

A man in a dark suit is blowing a large, billowing cloud of white foam. He is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a deep blue with some lighter blue, misty or smoky textures. The overall mood is surreal and artistic.

Le Petit Bain

(The Little Bath)

Conception and direction
Johanny Bert

World premiere February 2017
Théâtre de Romette

LE PETIT BAIN (The Little Bath)

Young audience work for audiences 2 years and older (and the adults accompanying them)
World premiere February 2017

Conception and direction **Johanny Bert**

Artistic collaboration **Yan Raballand**

Performer **Rémy Bénard, Samuel Watts, Manuel Gouffran** (alternately)

Artistic assistant **Christine Caradec**

Lighting design and technical director **Gilles Richard**

Sound design and engineer **Simon Muller**

Engineers **Bertrand Pallier, Marc De Frusto, Véronique Guidevaux, Jean-Baptiste de Tonquedec**

Plastician **Judith Dubois**

Costumes **Pétronille Salomé**

Set design **Aurélie Thomas**

Set construction **Fabrice Coudert** assisted by **Eui-Suk Cho**

Booklet commissions **Alexandra Lazarescou, Marie Nimier, Thomas Gornet**

Photography **Jean-Louis Fernandez**

Administration, production, touring **Mathieu Hilléreau, Les Indépendances**

House capacity: 80 people (including all guests and their escorts)

Running time 30 minutes

Production: **Théâtre de Romette**

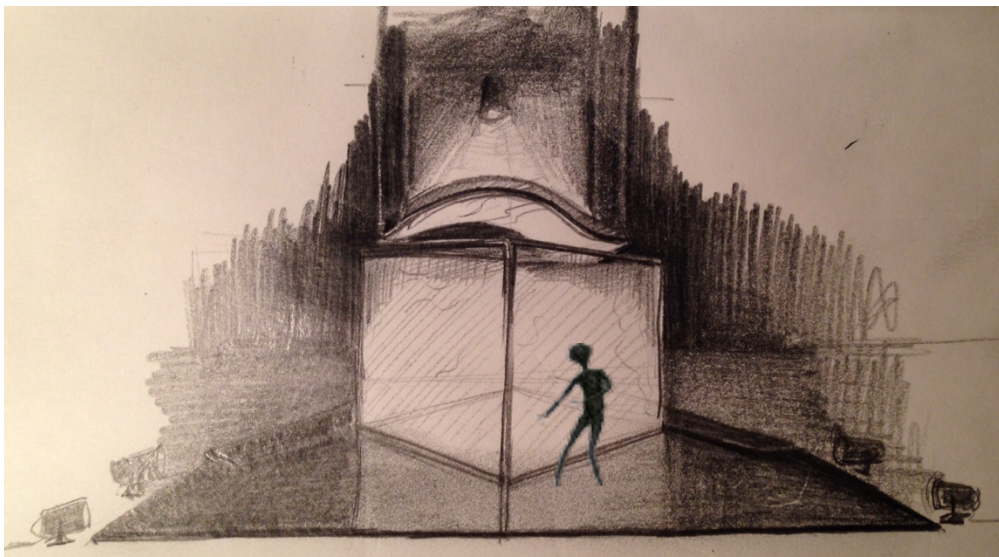
Partners: Théâtre Nouvelle génération CDN - Lyon, Théâtre Paris Villette - Paris, Graines de spectacles - Clermont Ferrand, CDN de Montluçon, La Cour des Trois Coquins - Clermont-Ferrand.

Le Théâtre de Romette is registered by the French Ministry of Culture, and by the city of Clermont-Ferrand, and is supported by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. Johanny Bert is an Associated Artist at La Comédie de Clermont-Ferrand, scène nationale.

There's a man taking a bath.
No, he's a dancer who is sculpting clouds.
No, it's a cloud cradling a dancer in its arms.
No, it's a man creating landscapes in order to disappear into them.
No, it's something else entirely.

Imagined for very young audiences and the adults accompanying them, Le Petit Bain is a creation based on material which is at once concrete, recognizable for the child – but which can also become an abstraction, a playing field for the imagination: bubble bath.

Working with this fascinating material is a dancer who sculpts the foam to create fragile masses, landscapes and a number of ephemeral characters.



Sketch of the set, designed by Aurélie Thomas.

Creator's note

As a director, this work, Le Petit Bain is my first creation for very young audiences (and the adults escorting them). I had a wonderful time performing for these audiences as an actor. I like it when they “make rain” (applause), when they pretend to not be watching or listening, and then when they come back to you with a great smile because something has caught their attention, I like it when they imitate the movements they see or when I can tell that their solicitous adult escorts are little by little becoming absorbed by the story.

I don't know if writing a piece for very young audiences is so different from writing one for regular audiences. Each creation is for me an opportunity to find a new relationship between material and dramaturgy, between a human being and animated forms. The rigor of research is the same. For this piece, I decided that I needed to find a more sensitive form of writing, aware that I may be addressing an audience which is coming to the theatre for the very first time. I remember the first performances I attended – I didn't understand everything but the powerful emotions I experienced still resonate with me today.

I have conceived the work as a sort of dialogue since the child is always accompanied by one or more adults. The one gazing at the other is quite riveting.

The writing of the work is linked to a form of digression, a daydream based on playful yet aesthetic material: a bubble bath. It is a recognizable, tangible element for the child, but it can also become an abstraction, a playing field for the imagination. It is a fascinating substance which can create volumes, ephemeral spaces for playing, fragile and transformable masses which I then imagine as a playing field for a moving body, a body confronting the foam, even a giant transformable puppet, at the same time both a character and a landscape.

I have worked with contemporary writers for several years: Marion Aubert, Pauline Sales, Magali Mougel, Sabine Revillet, Guillaume Poix, Thomas Gornet and Stéphane Jaubertie ... But on this project I realized that the writing needed to be different, that the relationship between words and images would need to be something new.

I imagined a visual piece, without words, working with a certain material and a body in movement. The writing on this piece was intuitive, linked to that material (and to the variables inherent in that material), movements and the space. It is a sort of experiment which I am offering something to spectators, in two stages: the first being the performance itself, and the period after it. I commissioned three different writers (Alexandra Lazarescou, Marie Nimier, and Thomas Gornet), asking each of them to write a story based on the elements in the piece. The texts are published in a little booklet given to the adults on their way out of the performance. Three stories, like three spectators' points of view, three imaginations bubbling over in their corners, showing us that in the theatre each spectator may not have seen or understood the same thing, that he or she may have told him- or herself a separate story based on his or her own life. And I find that absolutely fascinating. The texts will I hope allow for the creation of a dialogue between the adult and the child, between the words and the memories of the piece, at an age when one tells stories to children after they've had their baths.

For this creation, I asked the choreographer Yan Raballand to work with me. We created the project with longing, curiosity, slipping inside the baths of our childhoods while avoiding nostalgia. We believe we were both rigorous and faithful to the sensations we had in order to share them with such young audiences, perhaps in order to create new feelings for them, floating bubbles of memories which they will hang on to, or which may eventually dissipate, while leaving behind – I hope – a color, a light, a movement or a sensation.

Johanny Bert



Rehearsals in Clermont-Ferrand - December 2016.

Experimental Laboratory

Exploring different densities of the foam, how it moves, its consistency, its color variations in light or with the addition of dyes. How do you shape foam?

We will be looking for ways to shape volumes, dense – voluminous or small, with different levels of lightness. Then we will look at reproducing these ephemeral creations. And building characters based on the foam and on other substances.

PERIOD #1

Based on this material and certain technical and set based initiatives, our first research period will focus on the relationship between the body of an actor/dancer and foam.

The foam will surround a central character. He is maybe taking a bath. Or is he surrounded by clouds instead. He controls the shapes of the foam he is sculpting. Maybe he is making strange animals?

Many images seem possible. The space can become a foam space/ landscape.

The lighting may transform this substance, changing it into a sea and waves, into orange/ yellow sand, into chocolate mousse, into a mass of cotton candy. Or vegetable moss.

It's a rather quiet material whose sound may therefore be invented. Maybe the sound of crumpling paper, a scraped note on a cello or the sound of a rock tumbling downward?

The dancer may create spaces in which he can create a very small character who will walk through this fragile landscape, climbing, bouncing, descending the steps which are melting away right under his feet, then plunges his head into the snow. He's disappeared.

A character with a huge mouth appears, chewing, blowing bubbles, showing how much he wants to devour the landscape. Then the small character appears inside a soap bubble floating in the air.

The foam space is shaped by the dancer. His body ripples with the bits of foam sliding down his body, adding themselves to the mass.

Using strings he cuts into the foam like pieces of landscape which he then assembles, putting them together inside transparent plastic bags.

These are a few ideas and images. But it will be the stage and my research with the team of plasticians, the choreographer and the dancer which will define and shape the piece.

PERIOD #2

For this piece, I am commissioning three writers to write three stories or tales which will be printed in a little booklet, which will be given to the adults as they leave the theatre.

The booklet is without illustrations, and the adults may read it to the children in the evening or the next day ...

I would like these three stories to be three points of view of the piece, three ways of looking at it, three imaginations bubbling away in their corners.

A way of playing with the audience's way of seeing, with both perception and subjectivity. Each spectator will not have seen the same thing nor understood the same thing; he or she may tell him- or herself a story based on his or her own imagination, which is fascinating.

At this age parents still read to their children, and these stories can be the basis for a dialogue between an adult and a child about his or her memories of the piece, their feelings, their interpretations

Johanny Bert

He trained as an actor at the Ateliers of the Comédie de St-Etienne and studied puppetry with Alain Recoing of the Théâtre aux Mains Nues – Paris. Johanny Bert gradually developed his own theatrical language through the creations he worked on and the people he met while doing them, including working with props and puppet theatre.

In 2000, in Puy-en-Velay he founded the Compagnie Théâtre de Romette, an experimental space for creation. His company was in residence at the Théâtre Municipal in Puy-en-Velay, then at Polaris in Corbas (69).

From January 2012 to December 2015, Johanny Bert was the director of the Centre Dramatique National de Montluçon - Le Fracas, after which he decided to return to directing and working with a company.

Since January 2016, the company has been registered and given a residency by the city of Clermont-Ferrand, and Johanny Bert is an Associated Artist for three years at the Scène nationale of Clermont-Ferrand

Some of his creations are accessible for young audiences, among them *Le petit bonhomme à modeler* (2002 - 2008), *Les pieds dans les nuages* – inspired by a plastician photographer, Robert Parkeharisson (2004 - 2012), *Les orphelines* - Marion Aubert (2009 - 2012), *De Passage* - Stéphane Jaubertie (2014-2018), *Patoussalafoi* – a contemporary opera by Matteo Franceschini and Philippe Dorin (2015 - 2016), and *Elle pas princesse/ lui pas héros* - Magali Mougel (2015-2017).

Yan Raballand

After studying at the ENMDAD in La Roche sur Yon then at the CNSMD in Lyon, Yan Raballand has had an eclectic journey as both a performer and choreographer. He participated along with Christian Bourigault in the video deciphering of the solo *F. et Stein* of the late Dominique Bagouet and also danced with Odile Duboc, Stéphanie Aubin, Dominique Boivin, Bernadette Gaillard and Pascale Houbin. He was invited to choreograph for the Ballet du Rhin and the junior group at the CNSMD. He also collaborated with several directors as a choreographic advisor: Eric Masset, Charly Marty and Laurent Brethome, with whom he created *Bérénice* and Montverdi's *Orfeo*. He has also collaborated with Johanny Bert with whom he created *Krafff*, *Deux doigts sur l'épaule* (November 2013) and *Sex Toy - performance* (January 2014).

In 2002, he founded his own company, directing his work in three essential directions which evoke the notion of *counterpoint* for him, (the name of his company is *contrepoint*): musicality, choreographic vocabulary, and one's relationship to others. He created a number of works, among them: *Amorce* (2002), *Au devant de la* (2003), *Obstinée* (2004), *Ici et là*, in collaboration with Sylvie Giron (2005), *Grün* (garden version in 2006, stage version in 2008), *L'ange* (2008), *Viola* (awarded the audience prize at the (re)connaissance competition 2010), *Contrepoint* (2010), *Les Bulles chorégraphiques* (2011) and *Vertiges* (2012).

He teaches at a number of dance and drama conservatories such as the CNSMD in Lyon or the school of the Comédie de Saint Etienne.

The three writers



Alexandra Lazarescu is a writer, a dramaturg and a translator. After earning a master's degree in art philosophy at the Sorbonne, she enrolled in the department of theatrical writing at E.N.S.A.T.T. She was an assistant dramaturg at the T.N.P on *Par-dessus bord* by Michel Vinaver, directed by Christian Schiaretti, then worked with the French director Jean-Jacques Beineix on documentary film and theatre projects. In 2012, her text *Bec Kosmos* received "encouragements" from the National Theatre Center. In 2013, her translation of *The Antidote* by Nicoleta Esinencu received creation support from the National Theatre Center. She has also translated works by Mihaela Michailov, Nicoleta Esinencu and Gianina Cărbunariu, all published by Editions des Solitaires Intempestifs and Actes Sud-Papiers.



Marie Nimier is a sedentary writer who moves around a lot. She is the author of thirteen novels, among them *La Reine du Silence* (winner of the Prix Médicis, 2004) and *La Plage* (January 2016), and songs written for Jean Guidoni, Juliette Gréco, Artmengo, Clarika, Maurane, Enzo Enzo and Eddy Mitchell. For the stage she co-signed *À quoi tu penses?* with the choreographer Dominique Boivin (Chaillot 2007), and created with Karelle Prugnaud *Pour en finir avec Blanche Neige*, three performance pieces performed successively in a fish market, an underground parking garage and the lower floors of a department store, as well as her first pieces, *La confusion* and *Noël revient tous les ans* (Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris). Her plays are published by Actes Sud Papier, and her novels are published by Gallimard. She also writes plays and albums for young audiences, among them *Les trois sœurs casseroles*, *La Kangouroute*, and in 2016 *Au bonheur des Lapins* (Albin Michel Jeunesse).



Thomas Gornet is often an actor, sometimes a director, and more and more often a writer of texts (novels and theatre) non-exclusively targeting young audiences. He likes talking about the world from the level of a child or a teenager, when the world of adults seems sometimes so strange. He is also focused on encouraging audiences and readers, no matter what age they are, to be open to others and their differences, with *L'oeil de l'ornithorynque* (1999 – about a child stuck inside the body of a child), *Qui suis-je?* (2006 – a middle-schooler discovering a crush on a fellow classmate), *Je porte la culotte* (2013 – with *Le jour du slip* by Anne Percin, in which a little boy finds himself inside the body of a little girl for a single day). His novels are published by Editions du Rouergue and L'Ecole des loisirs.

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