIES

Cañada Morrison directed by Matías Lucchesi

Screening followed by an encounter with Sergio Boris

10 July at 02:00 pm, Utopia-Manutention

SHOWS – Focus on Argentina

- *Dinamo* by Claudio Tolcachir, Melisa Hermida and Lautaro Perotti

from 16 au 23 juillet at 03:00 pm, Gymnase du lycée Mistral

- *Cuando vuelva a casa voy a ser otro* by Mariano Pensotti

from 18 to 25 July at 06:00 pm, La FabricA

FICTIONS FRANCE CULTURE – Focus on Argentina

Fin de l'Europe by Rafael Spregelburd, reading with Marcial Di Fonzo Bo and the students of the TNS / 15 and 16 July at 11:30 am, Musée Calvet, free admittance

SCHOOLS AT THE FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON

Orchestre des Jeunes de la Méditerranée / Music by Giuseppe Verdi,

Gustav Mahler and Ana Sokolović, direction Carlo Rizzi, with the soprano

Ying Fang / With the Académie du Festival d'Aix-en-Provence

24 July at 10:00 pm, Cour du lycée Saint-Joseph

#ELSYNDROME

69th
EDITION

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In order to bring you this edition, over 1,750 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.