

AND...

ACCESSIBILITY  Audiodescription of the show Wednesday, July 19 at 11:00 for blind and low vision people
Information : accessibilite@festival-avignon.com

YOUNG AUDIENCE SHOWS

The Imperfect, Olivier Balazuc, July 22 to 26, Chapelle des Pénitents blancs
It's a legend, Raphaël Cottin, July 23 to 26, CDCN-Les Hivernales

THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

Author / Director : *New connections* with Thomas Quillardet and Tiago Rodrigues
L'Écho des planches, July 16 at 14:30

The lessons of University with Thomas Quillardet, UAPV, July 17 at 13:00

CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

Cycle of films for children and animation workshops, July 10 to 23,
Utopia-Manutention

THE YOUNG SPECTATOR'S GUIDE AND VISITS FOR THE FAMILIES

starting on July 7 - Booking visitejeunesse@festival-avignon.com

PEDAGOGICAL FILE

Pièce (dé)montée by Canopé, available on festival-avignon.com

TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- October 11 and 12, 2017, Théâtre de la Coupe d'Or, Rochefort
- November 10, Théâtre Jean Arp, Clamart
- November 23-24, Le Théâtre Scène nationale de Saint-Nazaire
- November 28 to December 9, Le Monfort, Paris
- January 11, 2018, Théâtre Paul Éluard, Choisy-Le-Roy
- January 19-20, Le Trident Scène nationale de Cherbourg-en-Cotentin
- January 26, Scène nationale d'Aubusson
- January 29-30, Théâtre de Vanves
- April 6-17, Terres de Paroles Seine-Maritime - Normandie

***Tristesse et joie dans la vie des girafes* by Tiago Rodrigues, translation Thomas Quillardet, is published by éditions Les Solitaires intempestifs.**

71st EDITION	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.	
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SADNESS AND JOY IN THE LIFE OF GIRAFFES

It all begins with the discovery made by Giraffe, a little girl nicknamed thus by her recently-deceased mother. She's all of 9 years old, but that doesn't prevent her from unearthing this chaotically logical reasoning: "the man who is her father" is an out-of-work artist, he can't seem to "earn money," which in turn prevents him from getting cable, "which isn't a luxury since you get access to things like Discovery Channel." And so Giraffe leaves, along with her teddy bear Judy Garland, on a quest to find money to pay for the subscription. Her encounters in the streets of Lisbon help her understand that adults cannot solve all her problems, especially those that turn out to be more serious than a lack of money. To follow the odyssey of this little girl, with her love for definitions and her wealth of questions, Thomas Quillardet draws the fluctuating map of her world and of the way she pictures it. Four actors drive this fairy tale without a moral, calling on numerous locations and characters to lead the child on the path to growing up. Unsure whether the world is too small for her or if she's too big for it, Giraffe will ignore questions of scale to blaze her own trail: that of a peaceful vitality, of a restored confidence where sadness and joy come together to serve as the foundation of life...

THOMAS QUILLARDET

Thomas Quillardet began directing in 2003 with Copi's *Four Twins* and Nelson Rodrigues's *The Asphalt Kiss*, during the festival Teatro em Ombras which he organised in Paris in 2005 to promote Brazilian theatre, a country to which he has strong ties. A recipient of the "Villa Médicis hors les murs" award, he directed in 2007 *Le Frigo (The Fridge)* and *Loretta strong* by Copi, a writer he is particularly fond of. Thomas Quillardet then started translating Brazilian and Portuguese writers into French. Merging their respective companies, Aurélien Chaussade, Maloue Fourdrinier, Claire Lapeyre Mazérat, Aliénor Marcadé-Séchan, and Thomas Quillardet founded the collective Jakart, within which he notably directed Valère Novarina's *The Meal*, Marcio Abreu's *A History of Rock*, Goldoni's *The Holiday* with Jeanne Candel, and *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute*, adapted from a book by Julio Cortázar and Carole Dunlop. In 2009, Thomas Quillardet went back to Brazil to direct Valère Novarina's *The Flying Workshop*. In 2014, his first foray into children's theatre with *Les Trois Petits Cochons (The Three Little Pigs)* met with great success at the Comédie-française. In 2017, he adapted with Marie Rémond and a new group of actors two screenplays by Eric Rohmer, and created *Où les cœurs s'éprennent (Where Hearts Fall in Love)*.

TIAGO RODRIGUES

Currently director of the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II in Lisbon, Tiago Rodrigues is an actor and director who came to writing by way of the stage. In addition to plays, he has written articles, screenplays for cinema and television, and prefaces for poetry collections. In 2015 and 2016, French audiences were given the opportunity to discover *By Heart*, *Bovary*, *Sadness and Joy in the Life of Giraffes*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the visible products of an ongoing writing process constantly evolving during rehearsals. Attached to memory, to the rewriting of historical remains, or to the interlacing of intimate memories and political facts, his theatre focuses resolutely on the actors, a result of his own experience of the stage. At the Festival d'Avignon, Tiago Rodrigues presented *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Théâtre Benoît XII in 2015, before coming back in 2017 with *Sopro (Breath)*.

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS QUILLARDET

The world of *Sadness and Joy in the Life of Giraffes* revolves entirely around a child. How did you choose to represent it?

Thomas Quillardet : As we started working on the show, we quickly realised that the character of Giraffe constantly finds herself confronted to things that are either too big or too small for her. She's big for her age, which makes her disturbing or exciting, or at the very least surprising; and every once in a while, she finds herself in a world that's too big for her. She tries to find her place in the world, in other words, the right size for her. The question of scale is therefore at the heart of the show, not only in terms of scenography but also from the point of view of the actor. We created a set that can go from the very small to the very big, thanks to models but also to shadows, which allows us to enlarge things almost infinitely. This question of scale is key during childhood. When you're a child, you always feel a little too small, you spend most of your time looking up. That's why coming back to the places you knew as a child is always surprising: everything seems smaller as an adult.

And yet, don't children tend to feel like they're bigger, like they occupy a larger space than is actually the case? Or is that merely something they desperately hope for?

That's true. In Giraffe's case, you can see it in the way she talks: she borrows adult words, she's almost too skilful already, although she still makes mistakes every once in a while. She's in a transitional phase, which is what makes her interesting. At the beginning of the play, she has the idea of being an adult, and through what she experiences, she becomes one—at the very least, she becomes much more mature. The text, by Tiago Rodrigues, is all about children's ability to understand—it's not quite a text for children, some of the words are very difficult, there's a sociopolitical aspect to it, you'd think children wouldn't understand but they understand perfectly. The play reveals the maturity all children develop at a very early age and that parents sometimes refuse to see. They often don't see it until much, much later—sometimes when their children are over fifty!

You translated the play. How did you end up directing it as well?

The translation of the text was commissioned by France Culture for a radio play. A few years ago, they were looking for Portuguese plays and I'd given them a glowing review of *Sadness and Joy in the Life of Giraffes*. A few years later, a director there remembered the synopsis I'd made and asked me to translate the play. And so I did, but at the time I thought that I shouldn't be the one to direct it, that my job was to translate the play so that it could eventually find the right person to direct it. At about the same time, the Terres de paroles festival asked me to read it. I accepted and then, by sheer happenstance, I found myself in a room perfectly divided between children, adults, and teenagers. I thought, "we'll see, but I think the text might be a little too difficult for children..." But it was magical. Children were able to see the play like their parents did, the parents saw it through their children's eyes, even people who didn't know each other

had that experience. It was a magical moment, a revelation; a very sweet and loving moment, actually. And I thought, "alright, if I'm to direct this play, I want it to be for a mixed audience of children and parents, I want the magic to happen again." This is a unique text because it doesn't infantilise anyone. I don't think that Tiago Rodrigues wrote it for children, which makes it all the more moving for them, in a different way: it touches the summit of their understanding, of their tenderness, in other words of their sensibility. Children aged ten or eleven are rarely told about the world in such a way.

Isn't the opposite true when it comes to the adults?

We never get the children's point of view about those questions. We talk about our worries, our disappointments, about who was elected where, we fear for future generations—I hear those particular words a lot—but we never hear what those future generations have to say! This time, guided by a little girl, we're ready to spend more time watching, to show more compassion and investment; you want little Giraffe to feel good, so it makes you want to carry her, to take her hand and show her the different paths that are open to her. That's all thanks to the superb method Tiago Rodrigues uses: at the start, you don't quite know what Giraffe is looking for. She's trying to get cable on her television, that's it. You only learn what Rodrigues is talking about indirectly, there is a real surprise. He talks about economic aberrations, about a policy of austerity that has hurt Portugal, about the dead-ends of a capitalist world, boxed-in and closed; but first and foremost he talks about the tenderness between a father and her daughter, between a daughter and her dead mother... That's what he's weaving. He develops both levels side by side, beautifully, and Giraffe's journey is very positive. It follows the logic of mourning, of reaching the decision that you have to keep on living. It's a vision of life that I find interesting because, yes, we're overwhelmed, we're oppressed by a lot of different things, but we're still here, trying to create, walking down the street, having children. I think we're aware, on some level, that life sometimes generates certain powers which, in the prisons we've built for ourselves, are worth living for. The show examines our relationship to solitude. Why is it that you can never forget someone and keep on going with the memory of that person inside you? You've been knocked down, you're wondering how to keep existing, and then, at some point, you find something that makes you want to live again. Giraffe, at the tiniest levels, creates that—a power for life.

Do you mean that it's better to carry the memory of someone you love than a teddy bear?

Yes! A teddy bear won't get you very far. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, we can say it with absolute certainty: teddy bears are useless! You can't project anything onto a teddy bear, it can't help you, it's empty. The bear may look like it helped during Giraffe's struggles, but she would have fought without it all the same, whereas she wouldn't have been able to speak the way she does, wouldn't have been open to the world the way she is, if it hadn't been for her mother.

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