



A collective creation by the
Théâtre du Soleil

Directed by
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Music by
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Together with
Hélène Cixous

With the exceptional participation of
Kalaimamani Purisai Kannappa Sambandan Thambiran



Hélène Cinque, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, *Théâtre du Soleil*, 2016 © Anne Lacombe

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1/ Our play



Wazhma Tota Khil and Shafiq Kohi, rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

Genuine curiosity

- So, where are you now?
- Us? We're in India.
- Still there? Last I heard, you'd come back.
- Yes. In fact, we did come back. However, we brought India with us.
- So, you're going to put on another play about India?
- It won't be about India, but rather it takes place in India. In a room in India. Moreover, that will be the title of the play.
- Come again? What do you mean? What happens in India that's not Indian?
- Visions, dreams, nightmares, apparitions, moments of panic, of doubt, of revelation. Anything and everything that might haunt the actors and technicians of a poor theatre troupe desperately seeking a resolutely contemporary and political theatre, and stranded there by deeply moving events beyond their control, events that equally distress and move us, leaving us looking for a way to face to them, a way to suffer through them without resigning ourselves nor adding evil to Evil through our words and our deeds.
- And then?
- For now, that's it. It's already quite a lot. Oh, we almost forgot! The gods of theatre willing, we'll take to the stage 26 October 2016.

Ariane Mnouchkine, letter to our audience, June 2016

It was as if we were refugees from History. All about our bedroom, the Times had been unleashed. We wondered what would become of us, we the people of the most diverse origins, but united by the same concern; we wondered what to call This, this chaos. (The air was scorching hot.) Through the French doors we could hear the sounds of India, that everlasting street demonstration. So, this continent never sleeps?

What we wanted was Life, to comprehend its mad Violence.

We had the feeling the whole world was pushing its way in to parade through our bedroom. The peoples were calling. It was truly very moving. They were calling out, Help! Or, Never again! And, in how many languages? All of them! We tried to respond, We, the members of the Company. Time flew by.

We leapt like fleas from one City to another. When it was time to laugh, we wept and vice versa. There was as much danger as there was hope, or almost as much.

How it would all turn out we did not know.

Some of us fretted over not knowing how to begin. After all, we had a mission: create a show.

What did I say? THE SHOW. Sign on the dotted line as early as tomorrow.

It was as if someone had told us, "Shut up the East and the West, both of them deranged, in nutshell. Distill their plagues and their times of peace into a fragrant potion."

- Yes, yes. We'll give it a try. Let's make haste.

And at that very instant, we'd see an army of anxieties and powerlessness rise up against us. It would be just as well to ask us to bring home Noah's Ark, the flood and the forty years in the wilderness, the French Revolution along with all the other ones, and all the religious wars, the rebirth of Odysseus, the witch hunt, the burial of the Pandavas, and so and so forth in a single rickshaw. How could we not tremble?

We dreaded being ridiculed. We relentlessly sought after laughter. Fortunately, or by misfortune, that night lasted centuries. Near midnight, a colonel brought me the latest news. I opened the paper. I screamed, No!

Excerpts from *Cornelia's Journal*

Hélène Cixous, May 2016.

Ariane Mnouchkine Interview by Agnès Santi (*La Terrasse*)

25 August 2016

Which questions does the new play raise?

This resolutely contemporary play broaches a question that haunts me. At the present day, how can one talk about the chaos of a world that has become incomprehensible? How can we recount this chaos without taking part in it, meaning without adding chaos to chaos, sadness to sadness, sorrow to sorrow, evil to evil? How can one create an *objet d'art*, a play that rather must somehow mark out this chaos, endeavour to plot its contours or its numerous and complex workings. In short, to restore our strength. These questions are the concern of the theatre, of literature, and of all art forms. Faced with the anxiety that grips us, we chose the vitality of theatre, and of mirth!

What was the genesis of the play?

The script was written and continues to be written as we advance in rehearsals on stage: once again it is nearly entirely improvised. The first stage of this new collective creation began in January 2016 in Pondicherry, India, during a period of work undertaken by a dozen actors with our *École Nomade* (Travelling School), followed by rehearsals with the rest of the troupe that had joined us. I wanted to take the entire Soleil troupe to India – actors, musicians, technicians... – and we were able to put together this fertile voyage. The Alliance Française in Pondicherry helped us and mobilized the French community, and many of us were kindly housed. After the terrorist attacks of November 2015, I was so paralyzed and indignant that I hesitated to go. I didn't speak of this distress and I persisted. I understood that we would perhaps work more soundly from a distance away from this sorrow and this incomprehension. We were all very close to each other and we worked very hard. It was also a rejuvenating way of affirming the force of life and the life of the theatre.

India is a very distinctive land for the theatre... Is it a play about India?

The play occurs in India, in a room in India, but it isn't about India. We can travel a great deal within a room, and even host the entire world! We can confront ourselves with a great diversity of imaginary voyages, metamorphoses, dreams and nightmares... Everything besides cynicism and resignation! India is of course present as an infinitely nourishing land, where everything

is grand, a matrix, inspiring and demanding. Indian culture generates rigour, and even an everyday beauty of gesture. It is a great fortune to know this precious facet of India whilst it holds out, because India also plunges by swathes into chaos, ugliness and stupidity. The play honours a form of Indian theatre that I knew little of, so the discovery made for a real shock; the Therukoothu.

What is this theatre?

It's a very ancient traditional Tamil theatre, most usually played by and for the low castes. Cousin to Kathakali, originating in the state of Tamil Nadu, which is situated in the extreme south of India. Whereas Kathakali won acclaim, Therukoothu remained a very popular theatre, performing in villages from dusk until the early hours. I was struck by the powerful liberty and vitality of this form, that principally recounts stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana epics. Within the play, the Therukoothu appears in all its vigour and its splendour. It thus plays a very important role as example of the actual power of theatre, and establishes itself as a kind of reminder of the fundamental and ancestral laws of theatre, that poke fun at our inconstant and undulating ways. Of course, in 2016, not everything can be resolved by a performance of Therukoothu. But this theatre is like a stepping stone in order to cross an overflowing river...

How does the play begin?

A theatre troupe is stuck in India. It has lost its director, who, following the terrorist attacks, has left because he felt completely helpless and had lost all strength. They have spent all the money for their trip and are supposed to announce a project the next day! The play is thus the quest for a play.

Faced with this very complex world, there is no shortage of analysis, that can sometimes be blinded by an ideology...

I strive to preserve an intellectual honesty so as to resist ideological crazes, as there have been ideological crazes at work for a long time. The obstinacy of explaining everything, not to say give excuses to, can also sometimes lead us to a biased simplification. Today, in this elusive world, there is an explosion of evil embodied in constant, anticipated and planned acts. We are faced with a world that can be comprehensible one day and incomprehensible the next, because what we have worked out in an attempt of explanation falls apart, because there occurs the exact opposite of what had so pretentiously been asserted to us. After the terrorist attacks, I was

shocked and surprised by the rapidity by which a certain waffle once again took over, without compassion, or with selective compassion. Nevertheless, we strongly set ourselves up against a perpetual lamentation. One must know how to be happy if possible! Today's world doesn't care for our complaints, our disenchantments; nostalgia serves no purpose, only to weaken us. We wanted to overcome our anxieties through laughter!

Why laughter?

To speak of the fear that this world causes, we chose comedy as a sort of antibiotic. We wanted to laugh at ourselves, laugh at our defeats and laugh at our fears, which doesn't mean denying their legitimacy. I am not one of those who think that fear is just a feeling, there are legitimate reasons to feel fear, we have to live with it and deal with it. The play is also fed by our pomposity and our illusions; it's the most difficult play we have ever made! The comedy often emerges during rehearsals, and everything thus becomes very sensitive, very subtle, measured out by the microgram! Comedy is more arduous to exercise than tragedy. In the end it's tragedy that disguises itself and that makes us laugh. From catastrophe – and the play is a succession of little catastrophes – must arise a comic theatrical dimension. We must draw from the power of laughter, legitimate or not! I don't wish to make a promise, and it is tricky to foretell that the play will be funny, but I hope it will be. In any case, we laugh a lot. The revitalising strength of theatre combats the despair and destruction, keeps alive humane and tender sentiment. As always, I trust our emotions, because I bet that the audience resembles us, that they will feel these same emotions and laugh, perhaps also because, like me, they are angry. We haven't the heart to laugh, and it's precisely for this reason that we want to create a comedy: it's what our heart needs. And, as always, I bet that we and our audience have the same heart.

2/ Rehearsal diary

[excerpts]



Hélène Cinque and Duccio Bellugi-Vannuccini, rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

In India, January 2016

Lessons from Indian Masters'

(...) This will be an extremely physical show, and now is the time to prepare for that, not at the Cartoucherie (...) I am asking you to split hairs.

(...) We have little time, here, to learn. This time of preparation and instruction is vital, you must dedicate yourselves entirely to their teachings.

(...) I am looking at what come out from your souls, not at your awkward feet. You, watch their bodies, watch their eyes, don't be lukewarm, listen, make the most of it. (...) Your eyes must shine.

(...) Sense the vitality of your arms right through to your fingertips. *(Palani)*

(...) Your gaze must rest on your fingertips, more precisely, at the centre space between your hands, and you lean to the side, not forwards. Hands in place, shoulder width apart. *(Sambandan)*

(...) Don't contract your shoulders when you stretch your arms, hands open. Align the head with the spine. Bend to the same side as the raised knee and keep the rhythm. The suppler your knees, the better. Stagger yourselves from the beginning of the exercise. *(Palani)*

(...) Keep your weight in the centre. If you get the arms mixed up with the feet, place your hands on your hips. For the acceleration, you must follow the song. Slap the ground more lightly with the first foot when the acceleration begins. *(Palani)*

(...) New movement: the heel starts, then the sole of the foot, all very relaxed. *(Palani)*

5 January

Basic essentials

(...) In 1993 I was in India when my father began to die. One night, we searched for a telephone and all of a sudden: an office table, and a man. Of course, he took advantage of the situation to raise the price a little, but he wasn't dishonest, and he provided me with the essential... There are always basic essentials: a telephone, electricity, petrol, food, for a child, or for everyone.

6 January

The tribe of light

(...) It's Art. The Therukoothu is this tribe of light. But it's too early for me to explain this, even though it's quite obvious to me. (...) Therukoothu is the unquestionable reminder of what art is, it's art's light.

11 January

The voyage

(...) Fill yourselves up with India, but without folklore. (...)

It can be observed, from the corner of a street, from a market. What you must go and see cannot be visited, you must wait for it. The peoples' fatigue... Step out into life!

12 January

1. Mr Sambandan Kannappa is the maestro of a Therukoothu troupe in the Purisai village situated approximately 120kms from Chennai, and considered to be one of the traditional centres of this folk art form. Sambandan's family have practiced this art across five generations. Along with two other members of his troupe, he accompanied the Théâtre du Soleil actors through their initiation of this art form.

Palani Murugan is an actor and dancer from a family of traditional Therukoothu performing artists. He received a research scholarship from the Indian Ministry of Culture (1999-2002) and received the 'Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar' in 2009, awarded by the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama) in New Delhi.

The chaos of India

(...) Hanne and Rajagopal² told me some terrible stories about the speculation of Indian land, bought from farmers to grow grain so as to nourish an overpopulated humanity. The school has been threatened, Raja is from a modest social class that has no means to defend itself. And they can't refuse to travel to Delhi to perform for one hour, for a derisory sum. India is not yet, is far from being, an upright State. (...) The chaos of India, the injustice, the insufficiency, the situation imposed upon women; all of these can be touched on.

12 January

Recounting the world

(...) I tell myself I'm slipping because there are so many stories to tell, this dance of demons that crop up from everywhere, and so I ask myself, what is our responsibility? We need to create a play that can be absolutely comical, and nourishing.

13 January

(...) You're in the same state as I am, the world is stifling us and we don't know how to deal with it without creating a cataclysmic description.

18 January

(...) It's so horrible we don't know how to talk about it. (...) It's possible that our play will be a delicate mixture. (...) I think the Théâtre du Soleil has always succeeded in recounting the world whilst maintaining the force of hope and joy; I think that the theme is a good one if there is theatre and the theatre exists through its actors.

20 January

The living language

(...) What defines the Tamil language is: word, music, theatre.

(...) He speaks a poetic Tamil, the equivalent of old French. The spoken commentary exists to explain the poetry: it's like Shakespeare's English, that the English don't understand. Tamil is a living language and it's the oldest language in the world.

13 January

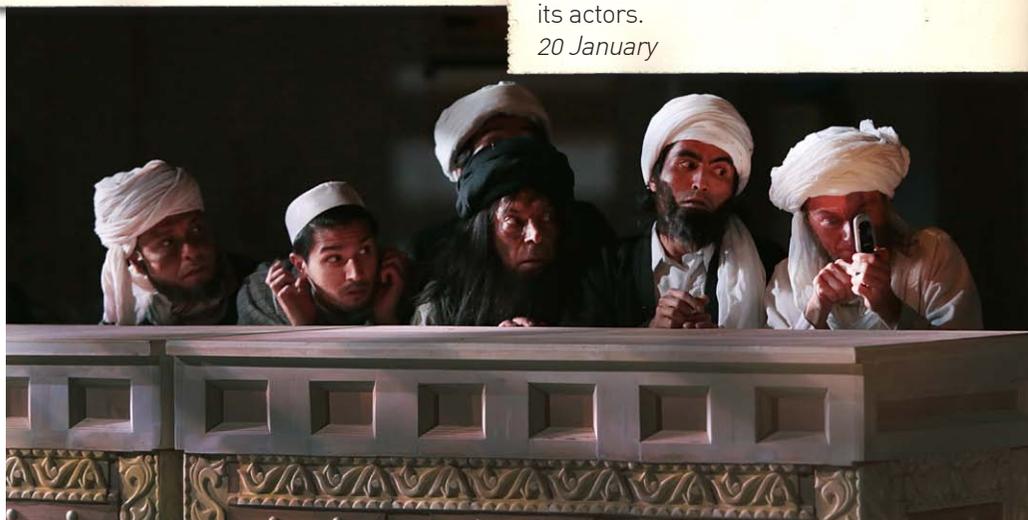
The Therukoothu

(...) I never had in mind a play that would be Therukoothu from A to Z. I am content with this form because the Therukoothu is a royal yet popular form, sophisticated but not fundamentally complicated, it has a vitality, a liberty, an insolence through the Kattiyakaran³. Therukoothu is the art form that certain characters in the play practice. There are concrete possibilities for comedy.

12 January

(...) In Therukoothu we see the origins of theatre, the origins of clowns. For me, Therukoothu, with its explosive force, is the modern world. I have great difficulty in abandoning the modern world. The danger of losing an art is wherein I found the metaphor. For the moment, what I have suggested doesn't work. If I were to be even more frank, I would say: my own personal anxiety in the face of the world grips me to such a point that I lose conviction in what I wish to talk about, especially for our children; our role is to give this strength.

13 January



Vijayan Panikkaveetil, Shafiq Kohi, Samir Abdul Jabbar Saed, Ghulam Reza Rajabi, Duccio Bellugi-Vannuccini, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

2. Professor Rajagopal, actor, director and teacher, and Hanne M. de Bruin, specialist in Indian theatre, founded in 1990, in a village in the north of Tamil Nadu, the association Kattaikkuttu Sangam, focussed on developing contemporary practices of Kattaikkuttu, a traditional rural dance-theatre. Amongst their many activities (professional troupe, residencies, festivals...), the association also founded a Kattaikkuttu school aimed at teaching children and adolescents from rural areas. The school opened up access to this artistic form to young girls and women, some of whom are becoming professional, which has previously never occurred.

3. As master of ceremonies, the *Kattiyakaran* directs the performance, comments on events, and dialogues with the characters in a lively manner.

Rage after Cologne⁴

(...) 570 women were humiliated, 570 had a hand down their underpants and we're talking about four rapes! Rape is a weapon of war; as long as man's honour is found in a woman's vagina, there will be a problem. Renée Saurel⁵, theatre reviewer and an old friend of the Soleil, upheld another struggle, against female circumcision, practiced even in France by French doctors who claimed the operations were better if done by them. The ideological dodging is intolerable. (...) 80% of German women said they wouldn't go to Carnival; half of humanity is in the process of losing ground. And that haunts me.

14 January

Enrichment from India

(...) I am convinced that this voyage to India will be useful, and I won't accept any reproach on the subject. That being said, my concern is to remain as fair and responsible as any subsidized company must be in regards to its mission of public service. I want you to feel you are creators. I hope that the enriching nature of India, our master Sambandan, every feverish regard, everything that happens here, will enlighten you.

14 January

Pongal! Pongal!⁶

15 January

To rehearse

(...) I'm thinking of *Les Éphémères*⁷, it's made up of little personal dramas, search in the details to find the greater picture, all these little stratum that make up the world.

4 January

(...) You were missing the real vision, the interior action.

(...) More than ever, search in the details to find the greater picture; more than ever, 'The condition of wonderful is the concrete'⁸. More than ever, the slightest detail is vital.

5 January

(...) Accuracy, if we search for it too early, becomes an abominable censor.

6 January

(...) This will be made of many fragments of life, in an absolute present. (...) One needs courage to do that, to dare to be ridiculous, to break through the first membrane. (...) There isn't a form yet.

7 January

(...) Reduced visibility is an avenue we shouldn't let go of. To think about the countryside, the rain, the ruts. (...) The gods of electricity aren't with us for the moment, let's hope that the theatre gods will join us because at the end of the day, they are the ones we need.

11 January

(...) Rather than work on our personal quests

as we did in *Les Éphémères*, let's work on our artistic quests.

12 January

(...) We must be capable of starting again from scratch, we must give ourselves this liberty, just as we do for an improvisation. (...) We must get out of the deadlock. We must give ourselves back this freedom.

14 January

(...) Attend to the ship, it's the only way you can try to get on board; if you try to place yourselves, you will always get in the way. (...) Concern yourselves with the play, it's wonderful what is happening here, I am so grateful to the Théâtre du Soleil for allowing us this; make the most of every day until the last without having a bee in your bonnet about what you are going to do. (...)

Forget everything, deny everything, deny this, play!

15 January

(...) At this point in time I am not asking much more of us than little moments of life.

(...) Be severe with yourselves, that way I won't have to be.

20 January

4. 'Attacks in Cologne': on New Year's Eve 2015, 1088 complaints were filed by the police, of which 470 were for sexual assault and 618 for theft, blows and injury. In all, 73 people will be placed under investigation. (Source: *Le Monde*, 17.02.2016)

5. Renée Saurel (1910-1988) was a drama critic for *Combat*, *L'Express* and *Les Lettres Françaises*, before joining *Les Temps Modernes* in 1952. She wrote the theatre column for the review until 1984, accompanying the adventure of decentralisation, and the pursuit to found a theatre for the people.

6. Harvest festival in South India. In Tamil Nadu the festivities last 4 days and take place the 14th or 15th of January (the first day of the month *thai* in the Tamil calendar).

7. *Les Éphémères*, collective creation by the Théâtre du Soleil based on a theme proposed by Ariane Mnouchkine, 2006.

8. Jirí Trnka, Czech motion-picture animator (1912-1969).

To laugh

(...) We have slipped into tragedy. Let's not forget, alongside its magnificence, or sometimes hellishness, is the comic force of Therukoothu.

12 January

(...) We must retain the comedy, this self-decision.

18 January

(...) Let the comedy come, it's a very noble genre, especially at the moment. (...) What would be the most courageous and most beautiful would be to make the audience laugh from their own fears. (...) There are some little moments on the state of the world then the force of laughing at oneself. (...) Shakespeare wrote comedies when something terrible had happened, don't be scared of that. If we manage to create a play equivalent to the situation of the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I will be very proud. (...) Within the accumulation of catastrophe one can find a comic force, that's the style of humour. The limit is hurting others. (...) We are trying to create a dramatic comedy whilst the world around us is in full chaos, in total confusion; it's not a comic tragedy.

22 January

(...) It's funny, therefore insolent.

25 January

How do we do it?

(...) The structure is there; I was so struck by the vitality of the form... but what do we do in the face of a desperate and despairing world? We lead the struggle, not that of Therukoothu, but our own. And our anxiety can become very fertile ground if we mock it, overcome it, if we amuse ourselves with it. Everything is permitted to you, all styles, all suggestions, so it will take some time, but that's normal, that's our way, we are exploring.

15 January

'A poem without Rasa⁹ is a mango without juice. The essence of a poem is in its flavour. Theatre is this flavour; this flavour is theatre.'

*Natya-Shastra*¹⁰



Rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Anne Lacombe

9. Rasa : « Juice, sap, essence ». Emanation and emotional projection of Bhava (emotion, fundamental state, as it is felt in its essence), whose fertile substance must find an echo within the sensibilities of the audience. There are nine Rasas (flavours) each with a corresponding divinity:

SRINGAR: Love (Vishnu)

VIRA: Heroism (Indra)

KARUNA: Compassion (Yama)

ADBHUTA: Marvel (Gandharva)

HASYA: Mirth (Promatha)

BHAYA: Fear (Kala)

RUDRA: Anger (Rudra)

BHIVATSA: Terror (Mahakala)

SHANTA: Serenity (Narayana)

10. Natya-Shastra :

NATYA: dramatic action

SHASTRA: rules

This fundamental text attributed to sage Bharata, recounts the origins of theatre and establishes its rules. It is considered to be the 5th veda (from the root 'vid'; to know, or sacred knowledge). The VEDAS are sacred texts that form the basis of the Hindu religion).

At the Cartoucherie, February-May 2016

Caution

(...) The majority of the time, when you manipulate the other instead of playing with them, it's done for from the start.

(...) All of the people who live and who've come from crucified and unstable countries carry with them a trauma, but to understand it, one must create a situation on stage. Just now, it was nothing more than illustration. (...) It's as though you have sprinkled the icing sugar, the little decoration, before the rest.

16 February

(...) When you have a proposal, you must trust it. You must take the time to develop it, but you often have the tendency to want to illustrate, and jump to the end.

17 February

(...) To advance, to find the characters, one has many diverse roads.

(...) How do you wish to construct something dramatic and profound, seeing as already you wanted it to be funny? Sometimes you fall into the abyss! There are eight of you, and there's not one who asked 'Are you sure?'

22 February

Advice

(...) Let's not be scared. Dare to have the conversation, and within a conversation, there is silence. Don't be terrified by the silences.

(...) Don't jump over everything concrete that is offered up to you by chance. (...) You must take up immediately what little concrete there is, literally, at face value. (...) Yes, it's a play about doubt, about a kind of feeling of helplessness, about those moments one feels powerless. But that being said, you mustn't think about it when you prepare your improvisations.

16 February

(...) You must nourish your improvisations with an absolute concreteness so as to be completely present.

17 February

(...) It's enough for you to be true, for there to be the right tone, the right rhythm in your body and the patience to wait. (...) You need patience to try to enter on stage.

22 February

Acknowledgement and creation

(...) It's as though you had a very thin pencil, still very faint, it's as though you were drawing with a very faint pencil, and with white. A lot of white. A sketch. But I will say that this sketch is enough for me, it is extremely pale on flimsy, slightly crumpled paper, but that suits me fine. (...)

16 February

(...) What is so beautiful in our vision is this conviction, this culture, this volubility, this re-joining of spirit that the character is experiencing, and that she brings them to experience. (...) It's a celebration, of creation, of imagination. (...) Because it's fundamental, that's the theatre's problem.

19 February

(...) We need to be hard workers, patient and courageous. It's a play that seeps out.

25 February

It needs a conscious, complicit illusion, where the audience knows it's an illusion because they know how it's produced.

29 February

The World

(In regard to an opinion column by Kamel Daoud¹¹)

(...) It's very sad because this man is very important. He and others, are alive and speak the truth. And we must defend them. Because he defends women and was called a neo colonialist. His friend has the right to disagree. But we speak through rounds of Kalashnikovs these days. They don't debate, they beat down.

23 February

(...) We need true great knowledge, that we manage to pass on.

25 February

11. Algerian writer, journalist, winner of the Goncourt prize for a first novel in 2015, for *Meursault, contre-enquête*, Actes Sud.

In an article published by the newspaper *Le Monde*, 31 January 2016 (http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantasmes_4856694_3232.html), the journalist and writer Kamel Daoud offers an analysis of 'what happened in Cologne on New Year's Eve'.

History, drama, doubt

(...) What is also beautiful is the doubt. It's almost a leitmotif. For our Lear, it is what to talk about; for the troupe, it is how to talk about it; and for them, it's how to metamorphize their doubt.

19 February

(...) There is a more generalised threat that, obviously, strikes directly at the troupe during their voyages, their comings and goings, even simply at their access to money. And then, yes, it unleashes right down to the south of India... (...) We take the time to grieve, but we perform. (...) There is not only our Lear who doubts. Our Lear pushes doubt to incandescence, he is on the verge of suicide, since suddenly he asks himself the questions that – thank God – we ask ourselves from time to time, and which is 'What purpose does theatre serve?'. Here, in the twilight of his life, he hasn't found the answer.

24 February

(...) I can understand that some people feel terror, but the actors of the troupe, they are saved from their terror because they have a love for theatre. (...) But then, well, will they really rehearse *Uncle Vanya* wearing gas masks? You have to try it but you have to really do it!

29 February

Questions of genre

(...) And that's what we have to find: characters about whom we think we could write ten episodes.

16 February

(...) Here, the dilemma isn't acidic enough for me. (...) As Stendhal said, you need a mini dose of illusion.¹²

18 February

(...) When I say that it is perhaps verbal, it doesn't mean that it's verbose. They are passions! (...) It's a classic, but I find it very beautiful. I find it beautiful that we are tackling a classic and that there's a mixture of *Frankenstein* and *Dr Strangelove*. We need to get to at that. Addressing 'President Trump' is a fine way to move away from the classic. The background noise presence of America would have needed to be much greater. We wanted to sense the America that we hate. We would have wanted to hear it, see it, with greater detail.

23 February

(...) I thought of many things during your improvisation: of the dangers, of the chasms that open up to the left and right of us, and of delights. Everything was there: *Les Précieuses Ridicules* [The Pretentious Young Ladies], Iran and Saudi Arabia, there is a lot of promise in it...

25 February

Laugh and avert

(...) Personally I adore the idea of making people laugh with this group of moronic Taliban. I find that delightful. (...) What do we have to do so that what makes us laugh enters into History? So, this could also become boulevard theatre. However, I am not going to turn my nose up at that which makes, without dishonour, so many people laugh.

16 February

(...) Perhaps we need to confront this subject now. We confronted the sacrificed child, and we'll come back to it. (...) And suddenly, we're going to laugh. Which would be absolutely marvellous. (...) Just as we can laugh at the Taliban, just as we can laugh at things that we thought we couldn't.

22 February

(...) We are going to confront everything that frightens us. We will laugh at everything that scares us. We are going to try to be sufficiently courageous, intelligent, to laugh at everything that scares us. And at ourselves. (...)

23 February

(...) Here, yes, there needs to be a death. But a funny death. In comedy, there are no real deaths. Here, we will laugh at death.

25 February

Caution, 2

(...) If you wait for laughs all the time, there is no action.

16 February

(...) But perhaps I am too impatient and you need, we need, these moments, these little comical apparitions that found the fertile terrain.

22 February

(...) We must work very seriously, but without taking ourselves seriously.

23 February

(...) We should take our own laughing as criteria. (...) Don't start to want to be nobler. Molière didn't try to be noble, and he went to the Saint-Germain fair, to see the acrobats who, for some, were absolutely crude and obscene. (...) Farce is very difficult, it requires a certain distance, a certain modesty, not to take oneself too seriously.

25 February

(...) Farce or not, I need to believe in it, there needs to be some truth all the same.

29 February

12. (...) All the pleasure we find in a tragic play depends on the frequency of the little moments of illusion, and, during these intervals, on the state of emotion in which they leave the spectator's soul.' Homemade translation from Stendhal, *Racine et Shakespeare* (work composed of articles written in 1823 and a brochure published in 1825), ed. Kimé, 2005.

Induced optimism

(...) There were the makings of a neurosis, a neurosis of joy.

19 February

(...) The actions that exist in struggle against the drama are what make it funny.

22 February

(...) All of a sudden, that makes me bold.

23 February

Economising language

(...) Economy is essential. What I found funny, is that there was someone who didn't say anything. (*Hélène Cixous*)

(...) To exist doesn't mean to speak, but to say exactly what is necessary.

1 March

There is something very musical. The music links us all together. And these long silences that say: 'Careful, speak at the right time, without any superfluous words...'

(*Shaghayegh Beheshti*)

3 March

The force of comedy

(...) Jean-Jacques didn't accentuate it, there was an air of melancholy. It was as though he added a little drop of lemon juice. I laugh with a background of sadness, melancholy. (...) It was very good.

16 February

(...) We are creating a comedy. Undeniably. But we are trying to make a dark comedy. Let's re-read Alfred de Musset:

I marvelled what a love for goading truth

This man possessed, with proud simplicity;

What manful gaiety, and so profound

That, when we've laughed at it, we should have wept.¹³

We need to create a dramatic scene and find the madcap transposition.

(...) It's like Kafka's fables¹⁴ from which we burst out laughing. (*Hélène Cixous*)

(...) So, voila, we are coming to understand that we are mounting a farce. Because Jean-Jacques said that our Lear could die. Because Sébastien said that we could go and fetch the body. And because I said 'Why not?'. And that has freed us up a lot.

(...) Even so, it's Chaplinesque, it hasn't the rhythm of silent cinema but it's Chaplinesque.

(...) We need to find dramatic situations and work out how Chaplin would play them. (...) What is Chaplin? Is it burlesque? Is it comical? (...)

23 February

Waffling

(...) If you please, forget the clichéd controversial scenes, the waffle, we can't deny that we do it... We have our own way of waffling when we don't pay attention! If we forget that, everything will come.

11 March

Brevity, sculpting time

(...) You must understand the virtues of brevity. Know that everything you do will be filed, pruned, sanded, trimmed.

16 March

(...) I believe there is something that we're not confronting properly, not courageously, not front on, myself included – because I'm oscillating. It's a question of temporality, not chronology, but even so, it doesn't occur over a week! And we must manage to put up with that. For me, the ideal would be that this happens over one night. 24 hours maximum. From midnight to midnight. (...) It needs to seem interminable, but not really be so.

23 March



Jean-Jacques Lemêtre, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

13. Alfred de Musset, *Une soirée perdue* (extract), 'A Wasted Evening' translated by Marie Agathe Clarke, in *The Complete Writings of Alfred de Musset*, Edwin C. Hill Company, New York, 1905.

14. In particular we can read those found in Volume II of the complete works of Franz Kafka: *Recits and fragments narratifs*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade n°282, 1980.

The text

(...) Take the text. Beneath the bombs, simply speak the text. They are not indifferent to the bombs, but when they read, they forget them.
22 March

Culinary metaphor

(...) The problem is that as soon as we sense you are talking to get the ball rolling again, it doesn't work anymore. As long as you are really searching, we feel we can get something out of it, but as soon as it's for the sake of speaking, it doesn't work.

1 March

Some of the flavour comes from your accent, but when you become incomprehensible, I lose that flavour; and when you speak too much, I lose the flavour too.

24 March

Gandhi and his toboggan

(...) I spent quite some time looking at this statue of Gandhi, with the children playing at his feet, or rather, who were tobogganing¹⁵. It's as though all of India, symbolically, is clinging to the skirts of this man who, in the end, didn't succeed in saving them... It's strange.
1 March



Pondicherry, January 2016 © Etienne Lemasson

'...India, for me, is like an "inner land", one of my former countries. I lived there in a past life, I believe.'

Ariane Mnouchkine. *L'Art du présent*, interviews with Fabienne Pascaud, Plon, 2005.

15. The Gandhi (1869 – 1948) Statue in Pondicherry is a 4m high statue situated on Avenue Goubert, by the sea. It is surrounded by eight granite pillars. Today it is a playground for children who climb up over his feet and then slide down, as though on a toboggan.

The pre-history of theatre

(...) We must feel the roots.

14 March

(following an entrance on stage by Therukoothu actors) (...) I felt the same emotion as the moment I understood that we must go to India. The kernel of theatre, the first men, who painted their faces red and who started to perform for the gods. As Eugenio said, whilst watching a Therukoothu lesson: 'I understand nothing but it pierces me.'

16 March

The theatre gods

(...) It's lovely that Juliano keeps his wrists joined as he recounts the situation in Europe.

(...) And the Therukoothu that imposes itself, that rises, that tries to enter by the door, sometimes they even go up and down the street to advertise the show with a speaker phone. And they, they don't want to, they don't understand until much later that it's the theatre gods who bring them the solution.

30 March

Turning points and 'divertimenti'

(...) This is part of what will exist, these little relays between a word, a gesture, an action, even a sound...

11 March

(...) What I find beautiful in what you are attempting to rough out, is that it's very funny without being either violent or mean. (...) We will call this the 'divertimenti'. We will have a little box of our 'divertimenti'.

22 March

Scared stiff

(...) We should recall, so as to distance ourselves, the company meetings we had before going to give a workshop in Kabul in 2005, or before performing *L'Indiade* in Israel in 1988. Our experiences were tied to History, to the fear of death, we forget that we were faced with war, faced with hate. It's perhaps what is difficult, the confusion between ourselves and the characters that we wish to interpret.

(Maurice Durozier)

1 March

'There exists the Greater History, that drags us and submerges us and into which we often think we can't intervene. We can neither know it, nor understand what direction it goes in, all the while it continues, and us with it. It is solely in returning to ourselves, once time has passed, that we understand its meandering and changes of direction. This Greater History leaves us no liberty. It advances inexorably and we don't know where it is going, nor why. We often tell ourselves fables of Hope and Despair, both equally unreasonable, even though at times their insanity gives birth to a light in the obscurity that surrounds us.

Nevertheless, in Greater History we can carve out little islands, miniscule gardens where our hand will be efficient and will allow us to live our Little History.

This Little History, tangled up in refusal and 'superstition', is that of our life, our house, our family, the misunderstandings, the encounters and coincidences that guided us towards the craft and the milieu which we have chosen to belong to.

It goes without saying that Greater History and Little Histories are not independent. But the Little Histories are not simply portions of the Greater History. The children, who build a little dam at the edge of a big river and dig a little swimming pool, don't play in the impetuous current, but the water in which they swim and paddle is no different from that which flows in the middle of the river. On its banks, they create cavities and unforeseen recesses, passing on to the future, traces of their identity.

All this, Voltaire described in *Candide*. From a deluge of irony and adventure, collapses the illusion that the world we live in is liveable or 'the best of possible worlds'. After having long participated in the mechanical game of confrontation between pessimism and optimism, Voltaire's protagonist arrives, on the last page, at the conviction that one must work without thinking about the destiny of our work, and commit oneself to 'cultivating ones' own garden'. Which doesn't signify to surrender, capitulate, a call for selfishness nor for a narrow and egocentric vision of life. It's rather the necessity to contradict the Greater History with a Little History that might belong to us. And to try to make them dance.

Theatre is to try to stay in the river water without being taken by the current.

Voila the history of theatre: little gardens, sheltered ponds of water, sometimes swept away by the violent current.'

Some oxymorons

(...) The scene falls between two stools, because it was neither really a farce at the beginning, nor really a tragedy at the end.

11 March

(...) What Jean-Jacques did was lovely: we went from symphony to drama and came back to hope.

16 March

(...) You mustn't be wilful. It's today's error. Because everything was fruitful. There are dramatic moments that will become farce and farce that will become dramatic!

22 March

(...) You speak of something appallingly violent in an atmosphere of peace. And it's very beautiful.

30 March

Doubt, a reflection

(...) A play reflects itself on our behaviour, *Les Atrides* reflected itself on our behaviour. Fortunately, with *Macbeth*, we were vigilant, because we were warned by the reputation of the piece itself. The *Fol Espoir* also reflected itself, its fraternity... I think that the subject of our piece today – doubt, incapability – because that's a subject, incapability... because I feel incapable of reflecting the chaos of the world in one sole theme – in the end it's exactly what's happening, we reveal ourselves to be incapable, that is reflected on our behaviour. Is it not, deep down, that I am scared of doubt? In fact, I fear negative doubts, but I believe that doubt is rich, except when we throw the baby out with the bathwater.

1 March

Free thinkers

(...) I think that the improvisations that you have begun on the Taliban render them ridiculous in an even more insolent way, since we show them wanting to kill us. (...) But it's a very, very black farce, because it's a farce that we tell ourselves will never end. (...) We are touching on a subject that is an atomic bomb. We must be free thinkers, and it's difficult at the moment. (...) We shouldn't retreat from common sense and it needs an absolute exactness, both in clothing and in situation. And afterwards, let the farce do its work of erosion and acidification.

2 March

(...) And now that we have amused ourselves, perhaps this scene can turn out to be more dangerous.

31 March

Point of no return

(...) It's like a plane, there is a point of no return. Traversing the Atlantic, there is a moment when, if it breaks down, we decide to turn back, and another moment where we can't anymore, we have to keep going. We are not far from that point. We need to tell ourselves that we need to know that we must unite, that we can do it at all times. Tell ourselves truths, and if there is a moment we doubt the premise, to accept it before the point of no return.

1 March

'It is through his deeds that Janaka and the others reached perfection. To maintain the people united, you also, must undertake your work.'

Bhagavad-Gîtâ, chapter 3, verse 20.

The way

(...) I feel that we are in the process of finding our underground passage; our path forges its way through icebergs or through coral reefs.

21 March

'Charge!'

(...) As for the rest, charge! We'll take out everything that is immodest, villainous, untruthful, but we can't avoid producing things like that if we want to do something real.

16 March

Abundance

(...) I don't want you to pull yourselves in too early. (...) I don't want to deprive us of abundance.

21 March

A group's quest

(...) There was a curious feeling of security. I knew where I was; a little lost because I don't know who I am, but since everyone was there, everything was possible. (*Nirupama Nytiandan*)

(...) At the moment, I often think of the film *Molière* and his actors who talked about making a comedy, a tragedy, but this happens in the artisanal work of theatre. (*Shaghayegh Beheshti*)

1 March

(...) I realise that this play is made up of scraps, slivers, fleeting moments because they're in the gasps for breath of the quest.

16 March

(...) Above all, when you are brainstorming, be careful not to be overcome by the state you desire the audience to be in.

22 March



Little girl in red, running on the steps of Varanasi, 1964 © Ariane Mnouchkine

The night

(...) The arrival of the crows was dreamlike but concrete.

1 March

(...) She doesn't say 'I had a nightmare', she says 'I had a vision!'.

16 March

(...) Let's try to start from afar like that, don't speak too loudly, it's night time. It was enough for me that we evoked *A Thousand and One Nights*, that it was an entire culture, living, carnal, aesthetic, musical, architectural.

24 March

The character's skin

(...) I took a photo of the cashier in Picard, in Vincennes. I asked his permission. His hair is done exactly the way you should do yours.

16 March

(...) You don't understand the fact that your costume is the second skin of the character. When you start with a bad costume, you give them a bad skin. It takes a little work to allow another to come, one who takes possession of your body, your voice, but who is different to you.

31 March

Caution, 3

(...) We had to realise that it was a rough draft. We shouldn't soften over our good ideas. I'll repeat what I said: 'Don't try to enter the scene by force.' If I enter a scene, I don't put myself in the armchair, you, you put yourself in a corner and you try to feel if you have anything interesting to say! You use your freedom ill-advisedly. You're not taking advantage of your freedom. I feel that something in your bodies and imagination has retreated inside of itself.

16 March

(...) You whet my appetite but I don't understand anything. You are proposing problems but you aren't proposing a life! (...) And it's extraordinary at what point we couldn't care less about problems when they're presented like that!

22 March

You've thought about leafing through, without considering each leaf. It's funny, this little toboggan we find ourselves on, and suddenly, we're sliding toward falsity. I find it very difficult to imagine them drinking tea during this play... They eat and drink, but always out of necessity! (...) The tea, it annoys me... when you start to drink tea... because I keep telling you it's a tempest of the soul. So, out with the tea, out with the trying on of costumes, out with the sheets!

(...) Do you realise that there are moments when you need to know how to stay put? (...) You exist more fully when you receive what is going on, than when you fiddle with someone.

23 March

(...) Yes, but that turns you into extras. We are trying to make good theatre, not a bad film.

24 March

'Reality occasionally appeases hope. That's why, contrary to all expectations, hope survives.'

René Char, *La Parole en archipel* [The Word as Archipelago] (Gallimard, 1962)

The space for visitations

(...) We need a well-defined space, which allows the possibility of becoming the Erinyes' dogs, that sort of folly.

2 March

Defy the space so I can see you!

16 March

Separation

(...) There is always a wall somewhere, and we are going to shift the wall. It's ethical rather than artistic.

16 March

'And we don't hear anyone indignant.'

(...) With regard to Palestine and Israel; in 15 years, the conflict has led to 8,200 deaths. 7,100 Palestinians and 1,100 Israelis. The Iran-Iraq War, in 8 years, led to 1,200,000 deaths. In Brazil, there are 56,337 homicides per year, equalling 840,000 in 15 years. In Syria, the civil war has already led to between 260,000 and 470,000 deaths in 4 years. (...) And we don't hear anyone indignant.

1 March

(...) I don't know from where to attack without being didactic, without being a demagogue, without also searching for farce, but precisely so, it's so meaningful, we are so indignant, that I can't work out which side to grab on to.

21 March

Urgent quest

(...) It's not simply that they wanted to make a play about everything, but I think they want to make a play that changes the world. It's even more difficult. Urgency is not a deadline. (...) It's what we are serving in this world, this centrifugal force... Trump has a real chance, it was unimaginable. Before, Bush seemed unimaginable, and now, it's Bush to the power of 10! (...) In the play, some want to talk about terrorism, because it haunts us; others want to talk about Israel, and yet others want to talk about women's rights, the environment... And it piles up, it piles up! And what do we talk about in the end? (...) We mustn't mistake the urgency. I think, all the same, that the urgency is: what must we do? Not when must we do it, but what must we do? (...) What should we, people of theatre, talk about to change the world or at least halt the world in its atrocious course? Of what use are we? Should we speak of the ambient obscenity? Should we speak of how to transpose waffle, of the danger of terrorism, of the fact that 1% of humanity possess the wealth of all of humanity, of misery, of poverty? We must speak of poverty. And once he's said that, everyone says 'But which poverty? In Africa or in Corrèze?'. And every time, it demoralizes them! (...) It was like when we made *l'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge*¹⁶. We received letters asking us: 'Why aren't you doing a play about Bosnia?'

1 March



Maurice Durozier and Dominique Jambert, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

'In India, I love the land, the arts, the fervour of life, the architecture, the immensity, the too much.'

Ariane Mnouchkine. *L'Art du présent*, interviews with Fabienne Pascaud, Plon, 2005

16. *The Terrible but Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia*, by Hélène Cixous, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine in 1985.

Jacob's room

(...) It's true that 'a room in India', metaphorically, means the world. It means all of History. Anything can happen in a room in India. Virginia Woolf wrote *Jacob's room*; we need to read it. It's a bit alike, it's a room within which everything happens. I want to talk about everything, and I can't. So I will talk about a room, in India.

1 March

To give courage

(...) We all want to create a play about everything. You take a world map and you realise that it's exploding everywhere. (...) But if it's so that people get out with their feet and arms cut off, that's not what we want either!

1 March

Bharata¹⁷

'All types of humans, all casts, all trades should recognise themselves. Everyone should thus experience the profound satisfaction of seeing themselves represented, understood, given their place in the universal movement. Everyone, foolish or wise, coward or hero, destitute or great nobleman, will see in it his own *raison d'être* in the harmony of the worlds and, by this door of individual emotion, will enter in contact with sacred teachings.'

(Juliana Carneiro da Cunha, citing René Daumal)

The two books

(...) It's very important to remember that Hebrew is a cousin of Arabic. A great journalist once said 'In any case we need two books because there are moments that the two tell the stories differently and we can't say that one is told better than the other. (...) If you wish to hear a beautiful Hebrew, ask an Arab.'¹⁸ (...) Through the gesture of a child, Islam and Judaism found themselves here united. There were no longer sacred books, only two little girls who were sharing time together. And on these subjects, it's enough for there to be an idealist, an activist, and it is hell. When we build walls simply based on what you eat, it's terrible. So let's look at these things like superstitions and treat them lightly.

2 March

'Now this room seems to me central, something scooped out of the eternal night. Outside lines twist and intersect, but round us, wrapping us about. Here we are centred. Here we can be silent, or speak without raising our voices.'

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, 1931

'It is only in our twilight hour that we discover, at last, that we were in paradise and that we will lose it. We weren't surprised to be welcomed by a sun that awaited us for millions of years, by the coolness of the rivers and the meadows, by the soft silence of the forests; we didn't even acknowledge the tree of life planted right in the middle of the creation. Now that I turn myself towards the side without shadow, I better recognise the torrent of light that floods my back and haloes the memory of every one of my steps on the bare ground or the asphalt of the night. In this past, conjured like a death, drip the faint springs of childhood, fainter still by my omission. Because I met no one to tell me I was living in the middle of paradise, surrounded by angels as visible as telegraph poles, and I was incapable of finding the word that could have rendered us similar to God, whom they hid from me to help me to live. It was this then, the miserable secret that occupied me throughout so many nights of sterile wakefulness, caused so much fatigue in searching for what I had never lost? I was in paradise, I am in paradise, in the past, now, but not forever. (...)'

Eduardo Lourenço

Vence, September 1983.

17. René Daumal, *Bharata, L'origine du théâtre. La poésie et la musique en Inde*. 'Blanche' collection, Gallimard, 1970

18. Uri Avnery (1923-) Israeli author and journalist, pacifist activist for the rights of Palestinians.

Faced with threats

(...) I'm going to give you some leads into the play: we are working on that which threatens the world, its beings, their dignity, their beauty.

2 March

(...) Once we have really gone through everything dignified, at this point in the world, to make a play, there will be material to sob over.

3 March

(...) It's unfair but it's like that, we have foully become accustomed to it happening in Indonesia, in Bombay... But the one hundred and forty deaths in Paris weigh down like thousands. (...) There was something in the sound of water, Jean-Jacques' music, and suddenly you said three hundred dead. And it gave me a chill down my spine.

30 March

Responsibility

(...) We cannot make this play by deciding in advance that the evils of the world come from the entire world except for oneself.

2 March

(...) If that's normal, then it's not interesting for us. No, you can't say that a woman in Afghanistan doesn't resist. And, on top of it, we're not in Afghanistan.

23 March

(...) I find essential this quiet questioning, without claims, without guilt. (...) It's essential to ask these questions calmly. (*Shaghayegh Beheshti*)

30 March

'Can Homer be born after us?'¹⁹

(...) And so, I say to myself, but for goodness' sake, how is it that we aren't succeeding, us the artists or them the intellectuals, or them the politicians, or them, who would I know, the unionists; how is it that we aren't succeeding in projecting for our children, our youth, how is it that we aren't succeeding in projecting an objective? (...) We aren't succeeding at projecting what I call an epic, either national or international, I don't mind; but to project an objective so that they don't have to search for an objective elsewhere.

21 March

Action

(...) But are we really going to work ourselves into the ground trying to play the mediocrity of politicians when we know that any old guy in a cabaret – excuse my language – shits on them every night and that doesn't change anything at all, all the while distancing us from the action? In the end, the only thing I don't want the audience to say to themselves when they leave – and it's why I really believe in the power of laughter – is 'Pooh! In any case, I can't do anything. The Théâtre du Soleil has just confirmed that I couldn't do anything.' (...) They have just made a little admission of momentary powerlessness, one that we all share. This powerlessness, sometimes, what do you want me to say, it has to be said!

21 March

'(...) Drama is a representation of the state of the Three Worlds. Sometimes there is reference to duty, sometimes to games, sometimes to money, sometimes to peace, and sometimes laughter is found in it, sometimes fight, sometimes love-making and sometimes killing.

This teaches duty to those bent on doing their duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment, and it chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned.'

Bharata, The Origin of Drama (extract from *Natya Shastra*, Chapter 1), translated by Manomoshan Ghosh, Ed. Manisha Calcutta, 1967

Joy

(...) And suddenly, when they are very scared, there is a gas mask that appears and there are moments, as always, where the text resonates. It's to be worked on. And that's a vision, because when they are trying to find the play, there's one who says, 'Do you realise there are people making theatre in Iran, in Syria!' (...) But above all, joy! There must be a very, very powerful bomb for them to say that the house will crumble, they hide, then we hear a voice that says, 'We'll keep going all the same!', because they have the profound desire.

22 March

Common sense

(...) He questions, and in questioning, he proves his intelligence. (...) We are a bit innocent, but we are not ignorant.

3 March

(...) Just then, you were in an opinion, so it has a boomerang effect. It looks like we are making bad jokes. (...) We are advancing over ground I want to cover, but it's mined ground, meaning we can't permit ourselves an error. The worst error, that we can't permit ourselves, is ignorance. We have to try not to be manipulated seeing as you are going to talk about manipulation. (...) We are swamped with disinformation and we need to make our own information. I believe in common sense; I think that common sense is a valuable tool.

16 March

(...) We must get through much exactness. It's not that it was false but that it was totally realistic.

31 March

Lasting empathy

(...) Is our country still expressible at the moment? How can it be expressible, without falling into detestation – which I absolutely refuse myself – I don't want to fall into self-detestation. But to demonstrate our incomprehension, our rage, our sadness, that, yes!

21 March

A method

(...) All right, I think that it's a question of methodology, we shouldn't globalise even though we want to deal with the globality of the world. Let's continue, calm, silence. (...) Give yourself time to associate your ideas. (...) Perhaps we should have a whiteboard and some coloured pencils.

6 April

There won't be any censorship during rehearsals, we'll sort through afterwards. (...) We are manipulating something similar to dynamite with subjects like these, so we must handle them with much precaution.

14 April

(...) You must learn how to leave something to be desired. You mustn't say everything, explain everything.

27 April

(...) Perhaps what we are missing, is work. I'm not seeing a feverishness to find a theme; I'm sensing too much nonchalance... (...) I am haunted by the fear that we will close our eyes to the truth. I want us to say: 'No, that doesn't work'. Immediately. (...) I don't want us to reassure ourselves. I am anxious about the difficulty of what we are undertaking and I'll say it every time. (...) At times we need an enormous magnifying glass, at times, the opposite, as though we were watching from afar. (...) It has to be true, like in a dream.

28 April

'You must be able to put yourself in the place of a woman here, you, who are an actor. Put on a burka, even for only an hour, and go out into the street. That is already the beginning of an actor's work. And you would be ashamed! Who will say it, if you don't? How can you continue to think that a country can grow economically with half of its population pushed to the side? Who will say it, if you don't?'

Ariane Mnouchkine, excerpt from the film *Un Soleil à Kaboul... ou plutôt deux*, by Duccio Bellugi Vannuccini, Sergio Canto Sabido and Philippe Chevallier, 2007.

Trust in youth

(...) It's at the very last minute of the play that they'll say 'Ah, well, there you have it, that's what we have to do.' They are honest, they're in a place of great fragility, immense difficulty, but they want to make a play about our world, to give strength and an appetite for it. Moreover, it's virtually the only thing that we can give, the conviction that we trust in young people.

6 April

The troupe

(...) There is this struggle against... this struggle that we know, this struggle against the emptiness of creation. And it becomes irresistible.

6 April

(...) This troupe is a troupe: meaning that they have seen each other in every getup possible over years. They've seen each other naked, they've shown each other, I don't know.... their boils! It's possible for someone to appear completely naked to drink a glass of water then leave. They know each other by heart. They love each other for their qualities, they detest each other for their faults.

14 March

(...) There is an urgency; material, professional, artistic, that appears much more quickly in theatre than in life.

27 April

(...) They all have the same hornet: what will they become, what will they do?

28 April

Chaplin

(...) 'It is paradoxical that tragedy stimulates the spirit of ridicule; because ridicule, I suppose is an attitude of defiance: we must laugh in the face of our helplessness against the forces of nature.'²⁰ What is funny for us is your drama.

27 April



Sébastien Brottet-Michel and Hélène Cinque, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016
© Anne Lacombe

India as a character

(...) There is the character of India that invades them, then that of Therukoothu. And India is multiple, loud and very parsimonious in its music.

27 April

(...) I certainly want the audience and the characters to ask what they're doing in India, but I don't think they'll think about it for long.

2 May

(...) We're talking about terrible but fabulous India.

4 May

(...) Now, we need to manage to have two lungs of the play: that of French theatre – which is not only French for that matter, and the lung of India, of Therukoothu, and the Mahabharata.

10 May

'Over there, we don't even have to go to the theatre, the theatre comes to you. There, it's a moment of life, like a harvest, like a grape picking. I had already seen Kathakali at the Théâtre des Nations (.../...) Without knowing it, nearly without desiring it, I was in the process of amassing a treasure that was going to change my way of seeing, of living.'

Ariane Mnouchkine, *L'Art du présent*, interviews with Fabienne Pascaud, Plon, 2005

Strictness and difficulty

(...) It escapes us, because it is difficult.

4 May

(...) For the play to be fun both for you and the audience, we need to have a hellish cruelty in rehearsals.

12 May

(...) We are faced with a problem of writing with this play; it's an extremely delicate, demanding way of writing, it won't be trifled with. Your problem, our problem, is for there to be metaphor, urgency, music, rhythm, a transformation that isn't real, and that it be true but not real.

18 May

(...) It's one of the most mysterious plays that we have ever encountered, it's difficult to understand what it wants, but when it comes, it comes.

24 May

(...) What does it mean when we are before a blank page, which, moreover, you are experimenting with, not to have any visions, not to have any ideas... It's what we are trying to materialize on the stage.

25 May

(...) Personally I find that it's an epic subject, the questioning of a group of actors who ask themselves what purpose they serve.

30 May

Courage

(...) The courage of this play resides in the fact that it will make people laugh. If we abandon this dimension, we lose its originality. So when we dream, we don't only dream of dreadful things. There are moments when the dream proves to us that our vitality, that we thought weakened – and which it sometimes is –, the power of life that the subconscious sends out, still exists. The comic force, the comical moments in the play are, in the proper sense of the word, vital.

26 May



Ariane Mnouchkine and Sébastien Brottet-Michel, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

A river of steel and freedom

(...) You must all pay attention not to fall into the trap of the dream. (...) Above all, it mustn't start to become dreamlike. The condition of the dream is the concrete, the rigor and the fantasy of each of us. We need a river of steel for the poetry.

3 May

(...) The truer it is, the more it will be in the dream... if all the ingredients are there. Because basically a dream is an underlying truth with an incredible freedom, it's the freedom that's incredible, not the feelings, the passions. Everything appears real but with such freedom for illogicality... That's what a dream is.

24 May

(...) Now that you are starting to feel comfortable in the dream, we must protect ourselves from very good ideas that lead us into a certain banality, whereas what we are looking for is rather found in the nature of a voyage into the subconscious.

25 May

Beckett

[...] The other day, there was a programme, with, I don't remember who, certainly a very learned woman who said that at a certain time, Beckett claimed that the theatre couldn't reflect the world. This very learned woman gave me the definition of absurdist theatre, meaning to say, a theatre that resigns itself to not confronting the world, to not trying to talk about it. And so, I understood: she put into my mouth, and my ear, oh how much that theatre hasn't interested me for fifty-five years, and afterwards I said to myself: 'But Ariane, at the moment, the play talks for two, or two and a half hours, about the doubts of a whole group of people who are asking how one might talk about the world in our era, and who brush against, in fact, this Beckettian interrogation.'

11 May

Without being Manichaeian

[...] Our knowledge is often too limited.

4 May

[...] How can we talk about this world without being simple, Manichaeian, adding lie to lie, illusion to illusion, weakness to weakness?

[...] Suddenly, there are moments when the power of theatre asserts itself and says: 'Keep making theatre! With your doubts if you want, but keep going.'

11 May

Religion

[...] That's what fascism is, it's 'I arrive and I'm stronger than you, you are shit and I will treat you like shit.', that's what I have to sense. You'll need to do some research about all the morbid mythology of religions in general.

26 May

Clowning

[...] All of Chaplin's tragedies are carried by a great rapidity, because the theme of haste is profoundly tragic. (*Hélène Cixous*)

18 May

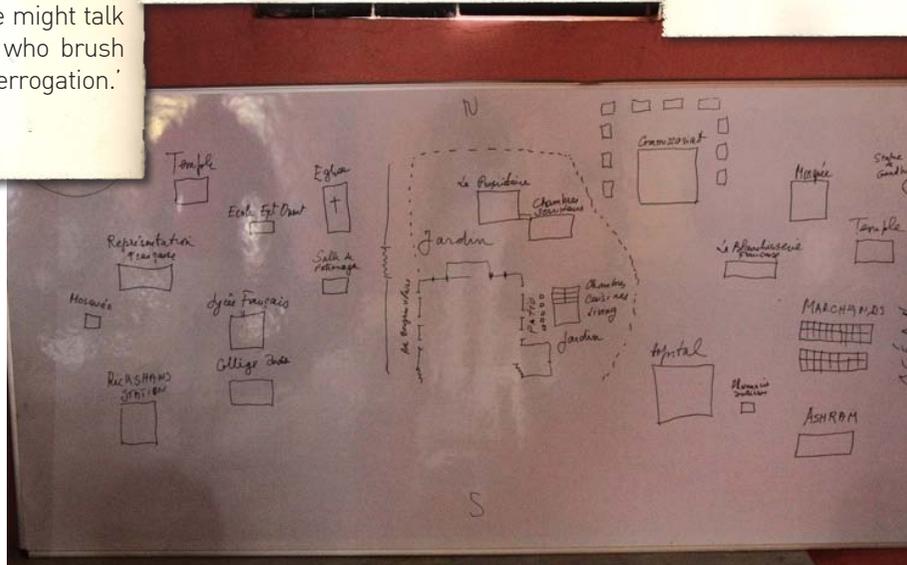
[...] It's as though we were clowning with Jean Moulin...

18 May

Poverty

[...] We had a moment of real poverty, not the poverty of a shanty town, but the poverty of a little person who could do lots of things but who doesn't succeed, because she doesn't meet the right people. (...) She's a brave girl. A brave girl who hasn't yet received declarations of love, of friendship, which in turn allow for creation to start to be possible.

24 May



'India always inspired me. Why? Because everything bad in mankind is worse there, and everything that is good is even better. I need these extremes. Here, everything seems tepid. There is something original in India, that I don't understand but that I recognise. The worst Indian helps me to recognise the worst here, Indian beauty helps me to recognise beauty here.'

Ariane Mnouchkine, *L'Art du présent*, interviews with Fabienne Pascaud, Plon, 2005

First drafts of the space in A Room in India, Indianostrum Theatre, Pondicherry, January 2016
© Archives Théâtre du Soleil

3/ A room...



Shaghayegh Beheshti, Sayed Ahmad Hashimi, Arman Saribekyan, rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Anne Lacombe

An unknown episode in the life of Orwell

This here is the first proposal Ariane Mnouchkine made to the actors in January 2015. Perhaps something of it remains in the play...

The journal of a Welsh ethnobotanist, found by a young ecologist researcher in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, taught us that, whilst he was a mediocre officer in the British Colonial Police Service, posted to a sad little Burmese town from 1922-1927, George Orwell fascinated himself in the history – a myth according to some – of a miniscule but famous tribe in the Arakan mountains in the North-West of the country.

It seems that it was whilst Orwell was standing guard in the prison, the night before an execution, that the Birman condemned to death spoke to him, for the first time, of the very real existence of this tribe that the nomads of the region called 'the enlightened people', and that in other valleys were also called 'the seekers of light'.

This political prisoner, whose mother had joined the tribe after the death of her husband, had spent his adolescence with them.

He had noticed that the lifestyle, the way of thinking, the methods of social organisation, the traditions, were constantly being questioned, rethought, transformed in function of what the tribe members called 'noble happiness'. The noble happiness of each individual being impossible if all the other members of the tribe didn't enjoy an equivalent happiness.

Orwell, who was at that time still at the dawn of his thinking and political engagement, then had only one thought: find this tribe, live with them so as to follow and understand this unprecedented experience. Was it a matter of imposture, of a misunderstanding, of another sort of tyranny? He asked his superiors for one year's leave, but as soon as he prepared, then commenced his voyage, he understood that he wasn't alone in following this track. Intellectuals, researchers, adventurers, sometimes picturesque and comical, as well as the Soviet, Chinese, and British secret services, chiefs of factions, henchmen, all sorts of people from all walks of life, were looking for the enlightened people, either for inspiration, to enslave them, to gag them, or to suppress them.

This tribe, that all thought to be fabulous, mythical, unreal, now appeared to be very concrete, and a source of great anxiety for many powerful people already in power, or revolutionaries wanting to achieve power. That night, a quest made of tales told by this prisoner, of encounters and episodes surging up from premonitory dreams, would take him from the mountains and lakeside Burman towns, through the revolutionary committees and prisons of Moscow, to the bald mountains of Catalonia during the Spanish war, via the revolutionary committees and the prisons of Moscow.

At his waking, the prisoner would be executed and Orwell, now a transformed man, would leave – for real – for Europe. There, during the very little time he had left to live, he would fight physically and intellectually to find the truth. Or at least a part of truth.

'(...) It's their feeling that there will be these pockets of light springing up in different parts of the world, and that these will be in a way invisible planets on this planet and that, as we or the world grow colder, we will be able to take invisible space journeys to these different planets, refuel for what it is we need to do on the planet itself, and come back. (...) They believe that there have to be centers, now, where people can come and reconstruct a new future for the world.

(...) In a way these are all attempts at creating a new kind of school or a new kind of monastery. (...) Islands of safety where history can be remembered and the human being can continue to function, in order to maintain the species through a Dark Age. In other words, we're talking about an underground, which did exist during the Dark Ages in a different way, among the mystical orders of the church. And the purpose of this underground is to find out how to preserve the light, life, the culture. How to keep things living. You see, I keep thinking that we need a new language, a language of the heart, a language, as in the Polish forest, where language wasn't needed — some kind of language between people that is a new kind of poetry, that is the poetry of the dancing bee, that tells us where the honey is. And I think that in order to create that language we're going to have to learn how you can go through a looking-glass into another kind of perception, in which you have that sense of being united to all things, and suddenly you understand everything.'

My Dinner with Andre, film written by Wallace Shawn and André Gregory, directed by Louis Malle (1981).

Other barbarians will come



An injured woman, Aleppo, Syria, 28 April 2016
REUTERS/Abdalrhman Ismail



Coryphaeus, Juliana de Caneiro da Cunha, La Ville
parjure, ou le réveil des Érynies, by Hélène Cixous,
directed by Ariane Mnouchkine, 1994 © Michèle
Laurent

Other Barbarians will come

Other Barbarians will come. The emperor's wife will be abducted. Drums will beat loudly. Drums will beat so that horses will leap over human bodies from the Aegean Sea to the Dardanelles. So why should we be concerned? What do our wives have to do with horse racing?

The emperor's wife will be abducted. Drums will beat loudly and other barbarians will come. Barbarians will fill the cities' emptiness, slightly higher than the sea, mightier than the sword in the time of madness. So why should we be concerned? What do our children have to do with the children of this impudence?

Drums will beat loudly and other barbarians will come. The emperor's wife will be taken from his bedroom. From his bedroom he will launch a military assault to return his bedmate to his bed. Why should we be concerned? What do fifty thousand victims have to do with this brief marriage?

Can Homer be born after us... and myths open their doors to the throng?

Other Barbarians will come from *Unfortunately It Was Paradise, Selected Poems*, by Mahmoud Darwish translated by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché, University of California Press, 2003.

4/ ... in India



Shafiq Kohi, Omed Rawendah and H  l  ne Cinque, rehearsals of *A Room in India*, *Th   tre du Soleil*, 2016    Anne Lacombe

'Above all, there are plural voyages. So I will obviously talk about the most recent, not just my voyage, but the one which was our voyage to India. All of the Théâtre du Soleil, and I really mean all of the Théâtre du Soleil: technicians, office staff, everyone, upon my request, much to the surprise of some of them moreover, but upon my request, I would say upon my insistence, everyone went to India. I had many reasons for this. For the actors and the musicians, it was obvious, meaning that I wanted them to have the opportunity to plunge or plunge again into a certain bath which perhaps we'll speak about, or not, but I desired that for once, those who don't shine on the stage, but who are responsible for much brilliance off stage, would be with us. I wanted to meet up with them again, and so it was done, we did it. We did it, thanks to, and moreover it must be said even in passing, the great deal of kindness, work, and solidarity of the people in Pondicherry who hosted us, who housed a great number of us, of the Alliance Française, of the French Institute... This was pulled together, very well pulled together, meaning we found a little bit of money here or there, etc. There was benevolence, lots of work to obtain it, but much benevolence, many initiatives, in France and in Pondicherry, since Pondicherry is where we were. But basically, it's true it's what I wanted and it was a delight, and we waited for it, and we were going to do our Travelling School, so twelve of us were going and the others would join us fifteen days later, and we would start to rehearse the play.

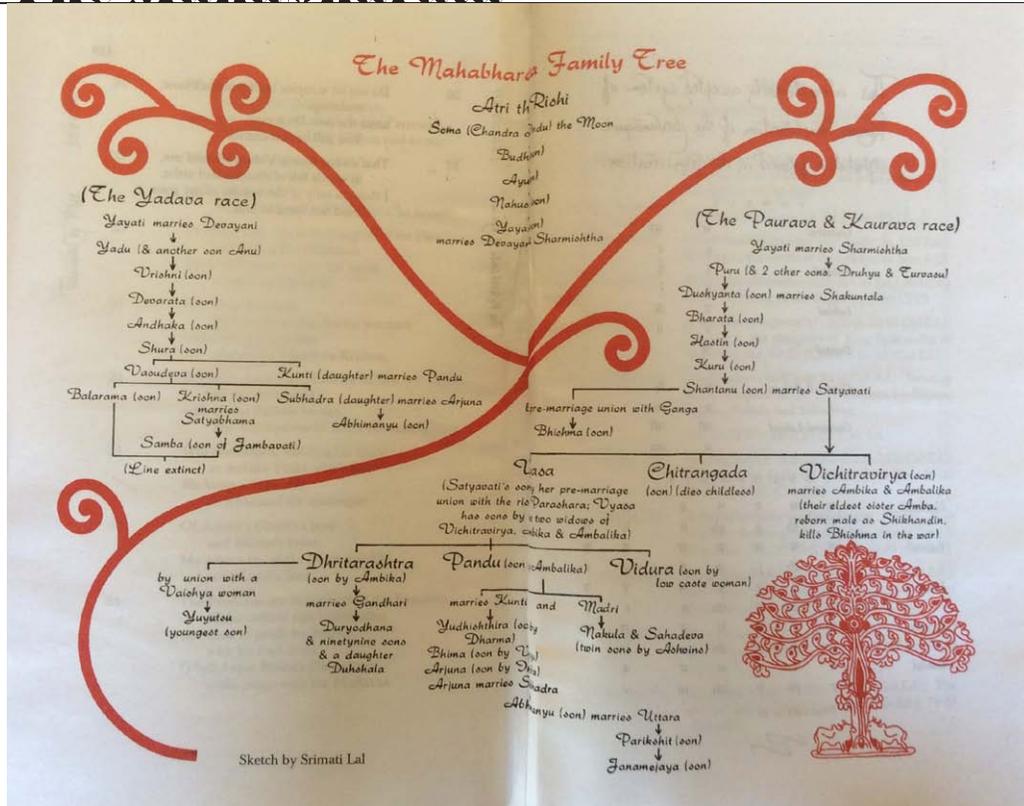
And then, and then November 13 came, Friday, November 13, and I asked myself if I wasn't, I have to say, completely mad... What did it mean: to take the Théâtre du Soleil to India, after what had just happened? After the unthinkable that had just happened, unthinkable but curiously not unpredictable, unthinkable. And so I have to say, I oscillated. I didn't even dare to talk to them about it – I said to myself "But no, we no longer have the right, voila, we haven't the right. We must stay right here to think about that, to work on that, there are no longer any other horizons". In the end, I was paralysed, tetanized, as you all were, I think, as we all were. There is probably nothing I could describe here that the majority of you didn't feel.

Then finally, I persevered, without even talking about my hesitations with the others, because I didn't want to awaken their own hesitations, because if our hesitations added themselves to one another's, perhaps we would not have gone. So I didn't ask, I didn't say "Are you hesitating?". I didn't talk about it, I didn't say anything, and I persisted. And why I persisted; exactly because I said to myself: you need to go a bit further to see, to understand, you need to get some distance, and it was the distance of the voyage. As for nourishing mothers, nourishing lands, I must say that even so, in going to India, I knew we were going to a land that is sometimes incomprehensible to us, cruel even; the chaos of India is terrible, but I knew we were going to a land made for us, for us theatre people, for artists in general but in particular for people of theatre, which is equally a land, a mother of absolute abundance. So voila, so what do we gain, what do we lose, I don't know what we lost, I don't believe we did. I'll admit that at first, I didn't ask

myself the question that way. Furthermore, I don't even know what we gained. I know we were very close to each other, that we really, really, reconnected, that we really, really, watched each other, that we worked an enormous amount. There was something regenerating and there was something that affirmed life and the life of theatre, whilst the events, as I said, had made me vacillate. We finish by asking ourselves what purpose we serve in the end.'

The prize of experience – constraints and transcendence in collective work. Public discussion between Ariane Mnouchkine and Eugenio Barba, Théâtre du Soleil, 8 March, 2016.

The Mahabharata



The story of the one-hundred Kauravas brothers and the five Pandava brothers.

At Hastinapura, Dhritarashtra couldn't be crowned king since he was born blind, and ancient customs forbade this coronation. His youngest brother, Pandu, thus became king, but he died not long after. Dhritarashtra thus became Prince Regent.

When the five sons of Pandu (the Pandavas) came of age, Yudhishtira, the eldest, should have become king. But the Kauravas (the one hundred sons of Dhritarashtra) lay claim to the throne. So, after some negotiation and in order to avoid a dispute, the kingdom was divided in two parts. The first, Hastinapura, was granted to the Kauravas and the second, Indraprastha, to the Pandavas. It was in Indraprastha that Vishwakarma, the divine architect, built a 'palace of illusions'. The five Pandava brothers and their shared wife, Draupadi, settled in. But the Kauravas, discontent with the division of the kingdom, burnt down their house. The Pandavas and their wife escaped just in time from the fire and decided to win back their kingdom. Pretending reconciliation, the Kauravas invited the Pandavas to play Chaupar, a game of dice. The game was rigged, and the Pandavas lost all their riches, kingdoms, treasure and properties, as well as themselves and their wife. After a second round of the game, they were banished for thirteen years. At the end of these thirteen years, a great battle was fought during which the Pandavas attempted to reconquer their territories. They won, and Yudhishtira became king.

The complete story can be found in *The Mahabharata* (Volume 1 & 2), Madeleine Biardeau, Seuil 2002

The Therukoothu



Performance of Therukoothu in Mosavadi village, Tamil Nadu, India, May 2015 © Ariane Mnouchkine

The Therukoothu is a traditional form of theatre originated in Tamil Nadu, a state in South India. Today, this very ancient form remains living and popular, particularly in the countryside. It combines song, dance, and speech. Singers and actor-dancers are accompanied by the little Indian harmonium, the drums *mridangam* and *dholak* and an oboe *mukhavina*.

The musicians are set up in front of a little curtain held upstage, while the stage is made from bare earth by the villagers. The whole night long, they tell stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the two great epic stories from India.

A master of ceremonies, the *Kattiyakaran*, directs the performance, comments on events and dialogues with the characters in a lively manner. The actors, with tall, brilliant headdresses and coloured costumes, talk with and heckle the *Kattiyakaran* and the audience.

Mixed into the stories are rituals that reflect the emotions, values, and customs of the villagers

in this region of India. In return, the Therukoothu becomes the expression of reality as it is experienced and lived by a people.

The performances of Therukoothu generally take place every year between March and July. They begin in the evening so as to continue through to the early hours.

Interview with Kalaimamani P. K. Sambandan Thambiran

What does Therukoothu mean?

Therukoothu is a general term that encompasses all the varieties of a popular form of theatre practiced in the north of the Tamil Nadu State in South India. It essentially recounts the two great epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, and some local legends in which the protagonists are the gods of the Hindu pantheon and mythical characters.

Every year, a great number of villages organise religious festivities to honour their protective goddess, particularly Draupadi (a character from the Mahabharata). The custom is then to invite a Therukoothu troupe (semi-professional, or composed by amateurs from the village) to perform either the entire Mahabharata (10 or 18 nights) or just one episode. These festivities take place from mid-March to mid-September. Some professional troupes can perform up to 150 times per year.

What characteristics belong to Therukoothu?

A Therukoothu performance begins around 10pm and finishes around 6am. It's a real spectacle composed of parts that are sung, danced and played with a very fast rhythm. Therukoothu uses extremely elaborate costumes and props and has its own instruments (mukhavînâ, dholak, mridangam, talam, Indian harmonium). Unlike other traditional Indian art forms, it doesn't refer to the theatre charter Natya-Shastra, but rather to classical Tamil texts. It thus has its own way of recounting myths by incorporating a ritualistic dimension inspired by local beliefs. Therukoothu remains deeply anchored in community life because its dramaturgy is well aligned with the existing problems of a village. For example, the episode of a farewell between Karna and his wife Ponnuruvi, that exists solely in Therukoothu, sheds light on the difficulties of widows. The story of Karna is also recounted from the perspective of an injustice laid upon a man of low class.

Could you please elaborate on the very special character of Kattiyakaran?

In this context, we understand more easily the specific role of the Kattiyakaran, a true Bufon character and representative for the people. He is charged with the prologue, to introduce the main characters, to dialogue with the characters, to embody the secondary characters, to dialogue with the audience, to parody the characters and use this to his advantage to relay messages (local news, public services, safety, education...). Little by little throughout its evolution, Therukoothu took on the specifics of other artistic practices (street theatre, cinema, modern theatre).

Wherein it derives its vitality and very dynamic form?

Therukoothu dramaturges never ceased to write new episodes based on three elements: conversational text in free prose, text recited in verse, and songs constructed from ragas. Which explains the incredible vitality of this form of popular theatre.

But this capacity for appropriation, and its real permissiveness towards other art forms, leads equally to its artistic impoverishment as it attempts to follow the rules for success in commercial Tamil cinema.



P. K. Sambandan Thambiran and Palani Murugan, rehearsals of Therukoothu, A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent



Koumarane Valavane, Kalaimamani P. K. Sambandan Thambiran and Ariane Mnouchkine, rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Michèle Laurent

5/ The Théâtre du Soleil, some bibliographical markers



Rehearsals of A Room in India, Théâtre du Soleil, 2016 © Anne Lacombe

Ariane Mnouchkine, born 3rd March 1939 at Boulogne-sur-Seine, is the director of theatre company, the Théâtre du Soleil, which she founded in 1964 with her fellows of the ATEP (The Theatre Association of the Students of Paris). In 1970, the Théâtre du Soleil created *1789* at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, where Giorgio Strehler warmly welcomed the young company and gave them his support. The company then went on to choose its home at the Cartoucherie, a former bullet-making factory, in the Bois de Vincennes on the outskirts of Paris. The Cartoucherie enabled the troupe to expand on the notion of the theatre simply as architectural institution and allowed them to focus on the concept of the theatre being a place of haven rather than just complying with the traditional architectural notions of a theatre building, and all this at a time when urban change and development in France was transforming the place of man in the city and the place of theatre in the city. In the Cartoucherie, the Théâtre du Soleil found the necessary tool to create and present the type of popular yet high-quality theatre dreamed of by Antoine Vitez and Jean Vilar. The troupe invented new ways of working and privileged collectively devised work, its aim being to establish a new relationship with its audience and distinguishing itself from bourgeois theatre in order to create a high-quality theatre for the people.

From the 1970s onwards, the troupe became one of France's major theatre companies, both because of the number of artists working in it (more than seventy people a year) and because of its glowing international reputation. Attached to the notion of the theatre troupe as tribe or family, Ariane Mnouchkine established the ethics of the group on certain basic foundations: everyone working at all levels, everyone on the same wage, and on stage, the definitive casting only decided upon once many different actors have tried out many different roles. Today, the Théâtre du Soleil is one of the last theatre companies in Europe to continue to function in such a way.

The adventure of the Théâtre du Soleil has been continuing for more than fifty years, thanks to the faithfulness and affection of a large audience both in France and abroad. Its development is marked by a ceaseless questioning of the role it has to play, of the place of theatre in society and of its capacity to represent its own times. The Théâtre du Soleil's commitment in treating the great political and human questions from a universal angle goes hand in hand with its research on the great theatrical forms and the convergence of Asian and Western arts.

- 1963 Ariane Mnouchkine travels for the first time in Asia.
- 1964 Founding of the **THÉÂTRE DU SOLEIL**
- 1964 Maxim Gorki's **PETIT-BOURGEOIS** (or *Philistines*), from the adaptation by Arthur Adamov (Paris).
- 1965 **CAPITAINE FRACASSE**, after Théophile Gautier, adapted by Philippe Léotard (Paris).
- 1967 Arnold Wesker's **THE KITCHEN** adapted by Philippe Léotard (Paris).
- 1968 Shakespeare's **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** adapted by Philippe Léotard (Paris).
- 1969 **LES CLOWNS**, a collective creation (Paris, Aubervilliers, Avignon, Milan).
- 1970 (August) The Théâtre du Soleil moves into the Cartoucherie in the Bois de Vincennes (Paris).

- 1970 Creation of **1789, LA RÉVOLUTION DOIT S'ARRÊTER À LA PERFECTION DU BONHEUR** [1789: The Revolution must end only with the perfection of happiness], at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan.
- 1972 **1793, LA CITÉ RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE EST DE CE MONDE** [The Revolutionary City is of Our Times], a collective creation (Paris - Cartoucherie).
- 1974 **1789**, film version of the play shot by A. Mnouchkine.
- 1975 **L'ÂGE D'OR (A FIRST SKETCH)**, a collective creation (Paris - Cartoucherie, Warsaw, Venice, Louvain-la-Neuve, Milan).
- 1978 **MOLIÈRE OU LA VIE D'UN HONNÊTE HOMME**, film written and directed by A. Mnouchkine.
- 1979 **MÉPHISTO, LE ROMAN D'UNE CARRIÈRE**, after Klaus Mann, adapted by Ariane Mnouchkine. (Paris - Cartoucherie, Avignon, Louvain-la-Neuve, Lyon, Rome, Berlin, Lons-le-Saunier).
- 1980 **MÉPHISTO, LE ROMAN D'UNE CARRIÈRE**, film shot by Bernard Sobel.
- 1981-84 **SHAKESPEARE's cycle** (Paris - Cartoucherie, Avignon, Munich, Los Angeles, Berlin):
 - 1981 **RICHARD II**, translated by A. Mnouchkine.
 - 1982 **TWELFTH NIGHT**, translated by A. Mnouchkine.
 - 1984 **HENRY IV (PART 1)**, translated by A. Mnouchkine.
- 1985 **THE TERRIBLE BUT UNFINISHED STORY OF NORODOM SIHANOUK, KING OF CAMBODIA**, by Hélène Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Amsterdam, Brussels, Madrid, Barcelona).
- 1985 **À LA RECHERCHE DU SOLEIL**, documentary film directed by Werner Schroeter.
- 1987 **L'INDIADE OU L'INDE DE LEURS RÊVES**, by H. Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Tel-Aviv).
- 1988 **L'INDIADE OU L'INDE DE LEURS RÊVES**, film directed by Bernard Sobel.
- 1989 **LA NUIT MIRACULEUSE**, film directed by A. Mnouchkine, written by A. Mnouchkine and H. Cixous.
- 1990-92 **LES ATRIDES cycle** (Paris - Cartoucherie, Amsterdam, Essen, Gibellina, Berlin, Lyon, Toulouse, Montpellier, Bradford, Montreal, New York, Vienna - Austria) :
 - 1990 **IPHIGENIA AT AULIS**, by Euripides, translated by Jean and Mayotte Bollack.
 - 1990 **AGAMEMNON**, by Aeschylus, translated by A. Mnouchkine.
 - 1991 **THE LIBATION BEARERS**, by Aeschylus, translated by A. Mnouchkine.
 - 1992 **THE EUMENIDES**, by Aeschylus, translated by H. Cixous.
 - 1993 **INDIA, FROM FATHER TO SON, FROM MOTHER TO DAUGHTER** directed by Rajeev Sethi, from an idea of A. Mnouchkine.
 - 1994 **LA VILLE PARJURE OU LE RÉVEIL DES ÉRINYES** [The Perjured City, or, the Awakening of the Furies], by H. Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Liège, Recklinghausen, Vienne, Avignon).

- 1995 Molière's **TARTUFFE** (Vienna – Austria, Avignon, Saint-Jean d'Angély, Liège, La Rochelle, Vienne – France, Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris - Cartoucherie).
- 1997 **ET SOUDAIN DES NUITS D'ÉVEIL**, a collective creation together with H. Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Moscow).
- 1997 **AU SOLEIL MÊME LA NUIT** (The Sun shines even at Night), film directed by Éric Darmon and Catherine Vilpoux, together with A. Mnouchkine.
- 1999 **TAMBOURS SUR LA DIGUE, SOUS FORME DE PIÈCE ANCIENNE POUR MARIONNETTES JOUÉE PAR DES ACTEURS** (The Flood Drummers), de H. Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Basel, Antwerp, Lyon, Montreal, Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney).
- 1999 **D'APRÈS « LA VILLE PARJURE OU LE RÉVEIL DES ÉRINYES »** [From The Perjured City, or, the Awakening of the Furies] documentary film directed by C. Vilpoux.
- 2002 **TAMBOURS SUR LA DIGUE** (The Flood Drummers), film directed by A. Mnouchkine.
- 2003 **LE DERNIER CARAVANSÉRAIL (ODYSSÉES)** [The Last Caravansary (Odysseys)], a collective creation (Paris - Cartoucherie, Avignon, Rome, Quimper, Ruhrtriennale, Lyon, Berlin, New York, Melbourne, Athens).
- 2005 **UN SOLEIL À KABOUL...OU PLUTÔT DEUX**, documentary film directed by Duccio Bellugi Vannuccini, Sergio Canto Sabido and Philippe Chevallier.
- 2006 **LES ÉPHÉMÈRES**, a collective creation (Paris - Cartoucherie, Quimper, Athens, Avignon, Buenos Aires, Porto Alegre, São Paulo, Taipei, Vienna - Austria, Saint-Etienne, New York).
- 2006 **LE DERNIER CARAVANSÉRAIL (ODYSSÉES)**, film directed by A. Mnouchkine.
- 2008 **UN CERCLE DE CONNAISSEURS** [A Circle of Connoisseurs], documentary film directed by Jeanne Dosse.
- 2009 **LES ÉPHÉMÈRES**, film directed by Bernard Zitzermann.
- ARIANE MNOUCHKINE, L'AVENTURE DU THÉÂTRE DU SOLEIL**, documentary film directed by C. Vilpoux.
- 2010 **LES NAUFRAGÉS DU FOL ESPOIR (AURORES)** [The Castaways of the Fol Espoir (Sunrises)], collective creation written in part H. Cixous (Paris - Cartoucherie, Lyon, Nantes, Athens, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Santiago du Chile, Vienna - Austria, Edinburg, Taipei).
- 2013 **LES NAUFRAGÉS DU FOL ESPOIR** [The Castaways of the Fol Espoir], film directed by A. Mnouchkine.
- 2014 **MACBETH**, A Tragedy by William Shakespeare, translated by A. Mnouchkine (Paris - Cartoucherie).
- 2014 The 'First Fifty Years' Anniversary of the Théâtre du Soleil.
- 2015 Creation of L'ECOLE NOMADE (The Travelling School), an initiation by A. Mnouchkine (Santiago in Chile, Färö, Oxford, Pondicherry).
- 2016 (January) Residence in Pondicherry for the first stage of the collective creation of **A ROOM IN INDIA**

6/ Practical information



a collective creation by the **Théâtre du Soleil**
directed by **Ariane Mnouchkine**
music by **Jean-Jacques Lemêtre**
together with **Hélène Cixous**
with the exceptional participation of
Kalaimamani Purisai Kannappa Sambandan Thambiran

from Saturday 5 November 2016

1st part (2hrs30, without interval) every Wednesday at 8pm
2nd part (1hrs50, without interval) every Thursday at 8pm
Full cycle (5hrs with interval) on Friday at 7pm, Saturday at 4pm and Sunday at 1:30pm

Ticket prices

1st part: Standard 30€/ Groups 25€/ Students 17€
2nd part: Standard 20€ / Groups 15€ / Students 13€
Full Cycle: Standard 50€/ Groups 40€/ Students 30€

Reservations

Organisations, group bookings **+ 33 1 43 74 88 50**
Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 6pm

Individual bookings **+ 33 1 43 74 24 08**
Every day from 11am to 6pm

As always, the theatre is open for the audience 1hr30min before the play begins.
As always, you have the possibility to dine at the theatre, before and after the play.
As always, our free shuttle bus starts its journeys 1hr 45min. before the play begins.

www.theatre-du-soleil.fr