

THE WINTER'S TALE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

translated by Bernard-Marie Koltès

directed by Sylvain Levitte



The Winter's Tale

by **William Shakespeare**

in French, translation **Bernard-Marie Koltès**

direction and set design **Sylvain Levitte**

associate director **Clara Noël**

lightning design **Juliette Besançon**

costume design **Sylvette Dequest**

sound design **Olivier Renet**

company stage manager & lighting **Matthieu Marques Duarte**

sound technician **Matthieu Fuentes**

starring

Mariana Araoz

Simon Bakhouché

Yejin Choi

Alex Lawther

Paul Lofferon

Laurence Mayor

and a child from **Maîtrise des Hauts de Seine**

Running time **2 hours**

All audiences

Videos : [Teaser 1](#) / [Teaser 2](#)

[Integral show](#) (only for professionals)

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production **compagnie LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS**

coproductions **Scène Nationale 61 - Alençon, le Conseil Départemental de l'Eure, la Région Normandie et le ministère de la Culture (DRAC Normandie)**

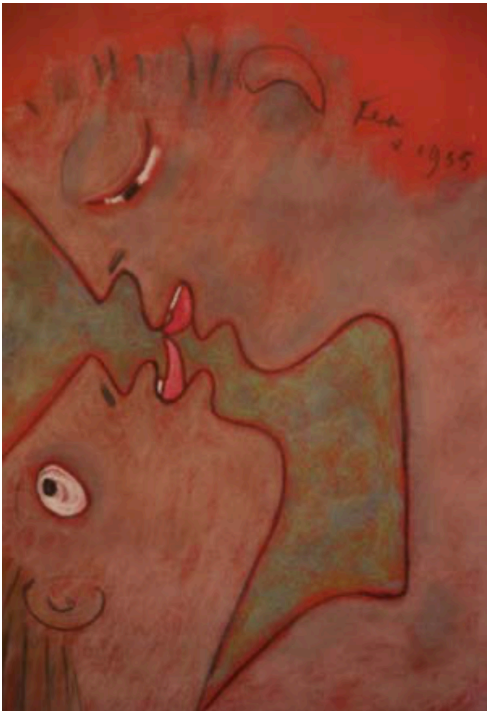
support **Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (Paris) ; Scène Nationale 61 (Alençon), le CENTQUATRE-PARIS, la Maîtrise des Hauts de Seine (Paris), L'Etable-compagnie des Petits champs (Normandie), Lilas-en-Scène (Paris)**

Tour 2023 : National Theatre 61 of Alençon, January 16-17 / Cormier Theatre of Cormeilles-en-Parisis, January 24 / National Theatre of Evreux TANGRAM, March 7 / National Theatre La Criée of Marseille, March 22-24 / The Renaissance of Mondeville, March 30 / Elisabethain Theatre of Hadelot, May 20



story

Leontes and Hermione, King and Queen of Sicily, are expecting their second child. But Leontes suspects his best friend Polixenes of being the child's real father. He calls for Polixenes' death – but Polixenes escapes and returns to his own country, Bohemia. Leontes accuses Hermione of treason and has her put in prison where she gives birth. The jealous king calls a trial during which his wife proclaims her innocence and defends her honor. Whilst denying the accusations of her husband, the death of their first child Mamilius is announced. Hermione collapses, is carried away and moments later we hear of her death too. Paulina and Antigonus organize the exile of the newborn, Perdita. The baby is taken by boat to Bohemia, and there rescued by an old shepherd during a terrible storm.



Sixteen years pass and Perdita, now a teenager, falls in love with a young man, Florizel, prince of Bohemia, child of Polixenes, king and former best friend of Leontes. During the sheep shearing festival in early spring, Polixenes discovers the romance between his son and Perdita, whom he thinks is a shepherdess. He orders the end of this relationship but like Romeo and Juliet, the love between Florizel and Perdita is stronger than anything. The two lovers flee to Sicily where they find Leontes. Perdita reunites with her biological father. The two old friends, Leontes and Polixenes, are reconciled. Florizel and Perdita are free to wed.

As this reunion brings tears to everyone's faces, Paulina unveils the statue of the late Hermione, which suddenly, as if by magic, comes to life.

director's note

After staging *King Lear* with two teenagers in an old attic and *Twelfth Night* with a cast of nine women, we turn our attention to a violent Shakespearean drama that carries in it the hope of redemption and the magic of forgiveness. *Le conte d'hiver (The Winter's Tale)* tells of a king whose jealousy turns delusional and undermines his ability to distinguish his imagination from reality.

With our company of six actors, we will be going ever deeper into the minds and humanity of Shakespeare's characters, exploring this tale from the point of view of Leontes -- a young king in his twenties. We enter into his world through his eyes, and little by little we feel what he feels and, above all, see what he imagines. We penetrate his consciousness, his visions, his dreams. *Le conte d'hiver* becomes Leontes' tale; the tale he tells when everything else has been destroyed. Destroyed by him.

Le conte d'hiver explores the thin line between reality and our perception of it; the border between truth and fiction. Each person's perception of the world is unique; therein lies the conflict of *Le conte d'hiver*. Leontes is willing to consider only his perception of the world to be the true one.

How can a feeling – jealousy – be so powerful as to transform reality? The first three acts are set in Sicily, inside of Leontes' home, in which protecting the crown is of primary importance. This relative domestic calm comes into tension as Leontes' jealous fantasies begin to take root. The beginning acts unfold as a family drama, as we see Leontes' visions start to interfere with reality. This man who has everything – partner,

child, friends, power – becomes blinded by jealousy, will stop at nothing to have his imagination legitimized, will destroy everything around him, kill everything. Thus we enter the mind of a murderer. Once he has lost everything, Shakespeare shows Leontes' horror and then quest for redemption as he realizes his grave mistake.

The last two acts, sixteen years later, take us to Bohemia, to spring, to nature, to love. It is perhaps only the dream, that of a murderous king, his last resort against horror, which serves as an escape from the present. Leontes, sat amongst his family's graves, dreams of rebirth and resurrection: a "sheep-shearing feast" as the Day of the Dead, a love story between his daughter and the son of Polixenes, a dreamed reimagining of his own story. Perhaps, through this dream, Leontes invents himself a way to be forgiven; a dream in which the characters take hold of their freedom... characters that seem so real that we might believe them to be. As in children's stories, the magic of the dream spreads everywhere; it's in the words, it's in the statues; Time itself speaks and announces itself to be bent out of shape.

Indeed, as Paulina says "**What's gone and what's past help / Should be past grief**" - going back is impossible. But what about inside the infinite space of the imagination? What cruelty and what beauty can the human brain create? What fantasy can be dreamt up between the actors and the spectators, when story becomes dream?

Sylvain Levitte, October 2021





the writer-translator

Koltès and Shakespeare

“Is Leontes mad?” I don’t think so: I think he’s the most sane character in this crazy play. For he is right to accuse his wife and Polixenes; he is right to abruptly repent at the news of his son’s death, for Hermione’s betrayal was not worth it. Hermione and Polixenes were, absolutely, unfaithful, of the worst infidelity which is that of tenderness. This innocence they proclaim is based on the question: Did they or did they not? No doubt it would have been better if they had done it, “on the stairs, on a trunk or behind a door”. I want to believe, with Leontes, that a baby can be born from touching the hands and lips, at least in a winter’s tale. Anyway, he is right to believe that this child does not belong to him: the flirtation which they indulge in front of his eyes for nine months has transferred the ownership.”

Bernard-Marie Koltès

Interview with Véronique Hotte

You’ve already translated Shakespeare.

I translated *The Winter’s Tale*; I wouldn’t do translation all my life, of course, but every now and then it would be a source of great pleasure, one more experience. I am currently finishing the writing of a play; then maybe I’ll go back to translating Shakespeare, either *Richard III* or *King Lear*. For those who write, translation is a prodigious lesson because in this profession you are completely alone and no one teaches you to write; we don’t have a judge. As for me, I am the sole judge until the end, I never show my manuscripts. Translating Shakespeare allows us to see how this author constructed his plays and how much freedom he used: it is a proof of luxury when it comes to writing. Translation, again, requires word-for-word work and does not support approximation; it calls for a return to the text constantly.

Interview with Gilles Costaz

*Last season, you translated Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*. Was it a chore or a pleasure?*

It was an incredible experience; I will do a Shakespeare translation again for my own pleasure. This guy taught me freedom. He freed me a lot from the rules of the theater. When fifteen years have passed, someone comes to say it, and it is done: fifteen years have passed. The editing of the scenes is mind-boggling. Shakespeare also tells us that we should not bother with the sets... Reading that, I was jumping for joy at the ceiling. The French classics, on the contrary, screw us in the shit. My aversion to them grows when I read Shakespeare.

director and associate

Sylvain Levitte

Sylvain Levitte is a French theatre director and actor born in 1988. After studying circus and music at the Maîtrise des Hauts de Seine, he studied theatre at the Studio d'Asnières and entered the Conservatoire National d'Art Dramatique de Paris in 2009. As an actor, he works under the direction of Declan Donnellan, Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne with whom he shares a sensitive artistic approach centered on the observation of the world and the humanities that inhabit it.

In 2013, he created the company **les choses ont leurs secrets** and staged three Shakespeare plays: *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter Tale*. Questioning genders and oppressions, he works from three different translations in order to discover what Shakespeare tells of our current era. He also regularly works in theatre schools and universities. His pedagogical approach is closely linked to his creative work. Awareness of space and partners are the heart of his work on stage and be in direct contact with the present moment.

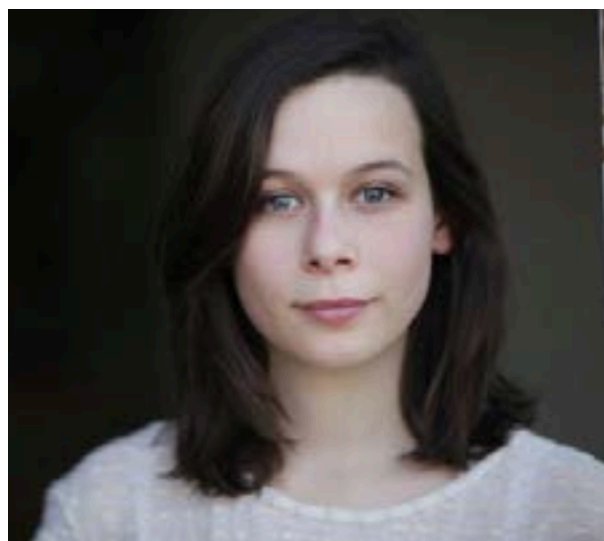
<https://www.leschoses.net/sylvain-levitte>



Clara Noël

It was at the Paris Conservatory (CNSAD) that Clara Noël met Sylvain Levitte. She performed under his direction in *Lulu (s)* by Frank Wedekind. Their artistic and amical understanding was immediate, and they continued their collaboration within the company LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS. She is the artistic collaborator of the company's three Shakespeare shows: *Le Roi Lear* (King Lear), *La Nuit des Rois* (Twelfth Night) and *Le Conte d'hiver* (The Winter's Tale).

As an actress and after two festivals in Avignon with the company of the Last Gesture, Clara Noël created the role of The Girl In, In memory of Anna Politkovskaïa written and directed by Lars Norèn. She entered the CNSAD in Paris in 2009, where she attended the classes of Daniel Mesguich and Sandy Ouvrier. As an actress, she works with Sarah Gabrielle, Denis Podalydès and Simon Abkarian. She regularly records on the radio for France Culture fictions.



actors

Alex Lawther



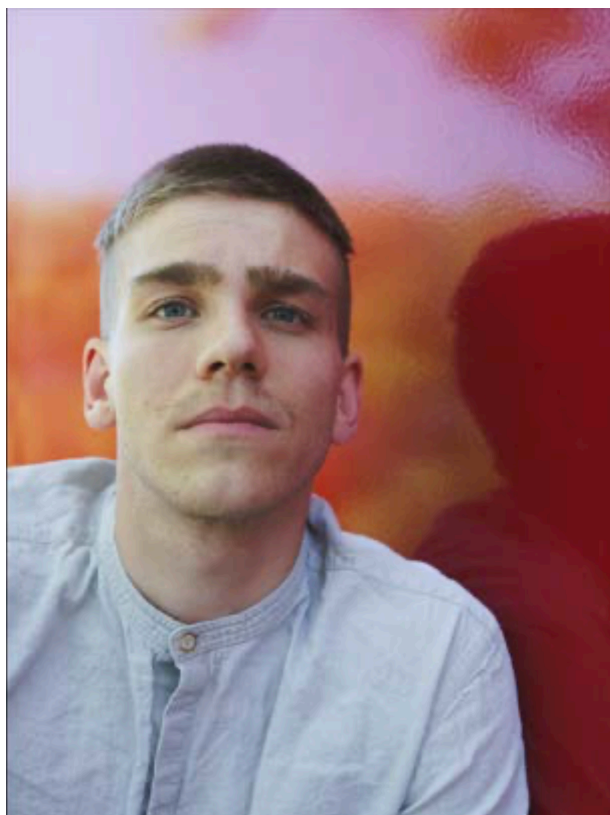
Alex began working as an actor in David Hare's *SOUTH DOWNS*, and then in film as the young Alan Turing in *THE IMITATION GAME*. He continues to work in television, theatre and film; was the lead in Charlie Brooker's *BLACK MIRROR* and BAFTA winning Channel 4/ Netflix series *THE END OF THE F***ING WORLD*. Recent work in film includes Wes Anderson's *THE FRENCH DISPATCH*, Ridley Scott's *THE LAST DUEL* and Lucile Hadžihalilović's *EARWIG*. In theatre, Alex has recently been performing in Peter Brook's *THE TEMPEST* in theatres in Europe, and will play *HAMLET*, directed by Rob Icke at the Armoury Theatre in New York in Summer 2022.

Yejin Choi



Originally from South Korea, actress and puppeteer, Yejin Choi began her artistic journey with theater and musical theater at Kaywon High school of Arts. At Dankook University (2012-2016), she majored in theater and film and met Playback Theater (improvised physical theater with public participation). After her studies at Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris (2018-2020), she participated in several workshops with Peter Brook (Tempest Project, The man who...) at the Bouffes du Nord theater and at the Printemps des Comédiens which allow her to meet the artists she is currently working with, in particular Collectif 2222 (Traverser..., Pourquoi les vieux..., physical theater, half-mask), Les Choses ont Leurs Secrets (The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare, directed by Sylvain Levitte).

Paul Lofferon



Paul Lofferon is a Paris and London-based director and actor. He began his career in the arts at 18, studying acrobatics at the Circus Arts School of Piste d'Azur in Cannes. Upon returning to Paris, he decided to pursue theatre and studied acting for two years at l'Ecole Internationale de theatre Jacques Lecoq. During this time, he joined the company Theatre de la Feuille, directed by Ata Wong Chun Tat. In September of 2018, the company toured its show Madman in several cities throughout China, including appearing in the Beijing International Fringe Festival. Most recently, he joined a research group led by Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne around the show The Man Who at Les Bouffes du Nord. He is also currently appearing in DREAM directed by Irina Brook. Paul is a co-artistic director and founding member of Voloz Collective.

Mariana Araoz



Mariana Araoz is an actress, director, author and educator. Born in Argentina, she lived her childhood and adolescence in Venezuela, Canada and Germany. She arrived in France at the age of 20 where, in addition to her studies in biology, she followed a theatrical training at the School "Theater in Acts" directed by Lucien Marchal (trainers: Christian Rist, Elisabeth Chailloux, Olivier Py). There, she met Mario Gonzalez and Christophe Patty, with whom she founded the Compagnie Collectif Masque in 2004. Within her company, she specialized on the theme of gender balance in her Trans Mission Research TMR project which is developing between Sweden, Argentina, the United States, Spain and France. She has interpreted classical texts (Don Juan, Georges Dandin, La casa de Bernarda Alba, Tartuffe) and contemporaries (Dr Jeckyll and Mr Hyde and Latin American texts such as Loup Rouge, El Juego, Acto Cultural). She created the TMR-balance method which she teaches at L'Ecole du Jeu in Paris and at the National Conservatory of Malmö (Sweden). She is a visiting professor at Saint Olaf College in Minneapolis, CNSAD in Paris, Columbia University in New York, the Boris Schoukin Institute in Moscow and the National Conservatory in Hong Kong.

Simon Bakhouche



Son of a doctor, he was in the last century a clown in circuses and even partner of Achille Zavatta, almost remained and live eternally in caravan. Since then, from Racine to Dubillard, he has acted in about thirty plays and twenty films.

In recent years, he has enjoyed two theatre collectives, «The Possessed», and «The Advantage of Doubt», which he co-founded.

Christian Rist, Denis Podalydès, the Belgians of TG Stan, and Rodolphe Dana are artists who mattered to him...

In 2022, he co-wrote his first play «After the Fall».

Laurence Mayor



Born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, she studied at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Dramatique of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg. Then she worked, among others, with Jean-Pierre Vincent, Bruno Bayen, Alain Françon, Jacques Nichet, Philippe Adrien, Alain Ollivier, Jacques Lassalle, Bernard Sobel, Joël Jouanneau, Claudia Stavisky, Claude Buchvald, Frédéric Fisbach, Valère Novarina, Jean-Yves Ruf Jean Bellorini, Sylvain Levitte... ; she played very different authors, among others: Hölderlin, Thomas Bernhard, Synge, Pirandello, Musil, Strindberg, Molière, Jelinek , Tchekov, Claudel, Wedekind, Horvath, Genêt, Corneille, Jon Fosse, Valère Novarina, Zinnie Harris, Daniil Harms, Shakespeare...

She directed Father, Creditors and Death Dance, by Strindberg, Angel of Poplars, by Milovanoff, and in October 2005 Strindberg's The Road to Damascus. She conducts workshops and storytelling shows at the Fresnes prison.