

ARTISTIC DOSSIER
THE EMPIRE OF LIGHT
KIM YOUNG-HA
ARTHUR NAUZYZIEL



Théâtre National de Bretagne
Direction Arthur Nauzyciel
1, rue Saint-Hélier
35000 Rennes
T-N-B.fr

Based on the novel by

KIM YOUNG-HA

Direction

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

Adaptation

VALÉRIE MRÉJEN (associate artist at the TNB)

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

Set

RICCARDO HERNANDEZ

Lights and video design

INGI BEKK

Film making, image and video editing

PIERRE-ALAIN GIRAUD

Sound

XAVIER JACQUOT

Costumes

GASPARD YURKIEVICH

Makeup and hairdressing

BAEK JI-YOUNG

Assistant set design

JUNGAH HAN

Head of stage management

SYLVAIN SAYSANA

JEAN-LUC BRIAND

Stage management

YANN KERRIEN

ÉRIC BECDELIÈVRE

Light management

CHRISTOPHE DELARUE

SYLVAIN BROSSARD

Sound management

XAVIER JACQUOT

FLORENT DALMAS

Video management

PIERRE-ALAIN GIRAUD

Surtitles

LEE HYUN-JOO

With

JI HYUN-JUN

MOON SO-RI

JUNG SEUNG-KIL

YANG DONG-TAK

YANG SAVINE YOUNG-MI

KIM HAN

KIM JUNG-HOON

LEE HONG-JAE



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Duration 2h10

Performance in Korean with English surtitles

Show created from the 4th to the 27th of March 2016 at the National Theater Company of Korea (NTCK).

Production: Théâtre National de Bretagne; National Theater Company of Korea (NTCK).
Coproduction: CDN Orléans / Centre-Val de Loire as part of the France-Korea Year / Institut français. With the support of Centre culturel coréen (Paris).



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THE PROJECT

Kim Kiyeong is a foreign film importer, an ordinary man like many others. His wife, Mari, is a salesperson in a car dealership. Nothing in their lives attracts attention. The couple live in dull anonymity in Seoul, a city where they blend in. Then the arrival of an email suffices to throw their ordinary existence into turmoil.

A few cryptic lines – "order number 4" – take Kim back to what he was in the past: a spy, operating now in South Korea for over 20 years. Suddenly, this ordinary man has only 24 hours to return to his native North Korea and abandon the life he carved out for himself without anyone knowing who or what he is in fact.

Kim Kiyeong's final 24 hours in South Korea are the focus of Arthur Nauzyciel's production of *The Empire of Light*.

The playwright, Valérie Mréjen, deconstructs the plot, which unfolds like a crime novel, and offers a personal rewriting of events that oscillate between truth and subterfuge. Arthur Nauzyciel tracks the footsteps of Kim Kiyeong and his wife Mari, a couple which innocently say goodbye to each other in the morning, then meet again radically changed in the evening. Mari has no idea who or what her husband really is. In an unconscious echo of the summons given to her husband, she too goes through her day, experiencing at the close a personal revelation that completely transforms her.

Division lies at the heart of this stage production, combining live performance and film sequences that guide the narrative. A nation, severed in two, suffers from an unhealed wound; as the hours go by a man and a woman grow further and further apart; the end is a collapse of two souls, spelling rupture and estrangement. Like two realities that collide and dislocate, truth is eroded, lies hold sway, and memories haunt the mind. Things move back and forth irreconcilably between what is and what isn't, what was and what will be. Arthur Nauzyciel's quest is personal, a reflection of himself. His zest for touching on the apparent normality of things, with the wave of a theatrical hand, is well-known.



INTERVIEW WITH **ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL**

What was your primary concern when adapting the novel to the stage ?

Simply said, it was to focus on the trajectories of Kiyeong and Mari. The main theme of the novel is love: wasted love. And separation. The same thing separates the couple and the country. I wanted to spotlight how the tragic past of Korea continues to affect the lives of Koreans today, how everyone bears that past in his or her being, often without realizing it. I'm told that the writer invented some of the stories, included real ones he'd either heard or that people told him, then put them all together into the novel.

For the stage performance I took this a step further and asked the actors to share their own memories of the division of the two Koreas. Then, using stories from the novel and stories from the actors, we turned the play into something like a ritual ceremony on stage. Theater is an ambiguous space between truth and lies, reality and illusion, and in this instance between fictional theater and documentary.

As a foreigner, how did you approach this very Korean novel?

I met with Kim Young-ha and we soon realized that we shared quite a few things in common, in particular cultural references, some of which appear in the novel. Our shared commonalities were sufficiently universal that they obviously could interest Korean and European audiences alike. The spy story is a hook that Kim Young-ha uses to touch on other topics as well. The secret separating Mari and Kiyeong has universal resonance. You don't have to be a spy to have secrets; everyone has something to hide, things we want kept hidden or things we're too afraid to share with others.

I'm told that you actually visited the places in the novel with Kim Young-ha?

That's true. I wanted to connect the places with the story. No doubt, Kim Young-ha had his reasons for choosing this or that place. I felt the need to appropriate them for myself. The city itself is a character in the plot. Two people move constantly around the city. Their trajectories are different, but they keep moving. One is running away from something, the other is wandering, almost floating.

Is that why you use film in the production ?

Before I even started working on the adaptation, I knew I would include a film in the show and the filmed image would play a significant role. It's the first time I've used film as much in a theatrical production. It's not just a scenic device; it's not there to explain things either. It adds to the atmosphere, instilling a certain mood. The film sketches a certain possibility and lets me deal with various levels of reality and time. By having close-up shots on faces, making places look ghostly, almost spectral, I'm able to convey a certain melancholy, a certain loneliness.

I'm very much a fan of the cinema and was interested in exploring the possible connections between theater and cinema. In actual fact, my curiosity for Korea comes in part from Korean movies, which have been distributed in France for a good ten years or more. It's also the reason I wanted to work with the actress So-ri Moon I saw in movies by Chang-dong Lee and Sang-soo Hong.

How do you see Seoul as a character in the production ?

The biggest difference between Seoul and its equivalent in France, Paris, is that the past is omnipresent in Paris. Most of the buildings in the city center date from the 17th century. In Seoul it's as if the past has been swept away. You can't know what the city looked like before it was demolished and rebuilt. Often we don't realize we carry the seeds of the past within ourselves, that all these stories are somehow ingrained in us, that we are the product of history. The past can weigh us down, but it's important to connect with it and use it to move forward. This project is about memory.

That would seem to make sense more generally in the context of your work, I mean the idea that theater is a ritual.

That's true, for me theater is more than entertainment. It can help us explore ideas, unravel complex feelings and profound emotions. The two-hour framework provides a genuine human experience. At the theater people come together in the same space; some people create an illusion for others who want to believe in it. It's very special; there's something almost mystical in the exchange.

The show doesn't aim to put characters on stage; what it does is have people speak and bear witness for others. For example, there's no Kiyeong, but the actor Ji Hyun-joon, who speaks for Kiyeong, for all the Kiyeongs. We're not representing *The Empire of Light* in some illustrative mode. By telling fragments of testimony, shards of memory rise to the surface, personal stories become inserted between fiction and History, with a capital H, and theater gives a voice to those who are absent, to those who are invisible. I love it when the theater blurs the boundaries between dream and reality, between the living and the dead. That's when it becomes the netherside of the world. And in that sense, it becomes ritual.

– Interview by Myung-Joo Chung,
February 2016, NTCK



THE ADAPTATION

We began our work on the adaptation by making a survey of the events, settings and characters in each chapter. We quickly found that it was necessary to sort them: there were many characters, some of them secondary or described in the past tense via flashbacks or interior monologues. The same for the settings: we needed to find a principle that could encompass all the different locations, one neutral and open enough that it could adapt to the various scenes – a café, a hotel room, a road, etc. Since we were talking about espionage and the act of listening in, and as many of the scenes in the book evoke recollections that delve into the chaos of characters' memories, we imagined a sort of recording studio with a table and some microphones.

The idea is that at the start or end of a scene with dialogue, one or another of the characters can relate one of their memories in a quite direct way. Kim Young-ha was kind enough to grant us total freedom, and so we didn't hesitate to change the ordering of certain scenes. We also integrated the personal stories and memories of the actors. Starting from the question, 'How or at what moment did you become aware of North Korea?', these short stories punctuate the performance and work to develop, on a level at once intimate and generational, the theme of a divided country.

– Valérie Mréjen et Arthur Nauzyciel

CREATION AT THE NATIONAL THEATER COMPANY OF KOREA (NTCK)

At the invitation of the Seoul-based National Theater Company of Korea (NTCK), Arthur Nauzyciel presented his piece *Splendid's* during the opening of their 2015/2016 season, and then in March 2016 worked at the theatre to create *The Empire of light*.

This project, a major artistic event in NTCK's 2015/2016 season, was undertaken as part of the intergovernmental 'France-Korea Year'. For *The Empire of light*, Arthur Nauzyciel worked with Korean actors from various backgrounds, most notably the actor Moon So-ri, well known for her career in cinema (*Hill of Freedom*, *In Another Country*, *Oasis*), and here making an eagerly anticipated return to theatre. Founded in the 1950s, the National Theater Company of Korea is one of the most important theatre companies in South Korea. Attached to the country's national theatre until 2010, NTCK has since been run as an independent foundation with a workplace and two rehearsal studios in Seoul's Seogyedong quarter. The year 2015 marked a historic moment for NTCK as they returned to their place of origin, the Myeongdong Theatre (558 seats) in the centre of Seoul. Today, NTCK is one of the foremost theatre producers in South Korea. With three venues, it pursues its mission to represent contemporary Korean theatre while presenting international works by prestigious directors from abroad. Under the artistic direction of Kim Yun-Cheol, president of the International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT-IATC), NTCK is engaged in developing links with international artists. With a repertoire that is at once classic and contemporary, NTCK now presents around 20 performances each season.

KIM YOUNG-HA AUTHOR

Born in 1968, Kim Young-Ha began his professional writing career in 1995 with the publication of *A Meditation on Mirror* shortly after his military discharge. At the same time he was the host of a book-themed radio program on the South Korean radio. He published his first novel, *I Have a Right to Destroy Myself*, in 1996, winning the much-coveted 1st New Writer's Award, given by Munhak Dongne. A prolific writer, he has since published six novels and four collections of short stories, including: *The Pager* (1997), *Whatever happened to the Guy Stuck in the Elevator* (1999), *Why, Arang* (2001), *Quiz Show* (2007), *A Murder's Guide to Memorization* (2013) and *I Hear Your Voice* (2015). Kim Young-Ha achieved international acclaim with the translation of his first novel *I Have a Right to Destroy Myself* in French in 1998 and in English in 2007. His historical novel *Black Flower* was awarded the Dong-in Prize. His fourth novel, *Your Republic is Calling You* (2006 in Korean, 2009 in French as *L'Empire des lumières*, 2010 in English), investigates the question of identity in a democratic Korean consumer society. Kim Young-Ha is often held up as an icon of the new generation of writers who grew up in modern Korea, no longer under the sway of dictatorship.

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL DIRECTOR

Arthur Nauzyciel is a director and actor. He directed the National Dramatic Center of Orléans from 2007 to 2016 and has been director of the Théâtre National de Bretagne since 2017. After studying visual arts and cinema, he entered the Théâtre National de Chaillot School directed by Antoine Vitez in 1987. Initially an actor under the direction of Jean-Marie Villégier, Alain Françon, Éric Vigner, or Tsai Ming Liang, he created his first stage productions, *Le Malade imaginaire ou le silence de Molière* after Molière and Giovanni Macchia (1999) and *Oh Les Beaux Jours* by Samuel Beckett (2003). Next, in France: *Place des Héros*, which marks Thomas Bernhard's inclusion in the repertoire at the Comédie-Française (2004); *Ordet (The Word)* by Kaj Munk translated and adapted by Marie Darrieussecq at the Festival d'Avignon (2008); *Jan Karski (My name is a fiction)* based on the novel by Yannick Haenel at the Festival d'Avignon (2011, Georges-Lerminier prize of the Syndicat de la critique); *Faim* by Knut Hamsun (2011); Chekhov's *The Seagull* in the cour d'honneur at the Avignon Festival (2012); *Kaddish* by Allen Ginsberg with the complicity of Étienne Daho (2013). In 2015, he created *Splendid's* by Jean Genet, with American American actors and the voice of Jeanne Moreau, recreated on Zoom, live streamed during the Festival Fantôme 2020, an online edition of the cancelled TNB Festival.

He works regularly in the United States, and creates in Atlanta 2 plays by Bernard-Marie Koltès : *Black Battles with Dogs* (2001) and *Roberto Zucco* (2004), and in Boston, for A.R.T., *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2007) and *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare (2008). Abroad, he creates shows that are then performed in France or in international festivals. In Dublin, *The Image* by Samuel Beckett (2006); at the National Theatre of Iceland, *The Museum of the Sea* by Marie Darrieussecq (2009); at the National Theatre of Norway, *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2012); at the Mini teater in Ljubljana, Slovenia, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (2015) ; at the National Theater Company of Korea (NTCK), *The Empire of Light* by Kim Young-ha (2016), presented at the TNB in 2017 and revived in spring 2022; and *Love's End*, a Korean version of Pascal Rambert's *Clôture de l'amour*, which Arthur Nauzyciel will create in Seoul in 2019 with the main actors of *The Empire of Light*.

He also works for dance and opera: he directed *Red Waters* (2011), opera by Lady & Bird (Keren Ann Zeidel and Barði Jóhannsson) which he recreates this season at the Rennes Opera House, he directed *A Florentine Tragedy* (2018) by Alexander Zemlinsky at the Abbaye de Royaumont and *Le Papillon Noir* (2018), an opera composed by Yann Robin and Yannick Haenel and also presented this season at the TNB. Alongside Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, he participated in the creation of *Play* (2010) with the dancer Shantala Shivalingappa and *Session* with the choreographer Colin Dunne (in residence at the TNB in 2019). For the cinema, he turns in *Rodin* by Jacques Doillon (2017). He is in the series *Irma Vep* by Olivier Assayas.

He regularly collaborates with other artists: Miroslaw Balka, Colin Dunne, Matt Elliott, Christian Fennesz, Damien Jalet, Valérie Mréjen, Pierre-Alain Giraud, José Lévy, Gaspard Yurkievich, Erna Ómarsdóttir, the Organum Ensemble, Sjón, Albin de la Simone. In 2018, he performed for Boris Charmatz in *La Ruée*, created at the 2018 TNB Festival.

He is directed by Pascal Rambert in *De mes propres mains* (2015), *L'Art du théâtre* (2017), and *Architecture* (2019).

At the TNB, he created *La Dame aux camélias* (2018) after Alexandre Dumas fils and *Mes frères* by Pascal Rambert (2021). He directed Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde* with the National Theatre of Prague during the TNB Festival 2022, and recreated his first show *Le Malade imaginaire ou le silence de Molière* (1999) in May 2023. In 2023-2024, he will stage *Les Paravents* by Jean Genet, created at the TNB and toured at the Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe à Paris. Arthur Nauzyciel is also director of the TNB Drama School.

VALÉRIE MRÉJEN ADAPTATION

Valérie Mréjen is a visual artist, writer, director, video artist and associate artist at the TNB. For the past twenty years, she has participated in numerous festivals and exhibitions in France and abroad (Palais de Tokyo, Centre Georges Pompidou, Tate Modern, Brooklyn Museum...). In 2008, the Jeu de Paume (Paris) devoted a retrospective exhibition to her entitled *La Place de la Concorde*. She has published several stories (*Mon grand-père*, *L'Agrume*, *Eau sauvage* published by Allia; *Forêt noire*, *Troisième personne* published by P.O.L.). She has directed numerous short films, documentaries, including *Pork and Milk* (2006), and a feature film, *En ville* (2011). In 2018, she co-directed the young audience show *Le Carnaval des animaux* by Camille Saint-Saëns with Albin de la Simone. In 2021, she creates *Gardien Party* with Mohamed El Khatib and presents her show, *Trois hommes vertes*, created in residence during the Festival TNB 2020. She has just published a monograph, *Palais des Glaces*, with Manuella Editions. In December, she presents her latest creation *Le Cinéma est né dans un chou* at the Musée d'Orsay auditorium.

For Arthur Nauzyciel, she directed a short film for the show *Kaddish* by Allen Ginsberg. She co-adapted the novel *The Empire of Light* by Kim Young-ha as well as the novel and the play *La Dame aux camélias*.

RICCARDO HERNÁNDEZ SET DESIGN

Riccardo Hernandez is a set designer. Born in Cuba and raised in Buenos Aires, he studied in United States, at the Yale School of Drama, where he is now the head of the department. He works regularly on Broadway, where he won many awards for productions such as: *The People in the picture* (at legendary Studio 54), *Caroline or change*, *Parade* (Tony Awards nominee and Drama Desk), *Topdog/Underdog*, et lately *Porgy and Bess* (Tony Awards 2012).

For the opera, he created amongst others the sets of *Appomattox* by Philip Glass in 2007, *Lost Highway* direction Diane Paulus, based on David Lynch's film, presented at the YoungVic, London (2008), and those of *Il Postino*, composed by Daniel Catàn and directed by Ron Daniels, created at Los Angeles Opera and presented at Châtelet-Théâtre musical of Paris in 2011. Productions in which he participated were played in major theaters in New York and the United States: New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater, Lincoln Center, BAM, Goodman Theater, Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum... For the theater, he has worked with directors George C. Wolfe, Brian Kulik, Mary Zimmerman, Ron Daniels, Liz Diamond, Peter Wood and especially Robert Woodruff, Ethan Coen, John Turturro. More recently, he designed the set of *Marie Antoinette* by David Adjmi, directed by Rebecca Taichman in Autumn 2012 at the A.R.T. (American Repertory Theater).

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the sets *Julius Caesar*, *Jan Karski* (*My name is a fiction*), *Red Waters*, *Abigail's Party*, *The Seagull*, *Splendid's*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *The Empire of Light*, *La Dame aux camélias*, *Mes frères*, *The Round* and *Les Paravents*.

INGI BEKK LIGHTS AND VIDEO DESIGN

From Iceland, Ingi Bekk works internationally as a video and lighting designer. He has worked both in theater and opera. His recent work includes *The Tempest* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *1984* (The Reykjavik City Theater) and *The Pearl Fishers* (Tel Aviv Opera). He regularly works with the director Katie Mitchell, most recently on *Schatten (Eurydik sagt) (Shadow Eurydice Speaks)* for the Schaubühne Berlin, and *Travelling on One Leg* for the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg. One of his video creations is currently touring with the Irish indie rock band Two Door Cinema Club; he has worked for other rock bands as well, such as Blur and Backstreet Boys.

The Empire of Light is his first collaboration with Arthur Nauzyciel.

XAVIER JACQUOT SOUND DESIGN

Xavier Jacquot is a sound designer. He studied at the School of Drama of the National Theater in Strasbourg. He regularly collaborates with directors Stéphane Braunschweig, Christophe Rauck, Marc Paquien, Éric Vigner, Balázs Gera, Jean-Damien Barbin, Macha Makeïeff, Agnès Jaoui. He has also worked on short and feature films for the cinema, as well as fiction and documentaries for television. After joining the teaching staff of the TNS school, he regularly takes part in the sound training course of the Creative Direction section.

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he produced the sound for *Le Malade imaginaire* or *Le Silence de Molière*, *Black Battles With Dogs*, *Oh les beaux jours*, *Ordet (La Parole)*, *Jan Karski (My name is a fiction)*, *Faim*, *The Seagull*, *Splendid's*, *The Empire of Light*, *La Dame aux camélias*, *Mes frères* and *The Round*.

PIERRE-ALAIN GIRAUD FILM MAKING

Pierre-Alain Giraud is a video director and editor. He produced documentaries, short films and animated films. In 2011 he directed a feature-length documentary, titled *Everything Everywhere all the time*, which was selected for several film festivals. He collaborated on a trilogy with Erna Ómarsdóttir and Matthew Barney. He is currently preparing a feature-length action movie, *Aimé*, and a feature-length documentary, *Le Dernier Voyage de Gerhard (Gerhard's Last Journey)*. He is also the co-author of a series of animated films, titled *À Boire et à manger (Food and Drink)*. He is also a musician with Michael Wookey.

The Empire of Light is his first collaboration with Arthur Nauzyciel.

GASPARD YURKIEVICH COSTUMES

He studied fashion design at the Studio Berçot in Paris. He was awarded First Prize at the Hyères International Fashion festival in 1997. He presented his first collection in 1998. His style is personal and recognizable: a subtle mix of traditional fashion and contemporary design. He subtly adapts his costumes to the associated setting. His fashion shows are opportunities for artistic experimentation and include live performances, live music and design. He has collaborated with the Crazy Horse, Didier Faustino, Cocorosie, Edouard Levé, the Cartier Foundation, and The Pompidou Center. His most recent creation is *Onepiece*, a new collection concept composed entirely of women's dresses in the studio style: creative, contemporary.

He worked with Arthur Nauzyciel on *Red Water, Faim (Hunger)*, *Les Larmes Amères de Petra von Kant (The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant)* and *The Empire of Light*.



"Arthur Nauzyciel moves his actors to share their memories of stories from the South and the North, then inserts them as leitmotifs in the narrative plot. The result is a tender inquiry into the human soul in a fusion of dialogues and confessions, spoken at a table equipped with microphones, and accompanied by filmed sequences that take the spectator outside the theater. Performed by two extraordinary actors, So-ri Moon and Ji Hyun-joon, the thwarted romance between Mari and Kim proves to be authentic, just beyond compare. *The Empire of Light* offers a deeply-moving vision of the capacity of resilience of two people in love. With its claim to contemporary drama, the play has all the hallmarks of classical tragedy as well."

"Adapted from the novel by Kim Young-ha, Arthur Nauzyciel's stage version, titled *The Empire of Light*, underscores all the complexity of Korean society. Subtle and profound. [...] Eight actors are seated at a long table laden with microphones, as if for a dubbing session. Video images of these characters moving around Seoul scroll across the screen behind. Little by little the actors rise from their chairs and assume their places on stage as actors. But when the silent images, realized with a touching sense of intimacy, materialize beyond their backs, the atmosphere is suddenly strange: thus split in two, they take the shape of apparitions. Personal stories and History with a capital H are subtly combined in a stage performance that should enable the audience to grasp contemporary Korean society in all its complexity. With fine stage presence, the actors achieve a genuine burst of empathy. The most experienced ones (Ji Hyun-Joon as Kiyong, and the sensitive So-Ri Moon, the famed Korean film actress, in the role of Mari) are calm giants of the stage: discreet, patient, intense."

THE TNB NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DRAMATIC ARTS (CDN)

The Théâtre National de Bretagne (TNB) traces its roots back to the very creation of the Centre Dramatique de l'Ouest (the West Center for the Dramatic Arts) in 1949. With the creation of the Maison de la Culture (House of Culture) in 1968, the 2 entities began working closely together. The merger of the two organizations in 1990 led to the creation of the TNB. In many respects the TNB is a standout CDN. As a European center for theatrical and choreographic production, its mission embraces not only theater, but dance, music, cinema and education. Included in its mission is the organization of an annual Festival. The TNB welcomes some 200,000 spectators every season. Since its founding, a number of directors have stood at its helm: Hubert Gignoux, Georges Goubert, Guy Parigot, Chérif Khaznadar, Dominique Quéhec, Pierre-Jean Valentin, Pierre Debauche, Emmanuel de Véricourt, François Le Pillouër. Since 2017 the actor and stage director Arthur Nauzyciel has led the TNB. On taking charge, Arthur Nauzyciel introduced an artistic project grounded in 3 fundamental values : Share, Transmit, Connect. In addition, he appointed 16 associate artists and a research fellow. Nauzyciel's project for the TNB aims to collapse many of the traditional barriers between artistic disciplines, while inviting the public to explore different artistic offerings. At the same time an extraordinary plasticity of artistic expression is on display. Cinema also assumes its rightful place in the programming and forms an integral part of the TNB's offer.

With the start of the academic year 2018, Arthur Nauzyciel and his associate director for academic affairs, Laurent Poitreux, introduced a reform of the academic program at the TNB School of the Dramatic Arts. The dual aim of the reform is to train multidisciplinary performers and open the school to international influences.

MISSIONS OF CDN

The primary mission of the National Centers for Dramatic Arts (CDN) is artistic creation for the theatrical stage. Created in the aftermath of World War II, France now boasts 38 CDN around the country. Envisioned by Jean Zay, and fostered by both Jeanne Laurent and André Malraux, the CDN are intended to decentralize dramatic production and deliver cultural democratization throughout France. To this day they remain the mainstay of the country's cultural policy: an endorsement of the ideas that art, culture, and theater are a public service, and that the state has a responsibility to make high-quality, artistic offerings available throughout the land. It is common practice to entrust the management of the CDN to renowned stage directors, so as to ensure the long-term viability of the artistic project and anchor it in a particular region for the local public. With a focus on theatrical creation, contemporary writing, innovative staging, and the hosting of major shows of French and international origin, the CDN remain to this day unique in the world and welcome over a combined one million spectators annually.

WATCH THE TEASER
L'EMPIRE DES LUMIÈRES



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