

PRESS KIT
JULIUS CAESAR
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL



Théâtre National de Bretagne
Direction Arthur Nauzyciel
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35040 Rennes Cedex
T-N-B.fr



JULIUS CAESAR **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** **ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL**



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TOUR

2018 – 2019

Ann Arbor, University Musical Society (US)

05 04 – 06 04 2019

Berkeley, Cal Performances (US)

26 04 – 28 04 2019

2017 – 2018

Rennes, Théâtre National de Bretagne

05 10 – 14 10 2017

Brest, Le Quartz – Scène nationale de Brest

19 10 – 20 10 2017

2011 – 2012

Festival ibéro-américain, Théâtre de Bogotá

02 04 – 08 04 2012

2010 – 2011

TGP – CDN de Saint-Denis

15 11 – 28 11 2010

Théâtre Dijon-Bourgogne

22 03 – 26 03 2011

Théâtre National de Bordeaux en Aquitaine

30 03 – 01 04 2011

Théâtre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

06 04 – 08 04 2011

2009 – 2010

CDN Orléans/Loiret/Centre

14 10 – 17 10 2009

Festival d'Automne à Paris (MAC Créteil)

21 10 – 24 10 2009

Festival Automne en Normandie (Évreux)

28 10 2009

Comédie de Clermont-Ferrand

05 10 – 06 10 2009

Comédie de Reims

11 11 – 14 11 2009

CDDB-Théâtre de Lorient

18 11 – 19 11 2009

With **SARA KATHRYN BAKKER**
DAVID BARLOW
LUCA CARBONI
JARED CRAIG
ROY FAUDREE
ISMA'IL IBN CONNER
ISAAC JOSEPH TAL
DYLAN KUSSMAN
DANIEL LE
MARC MONTGOMERY
RUDY MUNGARAY
DANIEL PETTROW
NEIL PATRICK STEWART
JAMES WATERSTON
and the jazz trio
MARIANNE SOLIVAN (vocals)
ERIC HOFBAUER (guitar)
DMITRY ISHENKO (double bass)

Duration 3h20
with intermission

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By
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Direction
ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL
Set design
RICCARDO HERNANDEZ
Lighting design
SCOTT ZIELINSKI
Costumes design
JAMES SCHUETTE
Sound design
DAVID REMEDIOS
Choreographer
DAMIEN JALET
Assistant
RENAUD DURVILLE
Stage manager
MATHIEU MOREL
Light technician
CHRISTOPHE DELARUE
Sound technician
FLORENT DALMAS
Surtitles technician
BERTILLE KAPELA
Props / Wardrobe
MYRIAM RAULT
Stage technician
ANTOINE GIRAUD-ROGER



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Premiere : American Repertory Theatre, Loeb Drama Center
(Cambridge, Boston USA) 13 february – 16 march 2008

Executive production : Théâtre National de Bretagne.
Coproduction Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre
in partnership with the American Repertory Theatre (major
production sponsor: Philip and Hilary Burling), Festival d'Automne
à Paris, Maison des Arts de Créteil, TGP-CDN de Saint-Denis.
With the support of Etant Donnés/The French- American Fund for
the Performing Arts, a Program of FACE.

Performed in English

JULIUS CAESAR

THE PROJECT

Artistic director of the Théâtre National de Bretagne since the 1st of January 2017, Arthur Nauzyciel wishes to present his work to the audience and to transmit this art theatre open on the world and questioning of the stakes of today's society in all its diversity.

So for his first season, he will revive several major creations from his body of work.

Amongst those is *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare, created in 2008 in Boston with American actors and which already toured a lot in France and abroad. Arthur Nauzyciel has created then artistic companionships with actors and collaborators that he has regularly worked with since. It consecrated an American experience, a rare thing for a French director, with two plays by B-M Koltès, *Black Battles with Dog* (2001) and *Roberto Zucco* (2004), and in Boston for the A.R.T. *Abigail's Party* by Mike Leigh (2007). A play giving a central role to politics, seldom performed in France, *Julius Caesar* opens up the reelection on what is the common good, and it still finds today strong, vivid, contemporary resonances.

After two plays by Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Black Battles With Dogs* at the 7 Stages Theater in Atlanta (2001), reprised in Chicago (2004), and *Roberto Zucco* at the Emory Theater in Atlanta (2004), Arthur Nauzyciel staged Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* at the American Repertory Theatre in Boston (2007). Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, his fourth show in the United States, was created at the A.R.T. in February 2008.

This Franco-American production was premiered in France for the opening of the CDN Orléans/Loiret/Centre season 2009-2010 (Oct 14 – Oct 17). It was then presented within the Festival d'Automne à Paris (MAC de Créteil, Oct 21 – Oct 24) followed by a French tour (Festival Automne en Normandie, Comédie de Clermont-Ferrand, Comédie de Reims and CDDB-Théâtre de Lorient).

For its second season, the performance toured at the TGP de Saint-Denis, at the Théâtre Dijon-Bourgogne, at the Théâtre National de Bordeaux en Aquitaine and the Théâtre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. In April 2012, it was presented in Colombia at the Ibero-american Festival of Bogota, one of the most important festivals in Latin America.



ORIGINS

JULIUS CAESAR

Written in 1599 for the opening of The Globe Theatre and right before Hamlet, Julius Caesar is the first in a series of great tragedies. Inspired by Plutarch, he wrote it at a critical moment of the history of England: the rebellion of Essex against Elizabeth I. As in *Richard II* (1595), the theme is the deposition of a sovereign: Julius Caesar has become a threat to the republic. Is it fair then to murder him before Rome is held totally under his absolute power that has no limits?

Though rarely seen in France, *Julius Caesar* is in the United States one of the best-known plays by Shakespeare. Its premiere at A.R.T. in 2008 (a presidential election year, whereas the play depicts a moment when democracy would teeter if the republic was to give away to an empire), was thus eventful.

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THE A.R.T.

Linked to the prestigious Harvard University, The American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) is considered since its creation in 1979 as one of the most important and innovative theatres in the country. The A.R.T. was founded by Robert Brustein and has been resident for twentyseven years at Harvard University's Loeb Drama Center. In December 2002, the A.R.T. was the recipient of the National Theatre Conference's Outstanding Achievement Award, and in May 2003 it was named one of the top three theatres in the country by TIME magazine. Here are a few names among those who worked and took part in the life of the A.R.T. : Peter Sellars, Lee Breuer, Martha Clarke, Bob Wilson, Anne Bogart, Dario Fo, Andrei Serban, David Mamet, Krystian Lupa, Joseph Chaikin, Susan Sontag, Milan Kundera, Jan Kott, Philip Glass, Don DeLillo, Robert Woodruff, Naomi Wallace, Frederick Wiseman. The A.R.T. is known for its commitment to the contemporary American theatre as well as repertory. It is also a residence for authors, directors and actors. A.R.T. productions tour all over the world.

Its current director is Diane Paulus. She has succeeded to Robert Woodruff in 2008.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Written in 1599 for the opening of The Globe Theatre and right before *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* is the first in a series of great tragedies. It contains in itself all the subsequent plays of Shakespeare. It is a political play, in which language and rhetoric play a prominent part; the power of discourse can change the course of History; the flow of words both reveals and hides their extraordinary presence.

And if the world pictured in the play still resembles ours (what has changed in politics?), one nonetheless feels throughout the text a will to encompass both the visible and the invisible, the real and dream life, the living and the dead in a one-and-only unit, a singular cosmography.

We are connected to the Greeks, the Romans, to Shakespeare, by a long chain which, from the beginning of time and for many centuries to come, contains, like a DNA loop, the collective memory of human fears and illusions. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote in *The Age of Extremes*: "The short twentieth century ended in problems, for which nobody had, or even claimed to have, solutions. As the citizens of the fin de siècle tapped their way through the global fog that surrounded them, into the third millennium, all they knew for certain was that an era of history had ended. They knew very little else."

We have yet to come to terms with the dark side of this century. Whenever I confront myself with a classical text, I have the feeling I ought to direct a "memory for the future". The classics are like the Statue of Liberty at the end of *Planet of the Apes*. The characters project themselves into the future, in which they will be the spectators of their own past, in which their acts will be a spectacle for others to see.

Like a testimony for the future of what we are and were.

We are in Boston. The theatre was built in 1964. Pop culture in the United States then had never been so dominant, the world so loud, there were images everywhere and all was appearance: that is why I want to place the play in the sixties, during the years when one wanted to believe that Kennedy would open onto a new era, when a crowd became a mass, when the image won over the word, when the most innovative and significant artistic trends were born in this country (architects, performers, performance art, photography, collage, reproduction).

– Arthur Nauzyciel, October 2007

RESONANCES

Like *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* is a puzzle. It doesn't conform to the idea of Aristotelian tragedy in presenting a noble man with a conspicuous flaw, nor to Elizabethan melodrama in presenting a conspicuous villain. *Julius Caesar* has great relevance to our time, though it is gloomier, because it is about a society that is doomed. Our society is not doomed, but in such immense danger that the relevance is great. It was a society doomed not by the evil passions of selfish individuals, because such passions always exist, but by an intellectual and spiritual failure of nerve that made the society incapable of coping with its situation.

– W. H. Auden,
Lectures on Shakespeare

It is no coincidence that the world of *Julius Caesar* is constructed almost entirely from language. The play contains little physical action: there are few shifts in location, in contrast to *As You Like It*, the play that preceded it, nor are there any special stage effects, apart from the appearance of Caesar's ghost to Brutus. Except for Caesar's assassination at the Capitol and the suicides in the final act, the play shows us very few events; almost everything that happens takes place off-stage and is then retold through rumour or report. This gives *Julius Caesar* an oddly subjective quality; so little is enacted directly in front of us that we must rely on other people's characterization of events, and we are never quite sure whom or what to believe. Words, not deeds, are the primary agents in the play, and they are endowed with extraordinary powers of creation, transformation, and destruction. Words can create a reality, or destroy a life.

Gideon Lester,
– *The Power of Speech*



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Gideon Lester* talks to Arthur Nauzyciel, director of *Julius Caesar*. (Boston, January 2008)

How are you approaching Julius Caesar ?

Whenever I direct a play, the context in which it's produced is very important. Why are we doing the play here, now, for this audience? *Julius Caesar* is almost never produced in my own country, France, so when you asked me to read it I was coming to it for the first time. Of course I immediately saw connections between the play and the fact that this is an election year in the United States. I don't want that to be obvious in the production, but it provides a strong context. For me, classical plays are a memory of the future. They're time capsules, they come from long ago, but they're with us now and they'll be here for centuries. They contain a collective memory of human behavior, aspirations, expectations, illusions. As time capsules, it's interesting to catch them and open them. They are like holograms or like stars, whose light arrives far after their death. In a sense the play is a user's manual for the next generation, written by Shakespeare for the future, a guide to politics and humanity.

What about the play resonates in the twenty-first century?

There's something "contemporary" about *Julius Caesar*, which sounds ridiculous, because it was written in the sixteenth century; it cannot literally be speaking about our own age. It's not that Shakespeare's observations are still accurate, it's more than that. It's as if nothing has happened in politics since the story that he writes about took place. It's as if we're stuck, like a scratched record; we're still in the final scenes when Octavius arrives. Nothing has evolved in terms of democracy or politics. Like Cassius and Brutus we believe that democracy is the best system, but it's still a compromise. So many so-called democracies are still really empires, like Rome in the play. What has changed is our experience of tragedy. We come from a century that invented Auschwitz and Hiroshima, after which we can never stage tragedy the same way again.

Your production will include many quotations from the 1960s. Can you explain why?

The production isn't set in the Sixties. I believe that all theatre takes place here and now, so it's not really a question of being in the past, whether that's Caesar's Rome or Shakespeare's London or 1960s America. But we will be quoting from the Sixties, for many reasons. There's the obvious link between Kennedy's and Caesar's, assassinations and political contexts, but more than that, I'm intrigued by the way the Sixties represent both past and future for us. It was a decade of great invention and innovation, obsessed with the future. The best Sci-Fi movies were made in the Sixties. And the aesthetic is still inspiring; if you look at furniture or clothes from the Sixties, they could belong in today's design magazines. *Julius Caesar* is a play about the invention of the future, a dream of a new world, so the resonances are strong.

What else interests you about the Sixties?

It was a period in which the image triumphed over the word. There's a wonderful story about the debate between Nixon and Kennedy: I don't know if it's true, but apparently people who listened to it on the radio voted for Nixon, and people who watched it on television voted for Kennedy. JFK was the first president whose image was more important than the content of his words. Suddenly visual icons and illusions were more powerful than speech. *Julius Caesar* is so much a play about language and rhetoric, and I think it'll be interesting to create this double layer by using elements from a time in which language and rhetoric failed. And at the same time there was a revolution in American art history, with the advent of Pop Art, installations, and performance art. The art and photography of that period was a strong influence in the design for our *Julius Caesar*, particularly Andy Warhol's repeated images and the installations of the Ant Farm. All this seemed appropriate for a production at the Loeb Drama Center, with its 1960s architecture. I like it when the theatrical design and the architecture of the building come together and the distinctions between the two spaces are blurred.

The set design incorporates huge repeated photographs of the auditorium. Can you explain why?

In part we wanted to remind the audience that the theatre in which they're sitting is essentially the same shape as the theatres of ancient Greece and Rome. If you stand on stage and look out at the seats, you see that the configuration is exactly the same, two thousand years later. It's also good to remember with this play that theatre and democracy were invented at the same time, and that the theatre was, in its origins, a political space as much as a place of entertainment. In this election year, the images of those theatre seats may remind us of public assemblies, or the Senate. And I also want to create an uncertainty for the audience: Are we onstage or offstage? Who are the watchers and who the actors? Are we part of the performance? What is illusion and what is reality? On which sides are the dead and the living? How do those questions of illusion and reality relate to *Julius Caesar*? The play is full of dreams and supernatural events, of ghosts and burning men and lions roaming the streets of Rome. The world that it describes doesn't literally exist. It's an imaginary dreamscape, a distortion of reality, and we can't stage it realistically. The production has to feel truthful, but not realistic. I hope that the audience will feel connected to an invisible world, seeing things they can't usually see, listening to things they can't hear.

* Gideon Lester was the A.R.T.'s Acting Artistic Director from 2007 to 2009.

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL DIRECTOR

After studying visual arts and cinema, Arthur Nauzyciel trained as an actor in the school of the Théâtre National de Chaillot (Paris) run by Antoine Vitez (1978). He began his career as an actor then turned to stage directing. His first production as a director was *Le Malade imaginaire ou le Silence de Molière*, after Molière and Giovanni Macchia for the théâtre de Lorient, CDN (1999), followed by Samuel Beckett's *Oh les beaux jours* (*Happy days*) for the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe (2003) and the Teatro San Martin in Buenos Aires (2004).

Since then there have been numerous productions in France and abroad: Thomas Bernhard's *Place des héros* (*Heldenplatz*) at the Comédie-Française (2004), the entry of the Austrian author into the repertoire of France's national theater; Kaj Munk's *Ordet* (*The Word*) staged at the Avignon Festival (2008) and at the Théâtre du Rond-Point during the Paris Autumn Festival (2009); *Jan Karski (mon nom est une fiction)/Jan Karski (my name is a fiction)*, adapted from the novel by Yannick Haenel, staged at the Avignon Festival (2011). *Faim* (*Hunger*), based on Knut Hamsun's novel, with Xavier Gallais at the Théâtre de la Madeleine in Paris (2011); Anton Chekov's *La Mouette* (*The Seagull*) staged in the Cour d'honneur of the Papal Palace at the Avignon Festival (2012); *Kaddish* by Allen Ginsberg (2013), reading created at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme then at the Avignon Festival (2013).

Arthur Nauzyciel works regularly in the United States: in Atlanta he staged two plays by the French playwright, Bernard-Marie Koltès: *Black Battles with dogs* (2001), also presented in Chicago, Athens (at the International Festival), and in France at the Avignon Festival (2006); and also in Atlanta, B-M Koltès's *Roberto Zucco* (2004); in Boston, for the American Repertory Theater, Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* (2007) and William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (2008), which went on tour to the Paris Autumn Festival and the Ibero-American Theater Festival in Bogota, Colombia.

Arthur Nauzyciel has created a number of shows abroad that were then revived in France or at international theater festivals: Samuel Beckett's *L'Image* (*The Image*) in Dublin (2006) with Damien Jalet and Anne Brochet, Lou Doillon later Julie Moulier, the production was also staged in Reykjavik, New York, Paris, China, Japan; Marie Darrieussecq's *Le Musée de la mer* (*The Sea Museum*), performed at the National Theater of Iceland (2009); Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*, revived for the National Theater of Norway (2012). He has also worked for dance and opera. In 2011 he staged the opera *Red Waters* by Keren Ann Zeidel and Bardi Johannsson (*Lady and Bird*) and contributed to the creation of *Play* by the choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and the dancer Shantala Shivalingappa. He regularly works with other artists on his projects: Christian Fennesz, Mirosław Balka, Damien Jalet, Sjon, Erna Omarsdóttir, Winter Family, Valérie Mréjen, Étienne Daho.

Arthur Nauzyciel is a recipient of the Villa Médicis Hors les Murs Prize. His production *Jan Karski (mon nom est une fiction)* was awarded the Georges-Lerminier Prize.

From 2007 to 2016, Arthur Nauzyciel has been the director of the Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre. Since January 1st 2017, he is the director of the Théâtre National de Bretagne/Rennes.



RICCARDO HERNANDEZ SET DESIGNER

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the sets of: *Julius Caesar*, *Jan Karski (my name is a fiction)*, *Red Waters*, *Abigail's Party*, *The Seagull*. Born in Cuba and raised in Buenos Aires, he studied in the United States, at the Yale School of Drama. 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 Young Vic, 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).

SCOTT ZIELINSKI LIGHTING DESIGNER

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the lighting design of: *Julius Caesar*, *The Sea Museum*, *Jan Karski (My name is a fiction)*, *Red Waters*, *Abigail's Party*, *The Seagull*.

Scott Zielinski lives in New York. For theater, dance and opera, he has worked on projects created throughout the world, with American or foreign directors, including Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Tony Kushner, Hal Hartley, Krystian Lupa.

In New York, he works regularly on Broadway, for the production of *Topdog / Underdog* by Suzan-Lori Parks, and for Lincoln Center and The Public Theatre.

He also creates the lights for productions in many other North American cities, with directors and choreographers such as Neil Bartlett, Chase Brock, Chen Shi-Zheng, Karin Coonrod, Ron Daniels, David Esbjornson, Daniel Fish, Sir Peter Hall, Tina Landau, Jonathan Moscone, Diane Paulus, Lisa Peterson, James Robinson, Anna Deavere Smith, Twyla Tharp, George C. Wolfe, Mary Zimmerman and recently, for *Miss Fortune* by Judith Weir at the Royal Opera in London.

Scott Zielinski holds a Master in "Theatre Design" at the Yale University School of Drama.



DAMIEN JALET

CHOREOGRAPHER

Damien Jalet is an independent Belgian and French choreographer and dancer working internationally. Interested in the capacity of dance constantly reinventing itself by conversing with other media such as visual art, music, cinema, theatre and fashion; his works are often collaborative.

He worked as a choreographer and dancer for companies such as Ballet C. de la B., Sasha Waltz and Guests, Chunky Move, Eastman, NYDC, Hessisches Staatballet, Paris Opera Ballet, Scottish Dance Theatre, Iceland Dance Company and many more.

His latest works as choreographer include: *Babel(words)* with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui with a set by Antony Gormley (two Olivier Awards), presented in 2016 at the Cour d'Honneur du Palais des Papes in Avignon; *Les médusés*, a choreographic installation for 30 performers in some of the main rooms of the Louvre in Paris; *YAMA* for the Scottish Dance Theatre with a set design by American artist Jim Hodges; *Bolero* which he directed together with Cherkaoui and the performance artist Marina Abramovic for the Paris Opera Ballet with costumes by Riccardo Tisci; *Inked* for the British Kathak dancer Aakash Odedra; *Obsidian Pieces* for the Iceland Dance Company in collaboration with Erna Omarsdottir (Icelandic national Performing Art Award Grimman 2015 for the best choreographer).

In October 2015 he choreographed *Gravity Fatigue*, devised by fashion designer Hussein Chalayan at Sadler's Wells in London. *THR/OJUGH*, a choreography for Hessisches Ballett, collaborating again with Jim Hodges, Austrian composer Christian Fennesz and designer Jean Paul Lespagnard, nominated for best choreographer at German theater awards "der Faust".

He created *The Ferryman* with the director Gilles Delmas, highlighting the relation between his works and existing rituals practiced in Bali and Japan, this film gets the exclusive participation of Marina Abramovic and composer Ryuichi Sakamoto. It is presented during the whole Venice Biennale at Palazzo Fortuny starting May 2017.

He directed *Vessel* together with Japanese visual artist Nawa Kohei, a collaboration initiated during a four-month-long residency at Villa Kujoyama (Japanese Medicis villa in Kyoto). The performance for seven dancers has been presented in many important venues in Japan such as Rhom Theater Kyoto and Naoshima's Art Site and will be played next March at the Perth international festival in Australia.

He is the 2017 artistic director of the UK National Youth Dance Company, for which he created *Tarantiseismic* premiered at Sadler's Wells.

Damien Jalet and Arthur Nauzyciel work together since 2006. They created together *The Image* in 2006, he choreographed *Julius Caesar* (2008), *Ordet (La Parole)* (2008), *The Sea Museum (Le Musée de la mer)* created in 2009, in which he also played the part of Bella, in 2011: *Jan Karski (my name is a fiction)* and *Red Waters*. Their latest cooperation was *The Seagull*, created in July 2012 at the Cour d'honneur of the Popes palace, and *Splendid's*, created in 2016. He is as well since 2017 associated artist at the Théâtre national de Bretagne (TNB) directed by Arthur Nauzyciel.

Damien Jalet choreographed consequent sections of the upcoming film *Suspiria* directed by Luca Guadagnino, starring Tilda Swinton, Dakota Johnson, Ingrid Caven with an original score by Thom Yorke.

In February 2018, he will direct his first opera *Pelleas and Melisande* together with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Marina Abramovic, with costumes by Iris Van Herpen at the Antwerp Opera.

As a teacher Jalet has also taught his specific technique using centrifugal force in many companies and institutions including Pina Bausch Company, ImPulsTanz Vienna, Atelier de Paris, Architanz Tokyo...

Damien Jalet has been named Knight of the arts and letters by the French government in 2013.

THE TNB NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE DRAMATIC ARTS (CDN)

The « Théâtre National de Bretagne » (National Theater of Brittany), called the TNB, traces its history back to the very creation of the « Centre Dramatique de l'Ouest » (Centre for the Dramatic Arts in the West) in 1949, which then worked in association with the « Maison de la Culture » (House of Culture) after it was founded in 1968. The TNB proper was created in 1990 with the merger of the CDN and the House of Culture. Today the TNB is an eminent CDN in the French cultural landscape: it is also a European Centre for the Theatrical and Choreographic Arts; it organizes an annual festival, has a cinema and runs an important drama school: « l'École Supérieure d'Art Dramatique » (the TNB School of Dramatic Art). The TNB welcomes some 200,000 spectators each season across its many programmes: live performances, cinema, special events and workshops. As of January 1, 2017, the actor and stage director Arthur Nauzyciel has been at the helm of the TNB, the first time in 26 years that an artist spearheads the TNB.

The primary mission of the French National Centres for the Dramatic Arts (Centres Dramatiques Nationaux – CDNs) is artistic creation for the theatrical stage. Established in the aftermath of World War II, there are now 38 CDNs in France. Envisioned by Jean Zay as contributing to the decentralisation of theatrical production and to the democratisation of culture in France, promoted by Jeanne Laurent, then by André Malraux, the CDNs remain to this day the mainstay of France's cultural policy, which continues to endorse the idea that art, culture and theater are a public service, which aims to make available high-quality artistic offerings throughout the land. It is common practice to entrust the management of the CDNs to stage directors, so as to ensure the long-term viability of the artistic project by cementing it in a particular region and sharing it with the local public. With a focus on theatrical creation, contemporary writing, innovative staging, and the hosting of major shows of French and foreign origin, as well as providing promising creative talents, troupes and the audience with valuable support, the CDNs remain to this day unique in the world and welcome over one million spectators annually.



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