

EDINBURGH  
INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL

2012



## Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)

The Castaways of the Fol Espoir (Sunrises)

**Théâtre du Soleil**

Supported by

**INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS**

Welcome to the Edinburgh International Festival at the Lowland Hall, Royal Highland Centre. This wonderful venue has allowed us to present three shows impossible to stage in conventional theatres.

This very special project for 2012 has been supported by the City of Edinburgh Council, Creative Scotland and EventScotland and we extend our thanks to them for supporting the Festival's ambition in presenting these shows.

An expert 80 strong team has transformed the 4500 square metres of Lowland Hall into a theatre space with over 50 tonnes of set for our productions by a roll call of world-leading directors.

In an epic undertaking, all three sets have been built alongside each other, a process which took just 16 days.

An enormous three-storey construction is the set for a stunning multi-media take on the Scottish play. *2008: Macbeth* relocates Shakespeare's work to a contemporary and brutal Middle East in a production from the Warsaw-based director Grzegorz Jarzyna and TR Warszawa.

In the year *The Artist* has taken cinemas by storm, a spectacular fantasy about the early days of silent movies and an amateur's attempts to shoot a film is just the beginning of *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)*. This complex, beautifully designed show, on which work started in 2009, is brought to the Festival by Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine, the legendary French director whose work has not been seen in the UK for more than 20 years.

With a soundtrack that includes Bryan Adams, George Michael and Wagner, a hilarious and surreal tale, inspired by *My Fair Lady*, *Meine faire Dame – ein Sprachlabor* marks a rare appearance in the UK for director Christoph Marthaler.

#### Jonathan Mills

Director, Edinburgh International Festival

The Lowland Hall at the Royal Highland Centre is supported by



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presents

# Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)

## Théâtre du Soleil

*Performed in English and French with English supertitles*

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**Thursday 23 — Saturday 25, Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 August 6.00pm**  
**Lowland Hall, Royal Highland Centre**

The performance lasts approximately 4 hours with an interval

*Les Naufrage du Fol Espoir (Aurores)* is part of London 2012 Festival

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Please ensure that all  
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The use of cameras,  
video and tape  
recorders is forbidden





## Les Naufragés du 'Fol Espoir' (Aurores) The Castaways of the Fol Espoir (Sunrises)

A collectively devised creation by the Théâtre du Soleil written in part by Hélène Cixous, from an idea by Ariane Mnouchkine, and loosely based on a mysterious posthumous novel by Jules Verne

### Featuring Misses

Eve Doe-Bruce as **Mr Félix Courage**, the owner of the restaurant and dance-hall *Le Fol Espoir*

Juliana Carneiro da Cunha as **Madam Gabrielle**, sister of the film director Jean LaPalette, *who will portray*  
Madam Paoli, an Italian emigrant  
The Indian mother

Astrid Grant as **Miss Mary Danaher**, specialist in pyrotechnics and smoke effects, *who will portray*

Maria Vetsera, mistress of Archduke Rudolf, Crown Prince of Austria,  
Hungary and Bohemia  
Queen Victoria, Empress of India  
Emelyne Jones, socialist and feminist

Olivia Corsini as **Miss Marguerite**, maid, *who will portray*

Marguerite's granddaughter  
La Rachel, the famous opera-singer and wife of Simon Gautrain  
Sister Augustine, of the Salesian Mission

Paula Giusti as **Anita**, the stunt woman, *who will portray*

Amalia Paoli  
Herrera, Commissioner of the Republic of Argentina

Alice Milléquant as **Suzanne**, another stunt woman, *who will portray*

The harbour-side nurse  
Segarra, Commissioner of the Republic of Chile

Dominique Jambert as **Miss Adèle**, *who will portray*

Anna, the schoolteacher  
Sister Magnanime, of the Salesian Mission

Pauline Poignand as **Miss Marthe**, Mr Félix Courage's right hand, *who will portray*

Marthe's granddaughter  
Gervaise, a mustard-worker  
Rodrigo, Secretary to the Governor of Patagonia  
Anju, a young Indian girl



Marjolaine Larranaga y Ausin as **Miss Flora**, the little laundress

Ana Amelia Dosse as **Miss Rosalia**, waitress, *who will portray*  
Louise Ceyrac, wife of Pierre Ceyrac

Judit Jancso as **Miss Eszther**, the Hungarian cashier, *who will portray*  
Nurse to La Rachel

Aline Borsari as **Miss Fernanda**, waitress, *who will portray*  
A sailor

Frédérique Voruz as **Miss Victoire**, waitress

And with the voice of **Miss Shaghayegh Beheshti**

## And Messieurs

Jean-Jacques Lemêtre as **Mr Camille Bérard**, the musician

Maurice Durozier as **Mr Jean LaPalette**, film director, *who will portray*  
Emile Gautrain, banker and industrialist

Duccio Bellugi-Vannuccini as **Mr Tommaso**, film maker, *who will portray*  
Josef, coachman to Archduke Rudolf, Crown Prince of Austria, Hungary  
and Bohemia

The ship's doctor

Sir Charles Darwin, eminent English naturalist

Marat Razine, galley-slave, ideologist 'with Bolshevik leanings'

Serge Nicolai as **Mr Louis**, huckster at Félix's restaurant, *who will portray*  
Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria, also called Jean Orth,  
otherwise known in Jules Verne's novel as the Kaw-djer  
Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister of the British Empire  
The Governor of Patagonia

Sébastien Brottet-Michel as **Mr Ernest Choubert** otherwise known as **Schubert**,  
actor, *who will portray*

An agent of the Austrian secret service

Simon Gautrain, banker and engineer

Armando Paoli, the lunatic son

Octavio MacLennan, an Argentinian bounty-hunter

Sylvain Jailloux as **Mr Alix Bellmans**, assistant to the LaPalettes, *who will portray*

An agent of the Austrian secret service

Antoine, La Rachel's driver

Professor John Jones, pastor and Christian socialist

Lieutenant Laurence, envoy of the British Government

Lusconi, an Argentinian bounty-hunter

Andreas Simma as **Josef**, the Austrian waiter, *who will portray*

The Archduke Rudolf, Crown Prince of Austria, Hungary and Bohemia

Father Matthew

Ian O'Brian, a sailor

A Sikh guard of the Empire of India

Lobo, an Argentinian 'bounty-hunter'

Seear Kohi as **Bonheur**, the Cambodian chef's assistant, *who will portray*

A young Austrian assassin

A young sailor

Yuras, the young Indian

Armand Saribekyan as **Mr Vassili**, the Russian painter, *who will portray*

Toni, the joiner-carpenter

Miss Blossom



Vijayan Panikkaveettil as **Ravisharanarayanan**, otherwise known as **Ravi**, commis  
chef, *who will portray*

The ship's Captain

A Sikh guard of the Empire of India

Jenkins, a sheep farmer

Samir Abdul Jabbar Saed as **Farouk**, the Babylonian confectioner, *who will portray*

A henchman

Mr Paoli, Italian emigrant

The butler at Windsor Castle

A galley-slave

Vincent Mangado as **Ulysse**, the wine steward from the Languedoc, *who will portray*

Patrick O'Leary, a sailor

Pierre Ceyrac, a geographer and utopian socialist

Sébastien Bonneau as **Jeannot**, the young juggler and newspaper seller, *who will portray*

A young Austrian assassin

Billy, the ship's apprentice

Maixence Bauduin as **Jérôme**, the hunter, *who will portray*

A henchman

Manuel, the schoolteacher

Jean-Sébastien Merle as **Mr Dauphin**, the hairdresser, *who will portray*

A bellboy on the ship

Winston Churchill, Queen Victoria's young page

A galley-slave

Seietsu Onochi as **Akira**, one of the restaurant's regulars, *who will portray*

Huang Huang Hshing, the Chinese laundry worker



**Jean-Jacques Lemêtre** has composed much of the play's music. He has also invoked and assembled the souls of his ancestors, the great composers of the 19th and 20th centuries.\*

\* Ludwig Von Beethoven, Hector Berlioz, Johannes Brahms, Anton Bruckner, Emmanuel Chabrier, Dmitri Shostakovich, Vincent d'Indy, Claude Debussy, Anton Dvořák, Gabriel Fauré, César Franck, Edvard Grieg, Aram Khachaturian, Carl Orff, Sergey Prokofiev, Sergey Rachmaninov, Ottorino Respighi, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, Franz Schubert, Jean Sibelius, Bedřich Smetana, Johann Strauss, Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Wagner

**Ariane Mnouchkine** dreamt up the performance space and the dream was then realised by **Everest Canto de Montserrat**

**Charles-Henri Bradier** assisted Ariane Mnouchkine in the direction of the play with the assistance of **Lucile Cocito**

**Serge Nicolai** designed and created the stage sets with the assistance of **Sébastien Brottet-Michel, Elena Antsiferova, Duccio Bellugi-Vannuccini, Andreas Simma, Maixence Bauduin** and all the company

Lighting design and operation

**Elsa Revol** assisted by **Hugo Mercier** and **Virginie Le Coënt**

Sound design and installation

**Yann Lemêtre**, operated by **Thérèse Spirli** and **Marie-Jasmine Cocito**

Wardrobe

**Nathalie Thomas, Marie-Hélène Bouvet, Annie Tran, Simona Grassano** assisted by the actors

Painted backdrops

**Danièle Heusslein-Gire**

Metal and wood construction

**Adolfo Canto Sabido, Kaveh Kishipour, David Buizard** assisted by **Jules Infante** and **Johann Perruchon**

Painting of the stage

**Erol Gulgonen** and **Marion Lefebvre**

Painting of stage properties

**Elena Antsiferova**

Upperworks and rigging

**Vincent Mangado** and **Dominique Jambert**

Icebergs and icebergs

**Erhard Stiefel**

Reconstruction of cameras from the early days of motion-pictures

**Paula Giusti**

Ice floe

**Olivia Corsini** assisted by **Aline Borsari, Ana Amelia Dosse, Alice Milléquant, Martha Kiss Perrone**

**Sylvain Jailloux** regulated the movements of the chassis and their counterweights

Hair design and wigs

**Jean-Sébastien Merle**

Follow spots and stage management

**Andrea Marchant** and **Ebru Erdinc**

Supertitle translation

**Marie-Louise Crawley, Eric Prenowitz** supervised by **Astrid Grant**

Supertitle operation

**Marie Constant**

Great technical matters

**Everest Canto de Montserrat**

Great technological and organizational matters

**Etienne Lemasson**

Administrative matters

**Claire Van Zande, Pierre Salesne**

Matters concerning national and international touring

**Elaine Méric**

Matters of public relations

**Liliana Andreone, Sylvie Papandréou, Maria Adroher, Svetlana Dukovska**

Editorial matters

**Franck Pendino**

The kitchen chefs

**Karim Gougam, Agustin Letellier**

Posters, flyers, programme (France)

**Thomas Félix-François, Catherine Schaub-Abkarian**

The great healer

**Marc Pujo**

The photographers

**Martine Franck, Michèle Laurent**

Thanks to Liv Ullmann, the jury of the Ibsen Prize and the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Agnès b.

And, as always, for their faithful and continued support, thanks to Françoise et Lorenzo Benedetti

To our friend Martine Franck (2 April 1938 — 15 August 2012)

### Episode 1 — The Mayerling Manifesto

*The hunting lodge of the House of Habsburg, Austria, 1889*

Where we learn that Rudolf and his cousin desired a socialist kingdom, and that Rudolf and his mistress were murdered.

### Episode 2 — All Aboard!

*Cardiff Harbour, Wales, 1895*

Where we first meet the passengers, rich and poor alike, and where we learn that while some are discharged against their wishes, others are taken on board in spite of their wishes.

### Episode 3 — Victoria is Hungry

*Windsor Castle, England*

Where we learn that Johann Salvatore disappeared five years ago, alongside his ship, lost with all hands when wrecked off the coast of Argentina. This gives Sir Charles Darwin an opportunity to whet Queen Victoria's appetite.

### Episode 4 — An Enforced Partition

*The 'Palace' of the Governor of Patagonia, Punta Arenas, Chile*

Where we learn of the stupidity of the war between Argentina and Chile and where a storm brews.



### Episode 5 — The Patagonian Mission

*On the southern bank of the Beagle Channel, Magellania*

Where we discover that he whom we believed was dead is in fact alive and well, and where we meet missionaries, natives and murderers.

### Episode 6 — The Shipwreck

*Off the coast of Hoste Island, Magellania*

Where we learn that the ocean is omnipotent while human beings are minuscule, and that nothing is ever entirely lost...

### Episode 7 — The Governor's Good Idea

*Hoste Island*

Where we learn that the Governor has an idea in the back of his mind, and that the Gautrain brothers have found what they have always been looking for.

### Episode 8 — The Decisive Night: The Social Contract, or the Other Dream

*Hoste Island*

Where we learn that there are two ways of imagining how one might seize power, that God can divide rather than unite, and that women are always forgotten.

### Episode 9 — The Gold Rush, or Farewell to Hoste

*Hoste Island*

Where we learn that human resolve is fragile, that one may die for love in the snow and ice, and that Johann Salvator chooses the Indians.







## The awareness of a 'guiding light'

'A measure of incalculable grandeur': this is what Marcel Proust felt when he heard a clean, insect-like hum in the summer sky of 1913. Yet the sound he heard was neither a fly nor a bird, but 'an aeroplane sent up by men, and watching over us'. That insect, that aeroplane, that flying horse, that tiny yet sonorous riding horse revealing the dizzying heights of a friendly, summer sky, could be our play. We can compare it to those tiny, Japanese flowers made of paper — those small, shadowy pieces of life which, as soon as they are immersed in theatre's bowl of water, expand, change shape, take on different colours and become houses, people, trees, sailors, statesmen, opera singers, convicts: they become characters, they become the whole of Europe and its surrounding areas, they become the oceans and the Americas.

Opening a short novel by Jules Verne, one day in 2008, we too experienced Proust's hint of incalculable grandeur. The book had survived its author by a hundred years and was lying on a bookseller's stall in a Paris market when it fell into the hands of Ariane Mnouchkine. Scarcely had we dipped into its profusion of words when from the ancient paper, we saw a monumental swarm rise into the sky.

Now let us travel back to the summer of 1895 — or perhaps a little later, to 1904. What blissful days! We find ourselves at the marvellous beginning of that most stirring of centuries: the 20th century, an era of electricity arriving at ever-increasing speed. Think about it! Since the revolution of Galileo, we have not seen such a concentration of discoveries. In the sciences, the revolution is total and absolute: here we have formal logic; there we have set theory. Here Henri Poincaré's revolutionary text *Science and Hypothesis*; and there, in 1905, Max Planck's constant and the theory of quantum mechanics. Continue at this rate and we shall soon be lighter than air! The new century is unfolding its wings. Each year shines with a new brightness. We are at the cross-roads. It is as though there is an alchemical reaction between all these various revolutions, all coming to fruition at the same time.

Here we see the illuminating flight of the inner being, as psychoanalysis begins to soar. This is the time when Freud finds the keys to the unconscious. It is this awareness of a guiding light, a beacon, that inspires the fabulous explorations of Jules Verne, stories for children of all ages and for us little visionaries: bold, happy adventurers, time-travellers, who do not know the meaning of the word 'No'.

Ladies, gentlemen, students

It is a moment of great joy to find myself here once more, in the college of Albi, and to take the floor for a short while. It is a moment of great joy and yet not without a hint of melancholy, for it is when one returns to a place after such a long while that one suddenly becomes aware of what the impervious passage of time has robbed us of and rendered to the past. Time robs us of ourselves, piece by piece, until suddenly it is a great block of our life that we see far behind us in the distance. A great anthill of time, with each minute silently carrying off a grain, until, one fine evening, the granary is left empty.

And yet what does it matter that little by little time robs us of our strength, as long as the former mysteriously employs the latter to create vast works in which a little of ourselves will survive? (...) Despite all our miseries and despite all the injustices perpetrated or suffered, what remains true is the great credit which is due to human nature; if one does not have a sense of its grandeur and a feeling of its various, unrivalled destinies, one condemns oneself to misunderstand humanity. This confidence is neither silly, nor blinkered, nor trivial. It does not ignore vice, nor crime, nor error, nor prejudice, nor egotism of any order — the egotism of the individual, the egotism of castes, the egotism of political parties, of classes, all of which place a burden on man's march forward, and very often divert the course of the river into a cloudy and bloody whirlpool. Rather this confidence knows that forces of good, and of wisdom, of light, and of justice cannot expect to be spared the shocks of time. It knows that the night of servitude and ignorance will not be lit up by a sudden and total illumination, but that the darkness will be attenuated only by a slow series of uncertain dawns.

Yes, those who have confidence in humanity know all of this. They are resigned ahead of time to witness only an incomplete realization of their vast ideals, which will in turn be transcended; or, rather, they congratulate themselves that the totality of human possibility is not revealed during the narrow limits of their own lives. They are filled with a deferential and compassionate sympathy for those who, having been brutalized by immediate experience, have had bitter thoughts, for those whose lives have coincided with times of servitude, subservience and reactionism, and for those who, living under a motionless black cloud, have thought that a new day would never dawn. But they themselves take care to inscribe the disappointments of passing generations among the failures of durable humanity. And they affirm, with unwavering certitude, that thought and action are worthwhile, that humanity's efforts towards clarity and justice are never lost. History teaches men the difficulty of great labours and the tardiness of accomplishments, but it also justifies invincible hope (...).

**Jean Jaurès**

*from an address given on 30 July 1903 to an assembly of students from the College of Albi, where Jaurès himself had been a pupil*

In this short time — let us say from 1890 until 1914 — everything has changed. Not one corner of physics, mathematics, chemistry or biology has been left undisturbed. What a breath of happiness it is! From the smallest things to the greatest, all is being stirred up and transported as if to a new continent. As though in a mere wing-beat one can travel from Paris or Berlin to Patagonia! Do you see that young man lying in a meadow over there, in Normandy, his head in the future? It is Proust. It is a fine day. He listens: he hears the hum of an insect in the blue of the sky; and there, a sudden revolution of the senses. What? That shiny insect? An aeroplane: superhuman emotion. At first you do not see it; and then you 'see' it: men, angels — celestial riders — up on high; and suddenly both time and space are transformed! Two kilometres by railway is not two thousand metres high in the vertical infinite. Human perspectives undergo lightning-flash transformations.

Here, with the marriage of literature and aeronautics, in Kafka, in Proust, in Shambala, we are soaring into the sky! The imagination takes flight in a different way. Distances and extremities are now within the reach of our new dreams. Think about it! One day, Clément Ader manages to fly 20 centimetres above the ground, and ten years later we are flying among the stars. From now on, we will desire and conquer with the electric motor. The motor car, the telephone, the radio: all ours. We will venture ever further, to the very ends of the earth, to the poles. But beware: over there is the unknown. Ernest Shackleton approaches the South Pole in his *Endurance*. Never before have we seen an era as ardent, as avid of expansion and new strength.

Nietzsche has told us: 'man is a promising animal'. And how promising and inventive we are! And we are receptive: it is as though, at this time, there is a phenomenon of propagation through the contiguity of souls, a contagion of the forces of life. Electricity will light up more than lamps: it will enable humanity's story to continue at night. The fact of being able to live, to work and to create by night is a miracle of technology. And we are still at the very beginning: habit, that monster that kills everything, has not yet tarnished the brightness of these marvels.

It is during these intoxicating years that our characters begin their enterprise. They soar high. In such auspicious times as these, it is of course natural to have a desire to change the world — and to want to depict that in new artistic movements and child-like adventures. And, of course, the vast sphere of politics is also being seized by convulsions. Things are bursting at the seams. Class, borders, regimes, thrones, powers, social models — everything is being shaken up, jostled by the spirit of liberty, because everything is connected: the motor car and the workers' movements, psychoanalysis, linguistics and rights for minorities. Subtly, politically and morally, we are moving forward, both in the sciences and in solidarity: in the very season when the first issue of a newspaper daring to call itself *L'Humanité* appears in France, Albert Einstein's article 'On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies' is published in Germany. Relativity and Humanity move forward together. What do Jean Jaurès and Einstein have in common? They share at least one trait: a carefully reasoned love of peace.





If we speak so much of peace it is because all this technological and political progress goes hand in hand with another, paradoxal progression: that of war, which also matures, nourished by jealousies, rivalries and excessive appetites. As our world grows larger, so too does our voraciousness. This fabulous era is also a bitter time of imperialist greed and nationalist ferment. Europe wants to devour the other continents. Little England has a stomach the size of two continents; France sprawls over Africa and into Asia; and Germany will not calm down. Dragons are whipping the air with their murderous tails.

Let us not dwell on that subject. Never before has art been so sumptuous. Opera intoxicates us; if we are too ill to go in person, we can subscribe to the 'théâtrophone' and listen to Wagner, Debussy or Strauss while lying in bed. That is what Proust does. What is actually happening far away can now enter our own bedroom — or even go right up into the attic! And motion pictures! Naturally, the first thing that the cinema does, when travelling is the most common thing in the world, is to go to the Moon. What if we were to go there too? What if we were to look for the Moon on the Earth? What would it look like? It would be white, shining, virgin. It would be an island. Let us imagine. In that place we might be able to trace out a model for humanity in the future. We might be able to sketch out an ideal democracy 3000 years after Aeschylus.

In his first article, of 18 April 1904, Jaurès rightly states that 'Humanity does not yet exist, or at least it is only just beginning to come into existence'. He is, of course, speaking of humane humanity, of humanist humanity, of humanity-equality, of justice,

of sharing. That humanity will exist: it is on its way. We tell each other that the century of humanity is coming. And it looks modern and dynamic. The air is mythological. Human beings are growing taller, becoming greater, reaching ever higher, being carried beyond existing limits. They are aspiring. But Jaurès says humanity is only just coming into existence. Well, the 'only just' was us. We would take pains giving birth to it, little by little, modestly, ideally, scene by scene.

We are beginning to fulfil Arthur Rimbaud's prophecies. We are taking responsibility for humanity. We are finding a new language to depict — in images — all those unknowns. Women, too, will be at the forefront.

How far will we go? Further than India, Chile and Argentina! Today's date is 29 June 1914. What could stop us now?

© **Hélène Cixous**

16 October 2009

## Timeline

- 1520** Magellan discovers the strait that will be named after him, proving — if it still required proof — that the earth is round
- 1830** Discovery of the Beagle Channel (named after the English ship whose crew discovered it during an oceanographic expedition)
- 1833** On board this same ship, Charles Darwin finds his inspiration for his theory of evolution
- 1848** California Gold Rush
- 1877** Thomas Edison invents the phonograph
- 1878** Eadweard Muybridge, an English photographer, invents cinematographic movement (24 images a second)
- 1881** Chile and Argentina sign a treaty to share the territory of Patagonia, a temporary solution to an unending disagreement
- 1884** The Argentinian General Roca's bloody Desert Campaign in Patagonia ends

- 1889** (January) Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, Hungary and Bohemia is assassinated at Mayerling in mysterious circumstances, alongside his mistress, Maria Vetsera
- 1890** Archduke Johann Salvator of Austria, Rudolf's cousin, mysteriously disappears
- 1895** (28 December) Antoine Lumière presents the first public film projection in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café in Paris, in front of an audience of 33 people. George Méliès is among them and finds it inspirational
- 1897** Jules Verne writes *Magellania* (*Les Naufragés du 'Jonathan'*) which is published posthumously

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- 1914** (June) The Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, new heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, is assassinated in Sarajevo; (31 July) Jaurès is assassinated at the Café du Croissant in Paris; (3 August) Germany declares war with France
- 1946–7** José Emperaire undertakes the very last ethnological expedition to study the Alakuluf, those 'Nomads of the Sea', who are in the process of becoming extinct. This race has now completely disappeared







## Illuminating the present

In a deeply felt 2004 interview about her theatre practice with the Théâtre du Soleil and its director Ariane Mnouchkine, the writer Hélène Cixous evoked their reasons for theatre-making: 'We dream of telling in such a way that something will move in reality. If not change — which would be enormously presumptuous — then at least be recalled, resuscitated, delivered from silence [...], an illumination of the present itself'. Illuminating the present, delivering from silence, what can also be seen as temporal and spatial oscillation, a stirring up and reworking of a never-ending conversation — these are traits that mark all the theatre born of the collaboration between Cixous and the Théâtre du Soleil.

Their latest theatrical creation, *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)*, a four-hour titanic journey that opened in February 2010 at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes in Paris, exhibits all these characteristics. In addition, this work of remembering and conversing also makes a major autobiographical statement. For *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir*, which is translated as 'The Castaways of the Fol Espoir (Sunrises)', not only speaks to unanswered social and political concerns of the contemporary world, but also contains and communicates the story of the Théâtre du Soleil itself, notably its theatrical culture and its own political commitment.

This 46-year-old company ranks unquestionably as France's leading independent theatre troupe. No less severe a critic than Michael Feingold, of *The Village Voice*, commenting on the production of the collective creation *Les Ephémères* ('Ephemera') during its run at the 2009 Lincoln Center Festival, applauded the particular enchantment of the company's creative spirit: 'To evoke such a vast range of life in seven hours and to impose it on the audience's imagination with such a degree of effectiveness requires care, passion and artistry to an extent that most theaters can barely dream of. [The Théâtre du Soleil's production] does what theater [is] meant to do: leave you with your sense of life's wonder enhanced'.

The Théâtre du Soleil's artistry has evolved and flourished under the sole direction of Ariane Mnouchkine. In 1961, in its first incarnation as a group of Sorbonne students, the company cut its teeth on an epic production of the story of Genghis Khan, written by Henry Bachau. A characteristically energetic and highly physical staging, the production took place in Paris's fifth *arrondissement*, in the Roman amphitheatre known as Les Arènes de Lutèce. With this monumental undertaking, Mnouchkine's ambition to conquer the world of theatre by making art happen in spaces previously



I can no longer believe that painting, the most individualist of all the arts, remains capable, at least in Europe, of presenting the image of a society which is evolving, with ever more sure and steady step, towards anonymous and collective modes of production. And as artistic expression has always been and perhaps may only be the child of production, we must acknowledge that we too have our part to play in this evolution. It seems to me that it would be relatively simple for us to penetrate the idea that, in order to express the spiritual rhythms which guide them, the great trends of humanity cannot and have never been able to do without a spontaneously imagined language until the day when they so fully integrate this language that they become one with it. (...) The cinema (the moving image) is almost exactly contemporary to mass-production, the motor engine, radiotelephony, and the universalized mechanization of production. All of the above are forms of a process of 'dispersed concentration', if I may so term it, which, before our very eyes, is succeeding the reign of those individualist methods which were established in the Renaissance and which only yesterday were still entirely legitimate. (...) The cinema is above all the *inexhaustible* means of revealing new pathways, of new arabesques, of new harmonies between tone and meaning, between light and shade, between shape and movement, between will and gesture, and between the soul and its various embodiments. (...)

Elie Faure

from *Introduction à la mystique du cinéma* (1934)

dedicated to war games and other violent confrontations made itself abundantly clear. Hélène Cixous, who had done some agit-prop sketches in favour of prison reform with Mnouchkine and Michel Foucault in the 1970s, joined the company officially as its writer in 1984. Ever since, her sensitivity to representations of women has helped inflect both the content of the Soleil's productions and the number of key roles for women actors.

Throughout its long, inventive and eruptive history, whether involved in collective creation, in reinterpretations of Greek tragedy, of Molière, or of Shakespeare, or whether fleshing out or reshaping texts written expressly for the company by Cixous, the Soleil, under Mnouchkine's prodding, has consistently examined its own engagement with making theatre, frequently incorporating a meta-theatrical meditation in its productions. In the Soleil's film *Molière* (1976) and collective creation *Et soudain des nuits d'éveil* ('And Suddenly Watchful Nights', 1997), for example, actors playing actors examine how a theatre company interacts with political power and with the pressing needs of dispossessed peoples. (The company in fact developed *Soudain des nuits d'éveil* from its own experience of sheltering in its theatre space illegal Malian immigrants evacuated forcibly from St Bernard's Church in Paris.) In the Soleil's 1999 production of Cixous' *Tambours sur la digue: Sous forme de pièce ancienne pour marionnettes, jouée par des acteurs* ('The Flood Drummers: In the Form of An Ancient Puppet Play Performed by Actors'), the drummer-performers, who embody the locus of the play's meaning, unite to warn the peasants of the coming flood and thus stand for the company itself, which has always seen its function as waking up contemporary society to the ills that could drown all of humanity.

*Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir* takes this kind of self-reflection to a new height, a new complexity and a new richness. It combines and blends a meditation on leftist politics and art with a rousing adventure story inspired by Jules Verne and reinterpreted by Cixous, who credits herself with having contributed less than half the text. Indeed, the original theatre programme teasingly told us that the play is '*mi-écrite*' (like the culinary term *mi-cuite*). Cixous, as is increasingly the case in her collaborations with Mnouchkine, prepared the ingredients and then adjusted them according to the director's taste and the actors' experimentation during rehearsals.

On its most easily readable level, and in an attempt at a simplified summary of what happens in the play, *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir* interpolates nine episodes of 'a silent film' within the story of the making of that film. The play boasts, then, an obvious theatre-in-the-theatre structure which spirals into more readable layers as it develops: M. Félix Courage, proprietor of a cabaret also called "Le Fol Espoir" has lent three socially conscious artists and their amateur team of international film enthusiasts his attic for their filmmaking project. It is the eve of World War I and voice-overs of daily newspaper headlines bring the war ever closer. Scenes of preparing the anti-war, utopian socialist film alternate with filmic episodes, during which the filmmaking is always visible.





The film, whose title is the same as the play's, *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir*, borrows episodes and characters from Verne's posthumous novel *Magellania*, finished and published in 1907 by his son Michel as *Les Naufragés du 'Jonathan'* ('The Shipwrecked of the "Jonathan"'). In the film, as in the novel, immigrants at the beginning of the 1890s, both very rich and very poor and hailing from all over Europe, attempt to reach Australia but are shipwrecked on an island that is part of Patagonia, called Magellania in the story. This can be located now, in so far as fiction is locatable, as Chile's southernmost tip. Eventually the survivors brutally clash over who should rule their colony and over what their guiding principles should be. Only two long-term inhabitants of the island, a mysterious and compassionate hermit (Jean Salvatore, who is, in fact, an Austrian Archduke turned socialist revolutionary), and his young Indian helper, Yuras, emerge intact from the survivors' killing spree. Visionary and compassionate men, the Archduke-explorer-hermit and the Indian depart to construct a lighthouse to prevent further shipwrecks. Thus ends the film. Meanwhile, in the world outside the film, in the attic where the filmmakers toil, war has been declared and the filmmakers disperse for the battlefields of World War I.

This barebones outline of the doubled, indeed mirroring, plots hardly captures the theatrical wizardry for which the Soleil is so justly famous. The aesthetic experience, the sensory pleasure and incomparable ingenuity of the staging illuminate the Soleil's longstanding theatrical pact — one that sutures the audience to the performance while at the same time reminding spectators that they are witnessing theatre-in-the-making.



As in every theatrical production since 1980, the company composer and musician Jean-Jacques Lemêtre, who also plays the role of the music and sound man Camille in the silent film (thus he, too, is doubled) creates from on stage a soundscape that underscores the production's emotional turbulence. Music from great late 19th- and early 20th-century narrative composers, most often Wagner, Verdi and Respighi, as well as snippets of popular cabaret melodies, waltzes and *paso dobles* from the early 20th century, usher in changes from film to filmmaking or from filmmaking to film.

Crashing waves and the thunder of retribution underscore the production's moral lessons. Lemêtre's musical choices introduce and reinforce the outer and inner melodramas of the piece (that is the tension of the impending war underlying the filmmaking and the pathos basic to the film). He conveys with his edited selections or new compositions the clashes of temperaments and the uncontrollable romances occurring during the filmmaking. And for the film within the filmmaking, he helps shape musically the framing story that launches the seafaring adventure as well as the horror of the last blinding snowstorm that closes the filmic narrative. At the film's very beginning, for instance, to underline and bolster the back story of the renegade Archduke-turned-hermit, he immerses the audience in the dramatic opening of the first movement of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto. This lush musical surge covers and colours the infamous assassination of the renegade's royal cousin Rudolf and his mistress at Mayerling, sending 'our hero', Jean Salvatore, into the elements. Lemêtre's soundscape contributes crucially to the production's emotional power.

December 21

The *Beagle* got underway: and on the succeeding day, favoured to an uncommon degree by a fine easterly breeze, we closed in with the barnevelts, and, running past Cape Deceit with its stony peaks, about three o'clock doubled the weatherbeaten Cape Horn. The evening was calm and bright, and we enjoyed a fine view of the surrounding isles. Cape Horn, however, demanded his tribute, and before night sent us a gale of wind directly in our teeth. We stood out to sea, and on the second day again made the land, when we saw on our weather-bow this notorious promontory in its proper form — veiled in a mist, and its dim outline surrounded by a storm of wind and water. Great black clouds were rolling across the heavens, and squalls of rain, with hail, swept by us with extreme violence so that the captain determined to run into *Wigwam Cove*. This is a snug little harbour, not far from Cape Horn; and here, at christmas-eve, we anchored in smooth water. The only thing which reminded us of the gale outside was every now and then a puff from the mountains, which seemed to blow us out of the water.

December 25

Close by the cove, a pointed hill, called Kater's Peak, rises to the height of 1700 feet. The surrounding islands all consist of conical masses of greenstone, associated sometimes with less regular hills of baked and altered clay-slate. This part of the tierra del fuego may be considered as the extremity of the submerged chain of mountains already alluded to. The cove takes its name of 'Wigwam' from some of the fuegian habitations; but every bay in the neighbourhood might be so called with equal propriety. The inhabitants, living chiefly upon shell-fish, are obliged constantly to change their place of residence; but they return at intervals to the same spots, as is evident from the pile of old shells, which must often amount to some tons in weight. (...)

At a subsequent period the *Beagle* anchored for a couple of days under Wollaston Island, which is a short way to the northward. While going on shore we pulled alongside a canoe with six fuegians. These were the most abject and miserable creatures in anywhere beheld. On the east coast the natives, as we have seen, have guanaco cloaks, and on the west, they possess seal-skins. Amongst these central tribes the men generally possess an otter-skin, or some small scrap about as large as a pocket-handkerchief, which is barely sufficient to cover their backs as low down as their loins (...) but these fuegians in the canoe were quite naked, and even one full-grown woman was absolutely so. It was raining heavily, and the fresh water, together with the spray, trickled down her body. In another harbour not far distant, a woman, who was suckling a recently-born child, came one day alongside the vessel, and remained there whilst the sleet fell and thawed on her naked bosom, and on the skin of her naked child. (...)

Charles Darwin

from The Voyage of the Beagle: Charles Darwin's Journal of Researches (1831–6)

Accompanying the myriad transitions of the theatre-in-the-theatre structure, the music also paces the sweep of the choreography, as the 33 actors rush on and off stage, establishing the decor, moving props, creating the frames for the silent film with its silent dialogue. The sense of the work of theatre never stops; actors playing filmmakers and actors playing film actors sweep the stage, man the wind machine, run the spots or manipulate the seagull puppet — the latter an emblem of hope for the last third of the play. This work of theatre is reinforced by members of the Théâtre du Soleil seen as such rather than as characters, who also manoeuvre backdrops, stage glides and riggings. All these bodies form part of a continuous moving dance machine. Thus while not losing sight of the fact of theatre-in-the-making, spectators are carried away by the kinetic and auditory pleasures of the production.

Through the character of Jean LaPalette, the production not only channels but actually slyly stages Ariane Mnouchkine, in a characterization that doubtlessly also pays tribute to her beloved filmmaking father, Alexandre Mnouchkine. This very successful film producer of the period from the 1950s to the 1970s was arguably at the origin of her own Promethean career, as Alexandre Mnouchkine enlisted his daughter's help early on for several of his blockbuster films. Hélène Cixous, or at least a spectre of Hélène Cixous' imagination, appears in the seeing eye or camera operator, Gabrielle. Like Cixous' Medusan heroine, Gabrielle is a laughing, ungendered — or rather multi-gendered — creative personality. A 'mole' like Cixous, who sometimes refers to herself in French as *une taupe*, Gabrielle tunnels through the psychic underbelly of the filming. Sometimes, too, she is like the Cixousian free-wheeling bird, a *voleuse*, flying in the sky as she films. Gabrielle/Hélène works in harmony — but not always perfect harmony — with Jean/Ariane. This kind of autobiographical clue summons up the complex affective history of the Théâtre du Soleil within which — as in the filmmaking process in the play — love affairs between participants make for awkward pauses as well as passionate advances, in the work of making art that challenges.

At the very end of the play, when the socialist aristocrat and the Indian boy go off to build the lighthouse, actors turn the lights and the camera on the audience. A way of handing to the public the task of building tomorrow, this gesture also positions the Soleil as a possible agent for change. A searchlight still illuminating the systems and passions that make war seem inevitable, the Soleil also lights the love and partnership that might change the future of humankind for the better. In any case, it opens the way.

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## A factual futurist whose writings whet the appetite

In spite of his over-familiarity as source material for such Hollywood films as *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *From the Earth to the Moon* much remains fascinatingly mysterious about the 19th-century French author Jules Verne. The Index Translationum, a UNESCO database of book translations, ranks Verne among the world's top five most translated authors (though the quality of such translations is not calibrated). Readers of French are indubitably in the best position to appreciate just how accomplished Verne was as a writer, not just as an 'odd rational madman' and 'maniac', as the literary critics Philippe Sollers and Roland Barthes respectively termed him, albeit with admiration. Another French fan, the novelist Julien Gracq, classed Verne with Georges Simenon and Dashiell Hammett as popular authors whose works acquired classic status over time, declaring: 'Enigmatic and galling to the mind is the example of such writers whom the bookshop has gradually imposed upon literature'.

For Verne is now a classic. If any doubt had remained, it was removed in May when four of Verne's massive novels (*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *The Mysterious Island*, *An Antarctic Mystery* and *In Search of the Castaways*) were reprinted as a two-volume set in the prestigious Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series from Les Editions Gallimard. Edited by the poet and literary scholar Jean-Luc Steinmetz, these four novels boast no fewer than 500 accompanying engravings, since Verne's original illustrations, by several different artists, remain an incitement to reverie and an essential part of his overall impact.

### Not science fiction?

Reverie is indeed the expected response to Verne's tales, yet his flat, drily didactic and sometimes preachy tone in the original is light years from what is generally seen as fantasy fiction. Like his descendant, the American author Ray Bradbury, who died in June, Verne demurred when others tried to classify him as a science-fiction author. Whereas such sci-fi elements as telepathy or parapsychology are found in works by H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs, Verne concocted wild images while sticking to a Gradgrind-like obsession with the facts of his day. *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* is chock-full of data about earth science and reptile life.

More an author of science-flavoured fiction than science fiction per se, Verne is quoted in interviews from 1903 and 1904 as reacting to the burgeoning celebrity of Wells,



How can one describe these powerful races in just a few lines? How can one speak of the Selk'nam, the Haush, the Yamana, the Alakaluf? They were powerful races because not only did they reach the most inhospitable lands on the planet, but, because of their enormous courage, they were able to remain there: they pulled their livelihood from the raging seas, the snowy forests, and the windswept, icy plains.

The Yamana and Alakaluf women paddled, defying waves coming up from the Antarctic, closing in on the whales, as their men, standing upright in the canoe and armed with spears, fought against their prey (...) The Selk'nam lived out their lives between guerrilla warfare and vendettas. They were a tough people, harsh towards their enemies, and tenacious with it. But they were also a loving people. They loved each other. They loved their mountains whose tops emerged from glacial seas. They loved their forests where multi-coloured birds made their nests. They loved their gods, metamorphosed into stars, winds and hills.

And they used to sing (...) they are no more. All that remains now is a handful of people whose parents and ancestors are now long gone. (...)

**Anne Chapman**

from the book *From Drama and Power in a Hunting Society (1981)*

author of *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Verne sniffed that it was impossible to compare his work to Wells's because:

We do not proceed in the same manner. It occurs to me that his stories do not repose on very scientific bases. No, there is no rapport between his work and mine. I make use of physics. He invents. I go to the Moon in a cannon-ball, discharged from a cannon. There is no invention. He goes to Mars [sic] in an airship, which he constructs of a metal which does away with the law of gravitation. Ça c'est très joli, but show me this metal. Let him produce it.

Verne saw Wells, with reason, as an imaginative writer, whereas his own aims were significantly different: 'I have always made a point in my romances of basing my so-called inventions on a groundwork of actual fact, and of using in their construction methods and materials which are not entirely without the pale of contemporary engineering skill and knowledge'. This stricture clearly would not apply to an anti-gravitational substance, conceived by Wells in *The First Men in the Moon*, making interplanetary flight possible.

The maniacal aspect of Verne appears plainly with close reading. As Barthes noted in his book of essays *Mythologies*: 'Verne was a maniac of plenitude: he unceasingly finished and furnished the world, filling it full as an egg; his impulse was exactly that of an 18th-century encyclopedist or a Dutch painter: the world is finite, crammed with numerable and contiguous substances. The artist can have no other task than to make catalogues, inventories'.

Indeed, in Verne's less inspired pages — and there are several of these in *Magellania* — reference books in different languages seemed to have been stacked on his desk, readily offering lists of scientific nomenclature to fill a fictional void. This wilfully exacted, rigidly rational writing system made Verne especially attractive to such manic literary compilers as Raymond Roussel and some minor 20th-century Surrealists. Verne himself was a devout admirer of Edgar Allan Poe. This well-founded Poe-worship was expressed in Verne's *Le Sphinx des Glaces* (*An Antarctic Mystery*), a novel intended as a continuation of Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. The former is included in Steinmetz's Gallimard edition and received its first full publication in a modern English translation only this June from the State University of New York Press.

### Original texts and family betrayals

Such high accomplishments in Verne's prolific output have inspired passionate adoration. Despite their varying quality, the 54 novels included in his *Voyages Extraordinaires* series have their zealous — and indeed jealous — lovers. Marcel Proust's novel *Sodome et Gomorre* from *À la recherche du temps perdu* offers a multi-layered metaphor in which a hotel headwaiter is described glimpsing the amount of a chauffeur's gratuity with the 'attentive and feverish manner of a child reading one





of Jules Verne's novels or a diner seated not far away in a restaurant who, seeing that a pheasant which he did not or could not order for himself is being cut up for you, abandons his serious thoughts for a moment to fasten upon the bird a gaze which love and longing cause to smile'. Greedy acquisitiveness and covetous delight are key emotions in appreciating Verne. Reading Verne becomes a form of accumulative *gourmandise*, as a logical outcome of books that were assembled, not just written.

A case in point is *Magellania* (*En Magellanie*), a novel written by Verne in 1897 but published in its original form only in 1987. A previous version was published in 1909, four years after the author's death, with the unwieldy title of *Les Naufragés du*

'Jonathan' ('The Castaways from "The Jonathan"'). It was much altered by Verne's son Michel, his literary collaborator in the last years of his life. Ariane Mnouchkine's *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir* (*Aurores*) is based on this material, with a great deal of poetic licence.

Verne's own political ideology, as such, was less inexorably progressive. One of the reasons his son rewrote *Magellania* is that, originally, two idealized Catholic priests appear at the end of the story, impressing the protagonist, a mysterious European royal who flees his homeland to heal natives on islands at the furthest tip of South America. Dubbed 'Kaw-djer', or 'benefactor' in the local lingo, this nobleman is initially presented as an anarchist, though not at all of the bomb-throwing variety. On the contrary, as a trained physician Kaw-djer heals the sick. He tends to his flock of followers despite his initial brave claim that he is governed by 'neither God nor Master', which turns out to be untrue, at least in the original *Magellania*. A paradox results, which to a modern reader may seem to invert the statement by the character Linus in Charles M. Schulz's comic strip 'Peanuts': 'I love mankind. It's PEOPLE I can't stand'. By loving individuals but fleeing civilization as he knew it, Verne's Kaw-djer is a highly unsystematic and indeed peculiar form of misanthrope.

Because of his initial anarchistic beliefs, Kaw-djer dismisses other characters in the novel who openly represent socialism (a lazy Frenchman) and communism (a pugnacious American). Yet trying to pinpoint Verne's own politics from the narrative of *Magellania* can lead to murky results. One of the reasons why Michel Verne's extensive posthumous surgery on some of his father's works may not be as shocking as it initially appears is that the elder Verne could be decidedly backward in his views, despite all his fame as a futurist.

To cite one example, Verne *père* was an anti-Semitic opponent of the unjustly accused Captain Alfred Dreyfus of the notorious Affair which gripped France for many years; by contrast, Verne *fils* was a Dreyfusard who wound up on the correct side of history on that issue. Firmly ensconced in the bourgeoisie, Verne really minded that he was never elected to the Académie Française, an even more asphyxiatingly stuffy and pretentious group during his lifetime than it is today. Like Kaw-djer, however much Verne railed against human society in his day, he never really dissociated himself from it. As a 19th-century misfit and uneasily questing traveller of letters, Verne can be classed alongside Hermann Melville, as Ray Bradbury observed. Although *Magellania* does not contain any superhero of the Captain Nemo/Ahab variety, it is part of the corpus that made readers not just avid, but positively greedy, to know what happens on each successive page that Verne wrote.

© Benjamin Ivry

Benjamin Ivry, author of biographies of Rimbaud, Ravel and Poulenc, has translated many books from the French, by such authors as Gide, Balthus and Gombrowicz, as well as Jules Verne's *Magellania* (2002)

A crash was heard. The splitting of a vessel's side on a reef in the open sea is one of the most melancholy sounds conceivable (...) several passengers were thrown down by the shock, and rolled along the deck (...).

A long cry broke out on the vessel: 'We are lost!'

Clubin's voice, dry and curt, dominated the cry. 'No-one is lost! Silence!'

Imbrancam's black form, bare to the waist, came up the hatchway leading to the engine-room. The black man said calmly: 'Captain, the water is coming into the hold. The fire will soon be out'.

It was a dreadful moment.

The shock had resembled a suicide. It could not have been more terrible had it been done intentionally. The 'Durande' had dashed upon the rock as though attacking it. One point of the rock had penetrated the ship like a nail. More than six feet square of her planking had been crushed, the stern was broken, the bow stove in, the open hull drank in the water with a horrible boiling sound. It was a wound through which shipwreck entered. The rebound had broken the pendants of the rudder, which hung loose and beat about. The keel had been stove in by the reef, and round the vessel nothing was visible but the thick, compact fog, now almost black. Night was fast drawing on.

The 'Durande' made a plunge forward. She was like the horse which has the bull's horn in his bowels. She was dead (...)

The passengers rushed about on the deck in a bewildered manner, wringing their hands, leaning over the rails, staring at the machinery, making all the useless movements of terror (...).

Clubin made a sign with his hand; everyone became silent. He questioned Imbrancam: 'How much longer can the engine work?'

'Five or six minutes' (...)

The crew and passengers listened, quivering with anxiety and attention, their eyes riveted on the captain. There was no object in lightening the vessel, and, besides, it was impossible. In order to throw the cargo into the sea, they would have been obliged to open the port-holes and increase the chances of the water entering. It would have been useless to cast anchor; they were nailed fast (...) The cattle, as the water was reaching them in the hold, began to bellow.

Clubin gave the command: 'Launch the long-boat' (...) all hands to the ropes'.

This time, all obeyed (...). The passengers, gliding down the ladders or hanging to the rigging, let themselves drop into the boat rather than descend into it (...). The sailors rushed forward behind the passengers. The cabin-boy had fallen under their feet, and they were trampling all over him.



Imbrancam barred the passage: 'No one before the lad', said he. He brushed aside the sailors with his black arms, seized the boy and handed him to the guernsey passenger, who stood up in the boat to receive him. The cabin-boy saved, Imbrancam stood aside, and said to the others, 'Pass on'. (...)

They went down. The long-boat was full; the water was on a level with the gunwhales.

'Now', shouted Clubin, 'give way.'

A cry arose from the long-boat. 'And you, captain?' 'I remain here.'

Shipwrecked men have but little time for deliberation, and still less for becoming affected. Still, those who were in the boat and in comparative safety, felt an emotion that was not altogether selfish. All voices insisted simultaneously, 'Come with us, captain'. (...)

'I stay. The vessel will be torn in pieces tonight by the tempest. I shall not leave it. When the ship is lost, the captain is dead. It will be said of me: "he did his duty to the end".'

**Victor Hugo**

*from The Toilers of the Sea (1866), translated by Isabel Florence Hapgood*





## Ariane Mnouchkine director

Ariane Mnouchkine was born in Boulogne-sur-Seine in 1939 and founded the Théâtre du Soleil with her contemporaries at the ATEP (the Theatre Association of the Students of Paris) in 1964. She directed the company's first production, Maxim Gorki's *Petit-Bourgeois (or the Philistines)* at the MJC at Porte de Montreuil, and in the same year she co-wrote the script of Philippe de Broca's film *That Man from Rio*, which was produced by her father, Alexandre Mnouchkine. Her notable early productions with the Théâtre du Soleil include *1789* (1974), *Méphisto, ou le Roman d'une carrière*, which she adapted from the novel by Klaus Mann (1979), *Richard II* (1981), *Twelfth Night* (1982) and *Henry IV Part 1* (1984). In 1985 she began her collaboration with Hélène Cixous, who has written numerous plays for the Théâtre du Soleil. Since making her first film — an unedited record of her production *1789* — in 1974, her films have included *Molière* (1977); *La Nuit Miraculeuse* (1989), commissioned by the National Assembly to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution; and an adaptation of her stage production *Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)* (2003). Her numerous awards and honours include the International Ibsen Prize, bestowed by the Norwegian government; the Goethe Medal, awarded by the Goethe Institute of Weimar; and the Stanislavsky Award (Moscow).

## Hélène Cixous

Hélène Cixous was born in Oran, Algeria, in 1937. In 1968, following posts at the University of Bordeaux, the Sorbonne, Paris, and the University of Paris at Nanterre, she founded the Experimental University of Paris, which became the University of Paris VIII, Vincennes. In 1974 she founded the Centre de Recherches d'Études Féminines at the University and remained its director until 2005. Since 1982 she has taught philosophy and literature at the Collège International de Philosophie, Paris. She is currently a professor of literature at the University of Paris VIII, an honorary professor at the University of Cardiff and an A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University. Her prizes include the Prix Médicis (1969) and the Prix des Critiques (for Best Theatrical Work in 1994 and Best Theatrical Creation in 2000); she was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur in 1994, an Officier de l'Ordre du Mérite in 1998 and a Commandeur de l'Ordre du Mérite in 2010. She is the author of 44 novels, 14 plays and 15 volumes of theory and essays, and her work has been translated into more than 30 languages. Since 1985 she has been the 'house playwright' of Théâtre du Soleil, for which her plays include *The Terrible But Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia* (1985), *The Indiad, or India of Their Dreams* (1987), *The Perjured City* (1994), *The Flood Drummers* (1999) and *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir* (2010).





## Jean-Jacques Lemêtre

Jean-Jacques Lemêtre was born in 1952 in Saint-Malo, where he studied at the conservatory and won awards for playing the clarinet and bassoon. By the age of 12 he was performing in dance-halls, singing rhythm and blues and playing the saxophone, flute and clarinet. He has been the Théâtre du Soleil's resident composer and principal musician since joining the company for *Méphisto* in 1979, providing live accompaniment on a variety of instruments and establishing his own instrument-making workshop at the theatre. In addition to his work for the Théâtre du Soleil, Lemêtre also teaches, works in music therapy and makes instruments. He composes for circus shows, cinema, television, theatre and dance productions and wrote the music for the opening ceremony of the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville. He gives frequent solo concerts at festivals throughout France and internationally, and conducts regularly. In 2010 his residency at the Société des Arts Technologies, Montreal, resulted in *Babel Orkestra*, an 'orchestral opera' composed of hundreds of spoken-word recordings in over 1800 languages and dialects. He won the Grand Prix de la Critique du Meilleur Compositeur de Musique de Scène in 1991 and the Molière Award for Best Music in 2005 for Ariane Mnouchkine's production of *Le Dernier Caravansérail* for the Théâtre du Soleil.

## Théâtre du Soleil

The Théâtre du Soleil was founded by Ariane Mnouchkine in 1964, when it presented its first production, Arthur Adamov's adaptation of Gorky's *Petit-Bourgeois (or the Philistines)*, in Porte de Montreuil, Paris. In 1970 the company moved into the Cartoucherie, a former bullet-making factory in the Bois de Vincennes which has been its home ever since. Here the Théâtre du Soleil began creating and presenting popular, collectively devised work with the aim of establishing a high-quality theatre for the people. Its principles have remained consistent: the company is considered to be a tribe or family, all its members are paid the same amount, and productions are cast only after numerous actors have tried out several roles. The company is characterized by its constant questioning of the place of theatre in society and its capacity to represent the present day, a commitment to examining great political and human issues, and its research into the major theatrical forms and the convergence of Asian and Western arts. In addition to its numerous large-scale productions at the Cartoucherie over the past 40 years, many of which have toured internationally, the Théâtre du Soleil's major projects include *1789* (1970) at the Piccolo Teatro, Milan; the feature-length film *Molière* (1977), directed by Ariane Mnouchkine; and *La Nuit Miraculeuse* (1989), a film commissioned by the National Assembly to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Its more recent productions include *Le Dernier Caravansérail* (2003–5), which has toured in France and elsewhere, including Rome, Berlin, New York and Melbourne; *Ephemera* (2006–8), which has been seen in France, Athens, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Taipei, Vienna and New York; and *Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)* (2010–12) which has toured widely in France and internationally.