

**PRODUCTION FILE**



# JUDITH AND BLUEBEARD'S TEARS

conceived and directed by **MATHIEU BAUER**

After Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* based on a libretto by Béla Balázs and various texts

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# JUDITH AND BLUEBEARD'S TEARS

a creation in two phases and in two parts, by **MATHIEU BAUER**

## CREDITS

concept and stage direction **Mathieu Bauer**

artistic collaboration and music composition **Sylvain Cartigny**

dramaturgy **Thomas Pondevie**

set design and costume **Chantal de La Coste**

## CAST

FIRST PART

with **Evelyne Didi**

SECOND PART

with **Evelyne Didi,**

**two singers** and **an orchestra**

## PRODUCTION

executive production **Nouveau théâtre de Montreuil - centre dramatique national**

coproduction **La Pop**

## PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

FIRST PART

premiere **november 2017 at La Pop (Paris)**

SECOND PART

premiere **season 2019/2020**

## **NOTE OF INTENT**

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### *It is through nostalgia that awareness of our present comes about* **Heiner Müller**

This project has its origins in the fascination I felt very early in my life as a music lover for *Bluebeard's Castle* – Béla Bartók's only opera – and the very keen emotion it aroused in me. An emotion that, even today, leaves me speechless; an emotion that, as they say, is overwhelming!

I had the intuition from very early on that I would have to follow this emotion back to its source to take full possession of this work, for while *Bluebeard's Castle* crystallises my current preoccupations – a relationship to melancholy, history and disenchantment, to the present, music, or secrecy – it is by way of emotions that I wish to draw the audience into this project. Draw it in, with the character of Judith as its guide.

**What is the significance of this emotion that floods the opera in tears?** Where does Bluebeard's inability to live in the present come from? What does he hide from the eyes of the world? And what if, as Heiner Müller puts it, "it is through nostalgia that awareness of our present comes about"?

I believe that Bartók's opera implicitly engages in a reflection on History and I want to travel back through this vale of tears as one travels back through historical times, so that in my turn and in full awareness, I may understand our present.

Along the way, a little work by George Didi-Huberman came to mind: *Quelle émotion ! Quelle émotion ?* (What Emotion! What Emotion?), the transcription of a talk for children given at the Nouveau théâtre de Montreuil in the context of the "little enlightenments" lecture series. Georges Didi-Huberman argues that emotions – and tears especially – far from being the sign of impotence, a mark of weakness or an inability to act, move through us and move us, thereby enabling us to perceive the world differently and sparking the desire to transform it within us.

Could Bluebeard's tears be a sensitive response capable of transforming the times we live in? And could the emotions that stem from them be the last ramparts standing against the triumphant cynicism that characterises these times?

#### **Two parts to give Bartók's work its full dimension**

**I wish to set these two works off against each other, to have them interact and thereby try to make the question of emotions and *Bluebeard's Castle* into complementary sides of the same project that would be articulated in two phases.**

**The first phase (La Pop, Paris, November 2017)** would have the character of Judith as guide, years after the events of the tale – in the form of a prologue. I imagine this part as a time of enquiry, hypothesis and reflection in which history, ideas and politics are exhumed and come to the surface through a network of references borrowed from the history of emotions and Bartók's opera.

**For the second phase (season 2019/2020), I imagine staging a version of the opera with the first phase as a prologue.** When Judith's investigation reaches its conclusion, the opera would then play out in its entirety, returning to the timeline of the fiction and confronting the audience with the Hungarian composer's deeply moving and mysterious work.

These two parts, which also constitute two autonomous forms, invite us to circulate continuously in Bluebeard's tears, a lachrymal crucible crystallising the questions raised by *Bluebeard's Castle* and in which the active part of our emotions shine as catalysts for great upheavals.

**BLUEBEARD**

Why did you come to my home?

**JUDITH**

I will dry these weeping walls  
With my lips they will be dried!  
I will warm these cold stones,  
With my body, I will warm them.  
Let me, let me,  
Blue Beard!  
Your castle will not be dark,  
You and I shall breach the wall  
So that wind and sun shall enter,  
Let your castle shine!



Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*

## HISTORY OF TEARS AND TEARS OF HISTORY

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*Our basic condition is that we come into the world with tears  
and we leave it with tears*  
Béla Bartók

### **Bartók and Balázs' opera, the melancholic masterpiece**

*Bluebeard's Castle* is a remarkable work. A Hungarian-language opera composed in 1910, it takes place in one act and one place, with only two characters, in a minimalist format for the genre: one hour of intense drama in all. The librettist, Béla Balázs, turns Perrault's tale into an aching, solemn and allusive poem, constructing a narrative that leaves lots of space for music. He literally melts the text into the music (and in turn the listener melts when listening to the work).

Bartók's arrangements create a lugubrious atmosphere of great sadness, interspersed with surges of desire for life and lyrical flights of rare intensity. From the first notes, the music grips us and we are driven towards the dramatic conclusion that seems inescapable. This music takes us by the hand to drag us with it into the pathos of the work.

### **Bluebeard's mysterious and pathetic aura compels Judith to discover his innermost secrets.**

This pathos is embodied, beyond the music itself, in the character of Bluebeard, an enigmatic and almost silent presence on stage throughout the whole opera. He stands by, practically without uttering a word, as the seven doors of the castle are opened, *listening* – and, so to speak, *on the lookout for* – the one who has followed him out of love. Far from the depiction made in the fairy tale, he is a mysterious figure, bearing a hidden pain, a being inhabited by tears, a chasm into which Judith casts herself with open arms.

The young woman acts as if fascinated by the mysterious aura emanating from him. The desire to dry his tears drives her to open, one by one, all the doors of the castle, a metaphor for Bluebeard's tormented soul. She relentlessly investigates the mysterious domains that block her way until she reaches the sixth door which opens to reveal a lake of tears, symbolising a profound melancholy for which no remedy exists. Judith understands too late that by dint of wanting to know too much, you end losing the person you love: the final door closes on her while solitude (death?) closes around him.

## FIRST PART

# ARCHEOLOGY OF EMOTIONS: JUDITH ENCLOSED IN A GLASS BOX

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The first part of the show is built around the character of Judith, an older Judith, still locked up behind the seventh door, years after the end of the story of Bluebeard. She has devoted herself to a truly archeology excavation of emotions and the opera, in all its dimensions, which gives her scope for all kinds of digressions. This is the starting point for a montage combining literature, music, images and cinema, articulated around the question of emotions and under the auspices of Georges Didi-Huberman's work, *Quelle émotion ! Quelle émotion ?*

Naturally, in light of my usual writing and editing process, this proposal will continue to evolve during and after rehearsals.

**Considered as a prologue to the opera itself, independently from the score and the story in the libretto, this work is first and foremost a free-standing object, in the form of a visual and phonic installation in which Judith digs up and displays materials of all kinds. A work in its own right, therefore, which will be shown independently of the second part, at La Pop (Paris) in Novembre 2017.**

In this case, the opera is performed to confront the audience with Bartók's work. Judith, while kept in confinement, in fact ends up putting on the record (side A and then side B) while continuing to inhabit her space and tending to everyday matters. She prepares something to eat, reads, looks at photos, falls asleep, stares at us, serves us something to drink, invites us to share our impressions. In this way, through gestures and simple, silent questions (everything is done in writing), she builds up a dialogue between the work and the viewers. The viewers are free to leave whenever they wish, and Judith marks no conclusion, in keeping with what her life seems to be now.



Diana Vreeland's desk, New York, 1965

## SECOND PART

### THE OPERATIC FORM

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#### The focus switches to the opera and the contemplation of Bartók's work

The prologue then fades out to make way for the opera in its entirety, with two singers and an orchestra reduced to six or seven musicians who provide a spectral and ghostly presence in the space, shadows from another world and another era.

Thus, a first part that is constructed and highly charged, sometimes to the point of saturation, is followed by a stripped down, contemplative phase that commands our attention and ears without ever encumbering the gaze, a space dedicated to senses and sensations. The audience is placed in optimal listening conditions, in a dimly lit environment where it lets itself be guided by its ears.

Loaded up with all that it has taken from the first part, the audience embarks on a second journey, into the work itself. The materials of the first part act as references, signs and clues that offer the listener-spectator multiple possibilities of interpretation: emotional, theoretical, offbeat or historical, aesthetic or even political. Keys to go deeper and fully revel in this opera from the beginning of the last century. The audience is more active than ever, concerned, caught up in a double movement of contemplation and emotion on the one hand and in a keenly felt pleasure on the other. A simple melody can trigger thoughts and ideas that lead into amazing worlds.

My intention is that the reduced orchestra will also reinforce this effect, by toning down the “demonstrative” and “spectacular” side of certain musical passages so as to have the timbres, melodic lines and harmonies appear in purified arrangements while remaining faithful to the original score. This will be the challenge for the person or persons tasked with rearranging the music for a reduced orchestra. It is also my challenge to make this score heard in a new way while preserving its strengths and uniqueness.

#### From tears to arms!

In sum, I would like to literally immerse the audience into the music and history of this opera by providing tools and doors that enable it to tap into its own perceptions and emotions. All too often, opera remains an art devoted to connoisseurs and insiders ... The focus on the emotional dimension therefore offers me a way to “stage” Bartók's opera other than as an unattainable masterpiece reserved exclusively to a few specialists. On the contrary, it should be viewed first and foremost as a sensitive, accessible work open to all. The aim is to democratise what still too often comes across as a learned and elitist music.

**To conclude, I would like to express my desire to create a performance in which emotions have power and drive transformation, the “transformation of memory into desire, of past into future, or of sadness into joy”. The joy of making an emotional event into an effective opening that leads to knowledge and an emotionally open relationship to our environment. When it comes down to it, this is perhaps also a utopia: turning our tears into arms in order to transform the world.**

Mathieu Bauer

1. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Quelle émotion! Quelle émotion?*, Bayard, 2013

# BIOGRAPHIES

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## MATHIEU BAUER

stage director, musician and director of the Nouveau théâtre de Montreuil

Mathieu Bauer's main focus is his approach on the current issues at stake in today's world. / *Today's world current issues are the main focuses of Mathieu Bauer.* / *Mathieu Bauer's main focuses are today's world current issues.* Guided by an idea of theatre that intricately blends music, cinema and literature, where the construction process is considered to be the antithesis of decompartmentalising artistic forms, Mathieu Bauer works with a vast array of materials: press articles, essays, novels, films, operas and, of course, plays. He composes new scores which combine rhythm, text, song and images. This represents the distinctiveness of his work and the grammar underlying his theatre practice.

After training as a musician, he set up the Sentimental Bourreau Company with other artists such as Judith Henry, actress, Sylvain Cartigny, musician, and Martin Selze, actor, with the aim of recounting our world and our times. This joint adventure gave rise to many shows such as *Les Carabiniers* after the scripts by Jean-Luc Godard, Rossellini and Jean Gruault (1989); *Strip et Boniments* after the witness accounts of Suzanne Meiselas (1990); *La Grande Charge Hystérique* after *L'Invention de l'Hystérie* by Georges Didi-Huberman (1991); *Va-t'en chercher le bonheur et ne reviens pas les mains vides* after Nathanël West, Bertolt Brecht, Youri Gagarine (1995); *Satan conduit le bal* after Oskar Panizza, Fernando Pessoa, Jean-Didier Vincent (1997) and *Tout ce qui vit s'oppose à quelque chose* after Lucrèce, Emmanuel Kant, Georges Didi-Huberman (1998-1999).

From 1999, the company opened its doors to new collaborators: Marc Berman, Georgia Stahl, Kate Strong and Matthias Girbig, staging *Les Chasses du comte Zaroff* after *Mass and Power* by Elias Canetti and the script of the film *The Most Dangerous Game* (2001); *Drei Time Ajax* after a poem by Heiner Müller (2003); *L'Exercice a été profitable Monsieur* after Serge Daney (2003); *Rien ne va plus* after Stefan Zweig and Georges Bataille (2005); *Top Dogs* by Urs Widmer (2006); *Alta Villa* by Lancelot Hamelin (2007); *Tendre jeudi* after John Steinbeck (2007), *Tristan et...*, by Lancelot Hamelin based on a free adaptation of the libretto by Richard Wagner (2009). In 2011, he created *Please Kill Me* on the history of the punk movement after the collection of interviews by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain.

Since 1 July 2011, Mathieu Bauer has been Director of the Nouveau Théâtre de Montreuil – a national drama centre. The works scheduled and produced deal with issues and acts which give an account of our times. The shows are staged by artists who want to invent truly theatrical works. Artists who may set people at variance and yet people relate to. They are artists of our time who put the present at the heart of their work. Today's theatre goes beyond text and is also built up around images, bodies and sound. That is why the Nouveau Théâtre de Montreuil welcomes a broad spectrum of forms, with circus, dance, image and music, and sets music theatre at the heart of its projects.

During the 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 seasons, Mathieu Bauer set up a unique, federating project with a "theatre series" *Une Faille*, which echoed televised series and ran for 8 episodes. In January 2015, he created *The Haunting Melody*. In April 2016, he imagined *DJ set*, commissioned by La Pop, then created it again in October 2016 at the Subsistances (Lyon). This lecture-concert suggests (re)discovering history of music and sound listening.

In spring 2016, he created *Shock Corridor*, an adaptation of the Samuel Fuller's movie, with the students from the School of Théâtre National de Strasbourg.



## ÉVELYNE DIDI

actress

Évelyne Didi is a French stage and film actress. We recently saw her in Aki Kaurismäki's film *Le Havre* released in 2010, and *Électre* directed by Jeanne Balibar and Pierre Léon, which won the Prix Jean Vigo in 2012.

She started her career as a stage actress in 1969 at the Opéra Comique in *Le Médecin malgré lui* directed by Philippe Ermelier. As a result she made her career both on stage and in the film industry.

Évelyne Didi worked with a lot of talented directors: Jean-Louis Martinelli (Heiner Müller's *Quartett* in 1988), Jean-Pierre Vincent (Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in 1989), Michael Lonsdale (Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* in 2007), Bruno Geslin (*Kiss Me Quick* after Susan Meiselas in 2008), Christoph Marthaler (*Papperlapapp* created in 2010 in

the courtyard of the Popes' Palace at Avignon Festival), ... She worked several times with Matthias Langhoff (Eugene O'Neil's *Desire Under the Elms* and Tchekhov's *The Three Sisters* in 1993, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* in 1998, *Doña Rosita ou le langage des fleurs* after Federico Garcia Lorca in 2006, ...) and André Engel (Bertolt Brecht's *Baal* in 1976, Georg Büchner's *Leonce and Lena* in 2001, ...)

In the film industry, Évelyne Didi played in numerous short films and in many films directed by famous French directors, such as Jean Becker (*L'Été meurtrier*, 1983), Claude Chabrol (*Une affaire de femmes*, 1988), Philippe Garrel (*Le Cœur fantôme*, 1996), and Aki Kaurismäki (*La Vie de bohème*, 1992).

## SYLVAIN CARTIGNY

music composer and artistic collaborator

Sylvain Cartigny is the co-founder of the Sentimental Bourreau Company with Mathieu Bauer. He takes part in all the company's shows. In 2011, he adapted music from the rock and punk repertoire, which was theme of the show *Please Kill Me* directed by Mathieu Bauer. Sylvain Cartigny composed the music of *Une Faille* seasons 1 and 2, *The Haunting Melody* and *Shock Corridor*.

Furthermore, Sylvain Cartigny demonstrates his talent as a musician in the theatre together with Robert Cantarella, Christophe Huysmans, Michel Deutsch, André Wilms and Wanda Golonka. As an actor he was also directed by Philippe Faucon.

In the film industry, he has collaborated with Charles Castella, Stéphane Guisti, Charles Berling and Stéphane Gatti. He is also a member of the rock bands France Cartigny, Jo Dahan and Even if.

## CHANTAL DE LA COSTE

set and costume designer

It is not the first time Chantal de La Coste works with Mathieu Bauer: they had already work together in 2015 for *The Haunting Melody* at Nouveau théâtre de Montreuil, and she designed the set of *DJ set* in 2016.

After being Nicki Rieti's assistant for the directors André Engel and Jean-François Peyret (she now designs costumes for them), Chantal de La Coste designed numerous sets and costumes, for instance for Pascal Quignard's *Princesse vieille reine* with Marie Vialle at the Théâtre du Rond-Point, for Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Concert à la carte* and *Femmes d'intérieur* directed by Vanessa Larré at the CDN of Orleans, for Fabrice Melquiot's *Frankenstein* directed in Geneva by Paul Desveaux. She had already worked with Paul Desveaux for *L'Orage* after Alexandre Ostrovski (MC de Bourges, Théâtre de La Ville - Les Abbesses), for the opera *Les Enfants Terribles* after Jean Cocteau (MC de Bourges, Théâtre de l'Athénée), for Friedrich von Schiller's *The Robbers* (Théâtre 71 Malakoff).

At the MC 93, she works with Nicolas Bigard about a different relation between the stage and the audience for each show: *Chroniques du bord de scène* (season 1,2,3), *Hello America*, *Traité des passions de l'âme* and *Fado Alexandrino* after António Lobo Antunes, and *Barthes le questionneur*.

For Lukas Hemleb, she designed the sets and the costumes for *Od ombra od omo* according to Dante (MC 93), Gilbert Amy's *Le Premier Cercle* (Opéra de Lyon), Gregory Motton's *Loué soit le progrès* (Théâtre de l'Odéon), *Os dias levantados* (Lisbon Opera House).

## THOMAS PONDEVIE

dramatist

Thomas Pondevie was trained in the Théâtre National de Strasbourg School (2011-2014), and worked as a dramatist with Éric Vigner, Julie Brochen, Jean-Yves Ruf, Élise Chatauret, Nicolas Truong, Aliénor Dauchez and Sylvain Huc.

Since 2014, he has cherished a privileged relationship with Mathieu Bauer (*The Haunting Melody*, *Shock Corridor*, *DJ set (sur) écoute*) and the Nouveau théâtre de Montreuil, with which he often works. He is co-director of the WE Company with Vilma Pitrinaite and he develops his own projects about codes of some mainstream or old-fashioned cultural forms and their relationship with the audience (*En chaque homme il y en a deux qui dansent*, *Stunt action show*, *Miss Lituanie*, *Supernova*).

Thomas Pondevie is a steady contributor of the Revue Théâtre / Public, and since 2013 he has been a member of the national commission of support to creation of the Centre National du Théâtre.

## READING LIST

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*Le Château de Barbe-bleue, Avant-scène opéra.*

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Des armes aux larmes*

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Quelle émotion! Quelle émotion?*, Bayard, 2013.

*Histoire des émotions*, Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello (eds.), Seuil, Vol. 1, 2 et 3 (forthcoming).

Catherine Chalier, *Traité des larmes*, Albin Michel, 2008.

Sophie Lacroix, *L'Humanité des larmes*, Editions Manucius, 2016.

Aby Warburg, *L'Atlas Mnémosyne*, L'écarquillé, 2012.