

SHAKESPEARE

Le conte d'hiver

*d'après The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare
in French, translated by Bernard-Marie Koltès
directed by Sylvain Levitte*

compagnie LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS
www.leschoses.net



Le conte d'hiver

by William Shakespeare
in French, translated by Bernard-Marie Koltès

director Sylvain Levitte
associate director Clara Noël
sound designer Olivier Renet
costume designer Sylvette Dequest
dressing Fabienne Rivier

with
Mariana Araoz, Magne Havard-Brekke, Yejin
Choi, Alex Lawther, Paul Lofferon

estimated running time : 2 hours

calendar

rehearsals

March 15 - 27, 2021
Scene National 61 (Alençon)

April 4 - 9, 2022
Le CENTQUATRE-PARIS

November 23 - December 23, 2022
L'Étable - cie des Petits Champs

January 2-15, 2023
Scene National 61 (Alençon)

2022-2023 tour

January 16 and 17, 2023
Scene National 61 (Alençon)

January 19, 2023
Scene National 61 (Flers)

January 24-26, 2023
Cormier Theater (Corneilles-en-Parisis)

May 2023
Hardelot Elizabethan Theater

production compagnie LES CHOSES ONT LEURS
SECRETS

coproductions Scène Nationale 61 - Alençon, the
Departmental Council of Eure, the Normandy Region
and the Ministry of Culture (DRAC Normandy)

accueils en résidence L'Étable - compagnie des
Petits Champs, Beaumontel, Scène Nationale 61 -
Alençon, Le CENTQUATRE-PARIS.

with the support of the MC93 - Maison de la Culture
de Seine-Saint-Denis, the Gérard Philipe Theater
in Saint-Denis (National Dramatic Center) and the
Aquarium Theater for costume hire

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.

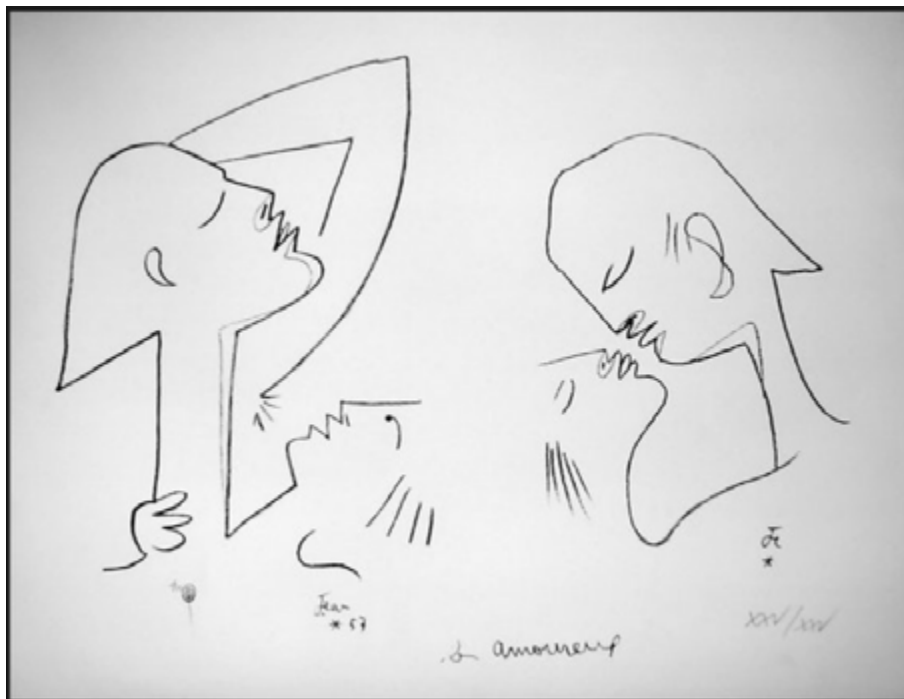


extract

Paulina

It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in't.

act II, scene 3



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

Le Conte d'hiver, Shakespeare, Koltès
cie LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS

Part One - Interiors
Family, Prison, Trial

Family



Trial



Storm



Le Conte d'hiver, Shakespeare, Koltès
cie LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS

Part two - Exteriors
Shearing festival - festival of the dead and resurrection



Party

Reunion



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

Born in 1988, Sylvain Levitte created the company LES CHOSES ONT LEURS SECRETS in 2013 and produced *Le Roi Lear* (King Lear), *La Nuit des Rois* (Twelfth Night) and *Le Conte d'hiver* (The Winter's Tale). The performer's body is at the heart of the creative process and a special place is reserved for research and listening to the body on stage.

As an actor, he has worked under the direction of Declan Donnellan, Peter Brook, Jorge Lavelli, Jacques Vincey, Macha Makeïeff, Luc Bondy, Patrick Simon, Jean-Christophe Blondel, Julie Brochen and Sandy Ouvrier, Denis Podalydès, Xavier Maurel at the CNSAD. He regularly records for the radio on France Culture and France Inter.

He began his artistic career with the circus arts, then singing at the Maîtrise des Hauts de Seine and theater at the Studio Théâtre d'Asnières school and at the CNSAD in Paris. Since 2020, he has been assistant director to Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne and works regularly with them at Bouffes du Nord.



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.

comédiens et comédiennes



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).



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.



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.



Magne Håvard Brekke

Magne Håvard Brekke attended the State Theatre School "Ernst Busch" in East-Berlin, joined the ensemble of the Volksbühne-Berlin in the late 1980's under the leadership of Frank Castorf that became legendary. He worked with great directors in Germany amongst whom of course Frank Castorf, but also Christoph Marthaler, Dimiter Gotscheff and many many others...Today he plays in theaters and films mostly in France, Germany and Norway. Several times with the french film director Mia Hansen Løve. And he has been touring around with the music-poetry-project « Ljodahått » for more than 10 years.



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'École 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.

around the show / outreach

“stage your dreams”

We offer workshops to discover or deepen the experience of theater with school audiences and / or adults around the theme of dreams. These audiences may or may not have seen the show and the goal is to devise a small piece, taking inspiration from a dream they have had, in groups of four to six people.

The work can be done over several sessions (which will give the opportunity to write and build the improvisations) or over just one (which will allow for great spontaneity on the part of the participants).

This work involves diving into something surreal. Our dreams are made up of very real elements taken from the world around us, it is their arrangement that might disturb, amuse, frighten or intoxicate us. It is the strangeness but also the precise nature of our dreams that we want to share in this research together and thus play with all the elements that the theater leaves at our disposal: twisting of time and space, speeding things up, slowing things down, change of place and identity in a heartbeat.

Workshops led by actors from the cast as well as Sylvain Levitte and Clara Noël.



previous creations

King Lear

by W. Shakespeare
in French, translated by Jean-Michel Deprats
directed by Sylvain Levitte

Saison 15-16

Domaine d'Harcourt, Hall de la Chanson (Paris Vilette)

Twelfth night

by W. Shakespeare
in French, translated by André Markowicz
directed by Sylvain Levitte

Saisons 20-21 et 21-22

*Théâtre Legendre (Scène Nationale d'Evreux, TANGRAM),
La Criée (Théâtre National de Marseille), Scène Nationale
61 (Alençon), Théâtre Gérard Philipe (Centre Dramatique
National de Saint-Denis), Théâtre du Cormier (Cor-
meilles-en-Parisis)*

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