

LE VIVIER DES NOMS

"In front of us, on the table that is the stage, language suddenly takes shape, takes form, is torn apart and bursts in every direction: it spreads out in the field of forces and acts in volumes. Here, it seems physical. Theater is at bottom the act of language made visible. Let the actor in and don't expect anything! Through mental leaps, he can, on the stage, make you, us, me, himself, become a non-adherent. Make us rediscover life through a flash of non-adherence. A spasm of sharp amazement. A sudden toppling over and a reversibility, the blunt ambivalence and the turning over of words in space, and the return of space within words; he can strike an invigorating blow. The living force operates in surges. It is through a tearing apart that the comic cruelty engages us. Nature does not evolve, it moves in overturning leaps. The performance penetrates us like a dream: without any human filter and psychological sieve; we see as if we were out of our own personal animals. Each of us changes into a prophetic animal because we remember. Prophetic memory wise, like the actor : unsubdued animal burning with speech, thrower of anthropoglyphs. The stage is the joyous place where the human figure is perpetually reinvented. A fountain of life. What the reverse man, the inverted man, the staggering man over here, on the sage is announcing is the good spell: the actor, 'inner acrobat', incomprehensible mime, perfect passer-away, throws far out the good news of theater: go tell the world that man has not yet been caught!"

Valère Novarina

The show will premiere on 5 July, 2015 at the Cloître des Carmes, Avignon.

VALÈRE NOVARINA

Born in Geneva in 1947, Valère Novarina is a writer, a painter, and a cartoonist: movement is at the heart of his creative process, of his reflection and research, because he thinks that *The Hand is the Organ of Language* (2013). He works on space, colours, and words as if they were matter. In his theatre, he tries to make words perceptible and visible by deploying them in space. Following three intertwined axes, his work questions language, its origins and forms, and the "thousand ways man can be man." Alternating between the theatre (*The Flying Workshop*, *You Who Live In Time*, *The Imaginary Operetta*, *The Unknown Act*, *The Animal of Time*), uncategorisable texts, monologues for multiples characters, poetry in acts (*The Babble of the Dangerous Classes*, *The Drama of Life*, *Words to Animals*, *Man's Flesh*, *The True Blood*), and theoretical works inspired by the stage and by actors (*During Matter*, *In Front of the Word*, *The Flipside of the Mind*, *Fourth Person Singular*), his books are published, for the most part, by P.O.L Publishing.

Le Vivier des noms (*The Breeding Pool of Names*) by Valère Novarina is published in French by éditions P.O.L.

INTERVIEW WITH VALÈRE NOVARINA

You've said that *Le Vivier des noms* (*The Breeding Pool of Names*) could have been called *Perpetual Entrance* or *Nature Freeing the Alphabet*. How did you choose this title?

Valère Novarina: Among my many notebooks, one is called "The breeding pool of names;" I write down character names in it, every time one comes to me... to the point where, some days, I turn into an animal that comes up with names, into a perpetual source of names... Thousands of names came to me that way, as if someone was dictating them to me. I never change them. When I'm not writing, I draw characters, in red and black ink... Other days, I listen to them, and they talk. *The Breeding Pool of Names* was born progressively out of this emergence, this perpetual calling. It's also a relapse, a reminiscence of the never-ending cycle of entrances and exits that was the basis of *The Drama of Life*, which would be like the first arch of a bridge whose second one is appearing today.

When you are working, how do your different functions succeed each other? What is your relationship to the text when you give it to your actors?

When I'm writing, I'm like an invisible actor who starts working before the others. The writing on the page is like an intuition of the drama of language in space. Later, I become a director, move over to the enemy's side. I no longer have this deep, blind contact with the materiality of the text; I play with the various energies that come together and contradict one another in the space of the stage: energies that belong to the actors, that emanate from the play itself, from the audience... As for the actor, he's like a monk, litanic: the drone of memory, manducation, a deep incorporation of the text, the eating of the written word, patience as a passive action.

You often talk of freeing things—words, the alphabet. How should they emerge? What do they have to be freed from?

We have to give words back to space, to the plural of space, to its flesh. I see the theatre as the place where the book comes to be straightened. *Keimeno*, which in Greek means "the text," also means something that is lying down, lifeless... The text is lying lifeless, and the actor straightens it up, resurrects it. We go to the theatre to be reminded that language isn't a chain of mechanical concepts but a fluid, a dance, a living matter. In a library, books are like gravestones, stacked like the dead. The reader opens a book and resurrects it, takes it in her hands. In this beautiful gesture that is the opening of a book, its unfolding, he gives it breath, he rescues it, and dead letters are once again caught up in the whirlwind of language, in the deep life of tongues... Words are once again given volume in space. It's beautiful that in our language, the way a "book" is also a "volume." The Actor, the reader can never dive deep enough into the score, into the various meanings of a text, into its sounds and rhythms... I think that between an actor and a text, between an actor and his part, there is *only one* point of contact that is right and true. You don't have to build a character, there is no need for composition. The text comes to meet the actor. At some point, language appears as a living animal, the book becomes suddenly *visible*, like a natural phenomenon. It's something that happens to time: an alteration, a variation, an accident of duration.

You were inspired by the form of the *kyōgen*, which serves as an intermission between Noh Japanese acts. What is your relationship to Japanese theatre?

I like the fragility of *Noh*: actors walk across the bridge, sing a little, sketch out a character with three steps and a fan, strike the ground, and leave. It's a construction, a fragile edifice that is built in front of you. An actor strikes the ground with his foot, the ground shakes: everything is said right there. The emotion of the whole play, of all the language that is unfolded, is summed up, concentrated in one point. The striking of the ground is the point of asphyxia, after which everything can breathe. In our shows, space becomes plural, multiplies, grows over the course of the representation. That is why we always begin by drawing a simple line. We don't use the entire space all at once, we begin like children, and then we dig into it a little. And at the end, we upend it... Great catastrophes of space happen through language... What happens in your mind if I say "No triangle has three sides"? Theatre is, etymologically-speaking, a place of optics. Language becomes visible. We come follow closely, see unfold in front of us, the living game of paradoxes.

If paradox is a constant, what does the intermission upset?

The idea is to rediscover an instability, a state of permanent invention, like at the circus, where emotion is located in the space itself. I often tell the actors of something suspended, that is being created but is also about to disappear—of theatre as a fragile dwelling. The ground, like their certainties, disappears from under the feet of the audience—but also of the actors. By shaking our mental foundations, we are looking for the edge, the division, the separation. We struggle deeply against any and all "atmosphere." You have to lacerate language, space, and time (I love the word "ragtime" for that reason) to highlight their contradictions: the combination of the comic and the pathetic. Most of all, no emotion is ever mandatory... You have to let the audience build something from what is scattered, broken, mysterious.

Is it because of this link with the circus that your shows often include a ringmaster figure?

Yes. It began with *La Chair de l'homme (The Flesh of Man)*, with a character whose name was Monsieur; then, in *L'Origine rouge (The Red Origin)*, his name was The Evangelist; in *Le Jardin de reconnaissance (The Garden of Gratitude)*, there was The Shadow Voice, which then became The Cantor. In *The Breeding Pool of Names*, you have The Historian... I need a strong voice, authoritative, to freely construct and deconstruct. I play with those two presences: The Narrator and its opposite: The Worker of Drama, like a mute stage manager. Yet he might be the one with all the cards. In *Le Vrai sang (The True Blood)*, he even said he was actually the writer of the play, which should have been titled "L'innocence victorieuse" ("The Victory of Innocence"). This time, he might tell us that the play should have been called "Le Polylogue invectif" ("The Polylogue Invective"). There was a beautiful medieval text with a very similar title: *Le Quadrilogue invectif (The Quadrilogue Invective)*.

Interview conducted by Marion Canelas / Translation Gaël Schmidt-Cléach

AND...

SACRED MUSICS CYCLE

- 7 July at 11:00 am and 01:00 pm, *Lumières du corps (The Lights of the Body)* by Valère Novarina / Chapelle Saint-Louis
- 9 July at 11:30 am, *La Quatrième Personne du singulier (Fourth Person Singular)* by Valère Novarina / Église Saint-Agricol
- 14 July at 11:30 am, *Observez les logaèdres ! (Watch the Logaèdres!)* by Valère Novarina / Église Saint-Agricol

THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Site Pasteur de l'Université, free admittance:

- 7 July at 05:30 pm, *Dialogue artists-audience*, with Valère Novarina, encounter hosted by the Ceméa
- 10 July at 01:00 pm, Radio creation week : *Le Vivier des noms* or « *Who make the piece, the artist or I ?* », hosted by Radio Campus Avignon

Site Sainte-Marthe de l'Université, free admittance:

- 9 July at 03:00 pm, *The teaching of the University*, with Valère Novarina
- Cloître Saint-Louis, free admittance, please sign up on recherche-creation-avignon.fr:
- 10 July at 02:00 pm, Encounter Research and Creation : *Verbal, non-verbal : one text, one world and stories*, with, among others, Valère Novarina, organised with ANR

THE NAVE OF IMAGES free admittance

L'Acte Inconnu (The Unknown Act) by Valère Novarina / Direction Valère Novarina (2007) / Realisation Dominique Thiel / 7 July at 02:30 pm, Église des Célestins

CINEMATOGRAPHICS TERRITORIES Utopia-Manutention

V. Novarina. Ce dont on ne peut parler c'est cela qu'il faut dire (What you can't talk about is what you have to say) by Raphaël O'Byrne
Screening followed by an encounter with Valère Novarina / 11 July at 11:00 am,

ENCOUNTER FAITH AND CULTURE

with Valère Novarina / 15 July at 11:00 am, Chapelle de l'Oratoire, free admittance

DEBATE *Art and democracy*, with, among others, Valère Novarina, organised by Région Île-de-France / 16 July at 03:00 pm, Espace Jeanne Laurent, free admittance

TOUR DATES OF LE VIVIER DES NOMS AFTER THE FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON

- from 13 to 15 October 2015: Le Fracas, Centre dramatique national, Montluçon
- 17 November: Théâtre d'Aurillac
- from 17 to 19 December: Théâtre Sorano, Toulouse
- 1st and 2nd March 2016: Bonlieu, Scène nationale, Annecy
- 8 and 9 March: Théâtre de L'Union, Centre dramatique national du Limousin, Limoges
- 17 and 18 March: L'Equinoxe, Chateauroux
- 22 and 23 March: Forum Meyrin, Genève
- 19 April: Théâtre de Budapest in the Festival MITEM
- 29 April: Le Bateau feu, Dunkerque

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