
structure



Châteauvallon Liberté



scène nationale

Mon absente FRANCE - THEATRE

Text, conception, installation **Pascal Rambert**

with

Audrey Bonnet
Océane Cairaty
Vincent Dissez
Claude Duparfait
Stanislas Nordey
Ysanis Padonou
Mélody Pini
Odile Sankara
Laurent Sauvage
Aristide Tarnagda
Claire Toubin

opening 23rd of march 2023, Châteauvallon-Liberté, scène nationale

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credits

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Odile Sankara

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Aristide Tarnagda

Claire Toubin

light design **Yves Godin**

costume design **Anais Romand**

music **Alexandre Meyer**

artistic collaboration **Pauline Roussille**

stage manager **Alessandra Calabi**

light production **Thierry Morin**

sound production **Chloé Levoy**

stage production **Antoine Giraud**

dresser **Marion Regnier**

text coach

production director **Pauline Roussille**

production manager **Juliette Malot**

production coordinator **Sabine Aznar**

production structure production, Châteauvallon-Liberté scène nationale (FR)

coproduction TNS - Théâtre National de Strasbourg (FR), ExtraPôle Sud Production (FR), Théâtre National de Nice (FR), La Criée-Théâtre National de Marseille (FR), Théâtre du Gymnase-Bernardine (FR)

opening 23rd of March 2023, Châteauvallon-Liberté, scène nationale

the text *Mon absente* will be published at Les Solitaires Intempestifs

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Mon absente

writer's statement

Mon Absente (My Absentee) immerses the viewer deep within a quiet and closed location. Set aside from a hectic life that has even forgotten what made it so hectic. A community of grieving friends and family are mingled together by the bedside of a woman who is no longer there. And memories begin to flood in. Words and tears start breaking loose. A diffracted portrait emerges from the void.

"My Absentee" was originally a commission intended for the associate actors and actresses of the TNS (Théâtre National de Strasbourg). It arose from the hole left by Véronique Nordey's passing. Then her character evolved into a fictional figure. This absentee is the mutual link between all the characters at stake.

Aristide Tarnagda and a recently graduated group of students from the TNS who had previously featured on the play "Mont Vérité" were eventually invited to join the original cast. 11 men and women of various origins, backgrounds and generations confronting their bodies' verticality and the warmth of their breaths to the pain and awe of loss and to the mysteries of death. Reunited by grief, they gravitate like satellites around a coffin covered with flowers and focal point to the ballet of their ins and outs. In this setting made of a mix of pain and observance, speech is what maintains life and the living together for better and for worse.

Pascal Rambert

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Mon absente

Interview of Pascal Rambert by Marie Plantin

Mon absente was commissioned by Stanislas Nordey currently head of the Theatre National de Strasbourg. What effect did this have on your writing process?

To me there is no difference between a commissioned project and one that is of my own initiative. I would rather speak of circulating desire. Commissions in the typical sense do not mean much to me because I always function in the same way: writing for others, putting words into actors and actresses' bodies. It is the source of my inspiration, my fuel.

You are bracing yourself into writing a chorus play for a very high-level group of actors and actresses.

Yes, they are incredible. It is very exciting. I am in this with some of my oldest and most trustful companions like Audrey Bonnet and Stanislas Nordey as well as with people I am reuniting with like Claude Duparfait, Laurent Sauvage, Vincent Dissez... Actors of this kind need to be fed. I do not want to put together too long a play, as dense as "Architecture" was, which was a big chunk of theatre. But I have to give them what they crave for. They literally feast on words.

Adding to this primal core of experienced actors and actresses you decided to enhance the cast with newcomers.

I wanted to mix generations, bodies, backgrounds and to work again with the students who had just graduated from TNS and for which I had written "Mont Vérité". Océane Cairaty, Mélody Pini, Ysanis Padonou and Claire Toubin therefore joined the original cast as well as my friend Aristide Tarnagda who is both an author, a director, an actor and the head of the Récréâtrales festival in Ouagadougou / Burkina-Faso. We know each other well and when I heard him read a text on the radio (France Culture) I immediately wanted to write for him, for his voice, his tone, his rhythm, his deepness. I wanted to write for what he radiates.

Who is this absentee?

When Stanislas suggested this project to me I went through the list of actors and actresses of the TNS. And suddenly the gap left by the absence of Véronique Nordey was all I could see. Besides the fact that she was Stanislas' mother, she was an actress with whom I would have loved to work. She passed away and it never happened. But then again, even though the starting point of my writing is her absence, this is not a biographical work. During the writing process my own father died and the project progressively evolved into something else. "My Absentee" is an image between the lines of a woman who is no longer there, told through the narratives of those who still are. The play articulates around and starts from the void left by a living being who no longer is. More specifically and quite simply, it is about a family and friends gathering at the bedside of a deceased woman.

How do you consider things are going to look like on stage ? Even though the spoken word largely prevails in your plays, it is the scenographic shrine from which it emanates that gives it its impact.

I see a black box, a large and obscure space. Very calm and beautiful. Like a magnificent resting place in which an enthroned coffin is surrounded and filled with flowers. Then a string of characters marching and grieving in dark costumes inspired by 50s/60s Italian ceremonial outfits. Black blouses and knee length skirts, elegant men's suits, everything sober and mournful. All this will expose the paleness of skin, hands, faces. There will be tremendous work to be made on lights with my collaborator Yves Godin. On how to have light emerge from darkness. A light that would come from deep inside. And then making people's auras visible, as we previously experimented on "Dreamers". Showing their psychic emanations. Like auroras emerging from their bodies.

The opposite of the emblematic white box that so often characterizes your work

Let's say it's as if I had a double sided notebook with white and black pages. Some of my plays like "Clôture de l'Amour" are set in a white square with white neon lights, fixed and straightforwardly illuminating our conflicts, our lives made of oppositions. This is one side. The white cube in which I place bodies which use words to confront each other. I see it almost like art installations. On the other hand I have plays that would illustrate my other side like "3 Annonciations", "Memento Mori" or even "De mes propres Mains".

The dark side. Plays created for obscurity in which lighting is crucial. They are in fact almost co created with Yves Godin. These plays of which "My Absentee" will be a part, sculpt bodies out of obscurity. They deal with the invisible, the fantasy within, what is at stake within our hearts and in the back of our brains. These plays are plugged onto the unconscious, the shameful, desire, the suffering induced by loss.

It seems one can expect "My Absentee" to be a mourning play. Your way of addressing speech is undissociable from the roaring energy that lies deep within our inner lives. Thus making it occur in the face of one another can look like some kind of redemption.

I strongly believe in the healing and comforting powers of speech. "My Absentee" will be a sort of contemporary "Bardo Thödol", the tibetan book of the dead. "Bardo Thödol" means liberation through hearing in intermediary states. I assume speech is relieving not just to the speaker but also to the listener. As a matter of fact people in a coma are often advised to be spoken to, even though their level of consciousness is a mystery. In the play these 10 characters, reunited by the same absentee, show up to grieve and vent together. It is death that triggers their words. Everything that hasn't been said before, all the words that didn't find their way when she was alive are spilled out in the context of observance.

You plays often aim at dissecting extreme moments in an almost surgical way. You write theatre that ignites from critical states... "My Absentee" binds itself to the ultimate paroxysmal state: death.

It is what I like best. Anything else tends to bore me. These crest line moments in our lives. These moments of critical decision making, of great fear, these emotional climaxes confront us to life itself and to the essential. With "My Absentee" I focus on the impact losing a loved one has on bodies and souls. The deflagration of loss. It is almost an ethereal play that feeds itself from dreams and psyche in order to outline sentences that have stayed stuck in there. Everything that was never said is set off by the absentee's passing hereby acting as a detonator. "My Absentee" is like an intimate and collective prayer aimed at someone who no longer is. If there is one place among all places where one can invoke the dead and their ghosts and reach out to our lost ones, it has to be theatre, right?

Interview of Pascal Rambert by Marie Plantin, December 8th 2021

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Mon absente

Biography of Pascal Rambert

Pascal Rambert is a French writer, choreographer, and director for the stage and screen. He was born in 1962. In 2016 he receives the "Grand prix de l'Académie Française pour l'ensemble de son oeuvre" / "Theater Prize from Académie Française for his entire body of work". From January 2017 he has been the partner artist at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, at El Pavón Teatro Kamikaz (Spain) from September 2016 to 2020, from 2014 the partner playwright at the National Theatre of Strasbourg and from 2022 the partner artist at Piccolo Teatro (Milano, Italy). For 10 years, 2007–2016, he served as the Director of TG2-Théâtre de Gennevilliers, which he has transformed into a national dramatic center for contemporary creation, exclusively devoted to living artists (theater, dance, opera, contemporary art, film, and philosophy). Rambert's theatre plays and choreographies have been produced by structure, supported by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, and staged in Europe, North America, Asia, Russia, South America, Middle East.

His writing (theater, stories, and poetry) is published in France with the press Solitaires Intempestifs and has been translated, published, and staged in many languages: English, Russian, Italian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Croatian, Slovenian, Polish, Portuguese (From Portugal and from Brazil), Spanish (Mexican and Argentinian), Castilian, Catalan, Dutch, Czech, Thai, Dansk and Greek.

His dance pieces, including the most recent, *Memento Mori*, created in 2013 with the lighting designer Yves Godin, have been performed at major festivals and contemporary dance festivals: Montpellier, Avignon, Utrecht, Berlin, and Hamburg as well as New York, Tokyo and Los Angeles. Pascal Rambert has directed several operas in France and in the United States.

The short films he has directed have been selected and awarded at festivals in Pantin, Locarno, Miami, and Paris.

His play *Clôture de l'amour* (Love's End), created at the 65th Festival d'Avignon in 2011 with Audrey Bonnet and Stanislas Nordey, was an international success. The script won the prize for public theater in the Theater 2013 – Dithea competition, the prize for best new French-language play from the Syndicat de la Critique (Critics' Union) in 2012, and the Grand Prize for dramatic literature from the Centre national du théâtre (National Theater Center) in October, 2012. In 2017, *Clôture de l'amour* was staged more than 180 times in France and much more all over the world, and translated in 23 languages. Pascal Rambert has adapted *Clôture de l'amour* into eleven languages: for the Moscow Art Theatre; in New York, Zagreb, Modena, and Rome, and at Milan's Piccolo Teatro; in Shizuoka, Osaka, and Yokohama; in Berlin and at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg; in Barcelona at the Grec Festival and in Madrid at the Festival de Otoño; and in Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus, and Odense, in mandarin in China in Beijing, in arabic in Cairo in Egypt, in Finnish in Finland, Helsinki.

Rambert created *Une (micro) histoire économique du monde, dansée* (A (micro) history of world economics, danced) at T2G, Théâtre de Gennevilliers, in 2010. After its French tour, Rambert has adapted the work for further performances in Japan; in Hamburg and Karlsruhe, Germany; in the United States in New York, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh; and in Cairo, Egypt.

His play *Avignon à vie* (Avignon for Life), read by Denis Podalydès, was first staged at the 2013 67th Festival d'Avignon in the Cour d'Honneur du Palais des Papes.

His most recent play, *Répétition* (Rehearsal), written for Emmanuelle Béart, Audrey Bonnet, Denis Podalydès of the Comédie Française, Stanislas Nordey, and Claire Zeller, premiered December 12, 2014 at T2G, Théâtre de Gennevilliers- national dramatic center for contemporary creation as part of Festival d'Automne in Paris. It was afterward performed in Lyon and toured nationally and internationally in the fall of 2015.

At the end of 2016, he will direct the Italian version of the play, *Prova*, at the Teatro Arena del Sole de Bologna and at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, and in 2017 *Ensayo* the Spanish version in Madrid. For *Répétition* (Rehearsal) Pascal Rambert was awarded from the French Academy with the annual prize 2015 of literature and philosophy.

In June, 2015, in the bare space of the Bouffes du Nord Theater in Paris, Rambert will present five of his plays: *Memento Mori*, *Clôture de l'amour* (Love's end), *Avignon à vie* (Avignon for life), *De mes propres mains* (With My Own Hands) and *Libido Sciendi*.

In January, 2016, he did premier his play *Argument*, written for Laurent Poitrenaux and Marie-Sophie Ferdane, at the CDN (National Theater Center) Orléans / Loiret / Centre, then present it at La Comédie in Reims and at T2G, Théâtre de Gennevilliers - national dramatic center for contemporary creation.

In May 2017 at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombiers in Paris, he directed the text *Une vie* (A life) that he wrote for the actors of the Comédie-Française in Paris.

In August 2017, he has written *GHOSTs* for some Taiwanese actors, he directed it for the opening of the Performing Art Festival in Taipei.

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He wrote *Actrice* (Actress) for the actors of the Art Theater of Moscow, and he created it on December 12nd 2017 at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, starred Marina Hands, Audrey Bonnet Jakob Öhrman, Elmer Bäck, Rasmus Slätis, Jean Guizerix, Emmanuel Cuchet, Ruth Nüesch, Luc Bataïni, Lyna Khoudri, Yuming Hey, Sifan Shao, Laetitia Somé, and alternately, Anas Abidar, Nathan Aznar et Samuel Kircher.

Actrice toured in France from January to march 2018. He directs *Glumica*, the croatian version of *Actrice* at the National Theatre in Zagreb in February 2019.

He wrote *Reconstitution* in march 2018 for and with Vero Dahuron and Guy Delamotte from the Panta Theatre in Caen.

He wrote *Nos Parents* (Our Parents) for the student actors of the Manufacture in Lausanne that he directed in April 2018.

In september 2018, he stages his play *Christine* at the Comédie de Genève during the Festival Julie's Party, then creates *Teatro* at the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II in Lisbon, starring Beatriz Batarda, Cirila Bossuet, João Grosso, Lúcia Maria, Rui Mendes.

In November 2018, he directed *Soeurs* (Sisters) written for Marina Hands and Audrey Bonnet. In December, he directed the spanish version, *Hermanas*, with Barbara Lennie and Irene Escolar.

In February 2019, he staged *Glumica*, the Croatian version of *Actrice* with the actors of the National Theater of Zagreb.

From February to June 2019, he is Visiting Belknap Fellow in the Humanities and Visiting Lecturer in French and Italian with Florent Masse at Princeton University, New Jersey. By May 2019, he will direct the students in his play *Other's*.

In March 2019, he created, the Taiwanese version of *Clôture de l'Amour* at the Metropolitan Theater of Taipei.

In June 2019, he created *Mont Vérité* with the TNS school students for the Printemps des Comédiens Festival.

His play *Architecture*, written for Emmanuelle Béart, Audrey Bonnet, Anne Brochet, Marie-Sophie Ferdane, Arthur Nauzyciel, Stanislas Nordey, Denis Podalydès, Laurent Poitrenaux, Pascal Rénéric and Jacques Weber, premiered at the Festival d'Avignon in july 2019 (Cour d'Honneur du Palais des Papes), and is touring for the moment in Rennes (FR), Strasbourg (FR), Paris (FR), Annecy (FR), Clermont-Ferrand (FR), Sceaux (FR), Valenciennes (FR), Lyon (FR) and Bologne (IT).

In November 2019, he created *Rakkauden Päätös*, the finnish version of *Clôture de l'amour* at the Finnish National Theater of Helsinki (Finland). In February 2020, he created *Desaparecer* in Mexico (UNAM, Merxico city).

In February 2020, he created *Desaparecer* in Mexico (UNAM, Merxico city).

He created 3 *annonciations* for Audrey Bonnet (FR), Silvia Costa (IT), Barbara Lennie (ES) alternately with Itsaso Arana (ES), on September 29, 2020 at the TNB Théâtre National de Bretagne and toured in France and in Europe in 2020–21.

In February 2021, he wrote and directed *STARS* at the Comédie de Genève (CH).

Pascal Rambert has adapted the play *Soeurs* in different versions, in Spain (creation in Madrid), Estonia (creation in Tallinn), Italy (creation in Milano and Torino) and Greece (creation in Athens).

He created his play *Deux amis* written for Charles Berling and Stanislas Nordey in july 2021 in Chateaufallon, with Chateaufallon-Liberté Theater.

Kotatsu is created in september 2021 at the Ebarra Riverside Theater in Toyooka (JP).

One month later he directed the play *8 ensemble* that he wrote for 8 young actresses and actors (Yulming Hey, Liora Jaccottet, Jisca Kalvanda, Felipe Fonseca Nobre, Souad Arsane, Mouradi M'Chinda et Marie Rochand) created during the Festival d'Automne à Paris, in the frame of Talents Adami Théâtre.

January 2022, he has adapted with Jim Fletcher and Ismail ibn Conner two monologues *The Art of Theater* and *With my own hands*, premiered on January 14, 2022 at PS21 (Performance Spaces for the 21st Century), Chatham, NY, co-presented by PS21 and The Public Theater/Under the Radar : On the Road initiative.

At the moment he is rehearsing the play that he wrote, *Sowane*, in Cairo (EGY) (creation october 2022), adapting the french version of the play *Perdre son sac* with the actress Lyna Khoudri (creation november 2022 in Rabat (MA)), creating the play *L'interview* that he wrote for Pierrette Monticelli (creation april 2022 in Nest Theater at Thionville, produced by La Joliette Theatre), and writing the play *Je te réponds* made for 8 prisoners people from the Reau prison center (opening january 2023).

Mon absente

Mon absente on tour (to be continued)

Saison 22/23

2023.03.23 > 25 - **OPENING TOULON-OLLIOULES** (FRANCE) - Châteauvallon-Liberté scène nationale

2023.03.28 > 04.06 - **STRASBOURG (FRANCE)** - TNS Théâtre National de Strasbourg

Saison 23/24

2024.01.03 > 05 - **ANNECY** (FRANCE) - Bonlieu scène nationale

2024.01.09 > 19 - **BOBIGNY** (FRANCE) - MC93 scène nationale

2024.01.23 > 25 - **NICE** (FRANCE) - Théâtre de Nice cdn Nice-Côte d'Azur

2024.01.30 > 02.01 - **MARSEILLE** (FRANCE) - La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille

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structure est la maison de production de l'auteur metteur en scène et chorégraphe pascal rambert.
dirigée par pauline roussille, structure produit et diffuse les œuvres de l'artiste en france et à l'international.

structure est subventionnée par le ministère de la culture et de la communication.
structure production - pascal rambert & pauline roussille associés au Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord depuis 2017.

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