

MILIEU

RENAUD HERBIN

Suitable for all, children from 8 onwards

Production TJP - Centre Dramatique National d'Alsace Strasbourg
Coproduction Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes de Charleville-Mézières

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Premiered in March 2016 as part of Giboulées, Biennale Internationale Corps-Objet-Image

MILIEU

Designed and performed by: Renaud Herbin

Set: Mathias Baudry

Puppets: Paulo Duarte

Sound Designer: Morgan Daguenet

Artistic collaboration:

Aïtor Sanz Juanes, Julika Mayer & Christophe Le Blay

Light Designer: Fanny Brushi with contributions by Fabien Bossard

Set construction: Christian Rachner

General stage manager: Thomas Fehr

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Charleville-Mézières

Available on tour

on its own or together with LA VIE DES FORMES - Premiered at the
Avignon Festival 2016

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A LINK BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, MILIEU OFFERS AN EXPERIENCE IN ANIMATION

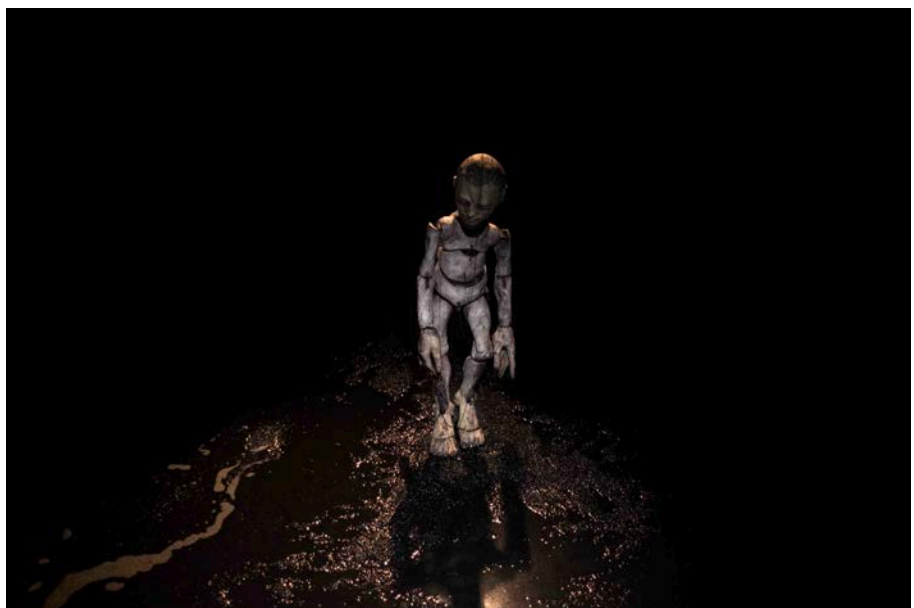
The puppet tells us about what makes a human being. It explores its own ability at telling us 'I'm here' and at being surprised by it. MILIEU is a stopover during which the puppet confronts itself with the climatic variations of its environment. Like a Samuel Beckett story, MILIEU depicts a situation that is as jolly as it is metaphysical.

Having gained extensive technical knowledge relative to string puppetry, Renaud Herbin chose to bring it up to date in order to best serve contemporary playwright. He presents a variation here on the notion of the puppet booth set-up, playing with differences in scale and the gravity of a suspended body.

THE PUBLIC SURROUNDS THE STAGE, IN A SET MADE TO ENHANCE VIEWING

Created with Mathias Baudry, MILIEU's set encompasses both the scales of the puppet and that of the puppeteer. A large cylinder is implied. It is a closed space from which it is difficult to escape although there are many attempts at it. And there are so many strong ties holding the wannabe escapees in.

A puppet moves around at eye level, oddly imbalanced as if it was tied to an imaginary horizon. The ground is strewn with damp gravel. The top, which is connected to the air and the light above, interacts with the vibrant mineral surface below. As water gradually appears and eventually covers the ground, it reveals a new opportunity, that of a new dimension to explore.



The public can closely observe a delicate manipulation, for which the puppeteer is quite far from its puppet, high above it.

Morgan Daguenet's sound and Fanny Brushi's lights are not only the puppet's playmates but become characters in their own right.



THE LOST ONES FOR EACH AND EVERYONE

To create MILIEU, Renaud Herbin drew on *The Lost Ones* by Samuel Beckett. In the closed microcosm of a 'low-profile' cylinder, a crowd of people is trying to get out by every possible means. They have the feeling that an exit is situated in the most inaccessible place, right in the middle of the ceiling.

MILIEU offers an environment for this puppet's body. The aim is to expose someone to something, and in order to do so the different parameters that preside over this *milieu* fluctuate. The ground's texture, the sounds, the electric lights, and the quality of the air can all provide opportunities for variations.

This environment is not a mere set up for some action or for a story. It is the story itself, for the playwright puts the 'where' and the 'how long' at the forefront, and displays a series of discontinuous sequences, of views. The puppet's body is trying to explore the place and although it exhausts itself in doing so, it never gives up.

In MILIEU, it is both the puppet and the puppeteer who find themselves constrained and confronted to each other. Because it is an object after all, the puppet will be able to escape only if the puppeteer allows it; while the puppeteer ceaselessly adapts to his puppet by letting it have some sort of free will.

Who is then at the heart of this 'milieu'? How does either of them learn to move away from the centre in a game in which they are interdependent from one another?



THE LONG STRING PUPPET IN RELATION WITH THE ABSTRACTION OF RAW MATTER

MILIEU stages a string puppet, which is the puppetry technique that embodies our relationship to manipulation. On the one hand, the strings provide the ability to animate, to mimic life, and to supply the puppet with some autonomy. On the other hand, they are what holds and ties the puppet and prevents it from going out of its allocated space.

The use of long strings amplifies the verticality of this relationship. They increase the distance between the puppeteer and the focus of his attention. The space then divides itself into floors and the puppet's moves become fragile. The public's gaze goes to and fro, from the puppet to the puppeteer and back.

The puppet-being is human-like and realistic but its proportions are not quite right. Its body is strangely misshapen, adapted to how it might apprehend the space around it. Its extremities, hands, head and feet, look inflated as they are the sensory organs through which it perceives the environment.

The puppet's body appears to be moved by a secret force that sometimes pushes it down and sometimes lifts it up. The puppet seems to gradually break free from the person who directs it and groans and sighs. However, in such an environment, it will not really be able to go further than the strings which partition it off.

