

Comédie de Genève

DOSSIER DE DIFFUSION

Dans la mesure de l'impossible

**A CREATION BY
TIAGO RODRIGUES**



© Magali Dougados

Created on 1 February 2022 at Comédie de Genève

Adresse postale

Promenade Louise-Boulaz 2
Case postale · 1211 Genève 6

Credits

Text and direction **Tiago Rodrigues**
Translation **Thomas Resendes**
Scenography **Laurent Junod, Wendy Tokuoka, Laura Fleury**
Music composition **Gabriel Ferrandini**
Lights **Rui Monteiro**
Sound **Pedro Costa**
Costumes and artistic collaboration **Magda Bizarro**
Assistant director **Lisa Como** or **Renata Antonante**
Set construction **Workshops of Comédie de Genève**

With **Adrien Barazzone, Beatriz Brás, Baptiste Coustenoble, Natacha Koutchoumov**
and **Gabriel Ferrandini** (musician)

Production **La Comédie de Genève**
Coproduction **Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe – Paris, Piccolo Teatro di Milano - Teatro d'Europa, Teatro Nacional D. Maria II – Lisbon, Équinoxe - Scène nationale de Châteauroux, CSS Teatro stabile di innovazione del FVG - Udine, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Théâtre national de Bretagne - Rennes, Maillon Théâtre de Strasbourg - Scène européenne, CDN Orléans - Val de Loire, La Coursive - Scène nationale de La Rochelle**

With the support of **ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross** and **MSF - Doctors Without Borders**

Duration 2h
Recommended age 14+

Show in French, English and Portuguese
Surtitled in French and in English

Created on 1 February 2022 at Comédie de Genève

The text is published by Les Solitaires Intempestifs.

CONTACT PRODUCTION & TOUR

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Dans la mesure de l'impossible

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The son of a doctor mother and a journalist father, Tiago Rodrigues has often wondered why he chose to tell the world rather than save it by acting in a more concrete way.

Rodrigues will be present for the third season since 2018-19 on the stage of Comédie de Genève. The theme, which links a person's story with history, is perfectly suited to this author-director who is a virtuoso in the art of mixing narrative layers. To write *Dans la mesure de l'impossible*, he met in Geneva staff of the International Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders. This led to a desire to look at the world through their eyes and the need to write a show through the prism of intimacy.

Inspired by their accounts, this show exposes the dilemmas of these men and women who come and go between troubled areas of intervention and a peaceful "home".

Dans la mesure de l'impossible is made of stories of men and women who fight daily for a better world, knowing that they will not change it. Capable of self-criticism and conscious of the problematics of the humanitarian experience, they continue to work to buy time before the worst.



INTERVIEW WITH TIAGO RODRIGUES

by Arielle Meyer MacLeod, dramaturge of Comédie de Genève

***Dans la mesure de l'impossible* was imagined before the tsunami of the pandemic. At the time it was planned that you would go on ICRC missions to write the show. Then the pandemic struck, and these trips couldn't take place...**

Yes. And today I think it's a good thing I couldn't leave. I would've come back full of certitudes, with the impression that I'd seen everything, that I could tell the truth about the world.

How did the project come about?

As I couldn't visit them in the field, I met the humanitarians here in Geneva. Therefore, *Dans la mesure de l'impossible* is above all about stories, the stories that these humanitarians have told us here about the experiences they've seen and lived elsewhere; stories that bear witness to what these people perceive of the world and how they perceive themselves. Hence, we're not going to play out or illustrate events that happened elsewhere, no, we're going to talk about events that someone has told us about and that have happened elsewhere. We're not doing documentary theatre, we're doing documented theatre, without aspiring to produce a generalist essay that gives an exhaustive view of humanitarianism. We always speak through them, these storytellers, without pretending that what we've heard allows us to even imagine the reality of the experiences they've gone through. On the other hand, we know very well how to reproduce the stories of these experiences, because we've lived these moments of sharing with them, moments when these women and men have offered us their stories, all of them unique, stories which reflect as many visions of the world and ways of speaking as the people they've met; stories which they think and often tell us that they should feature in the show!

So you write the show based on interviews. How does the writing process work?

I start by pressing *play* to listen to a recording that I then transcribe, already allowing myself a certain amount of freedom. This is the first stage of writing. I repeat the process and continue to write. Then I listen to the interview again, and I compare it with what I've written. So there's always a dialogue, a conversation, between real, shared stories and the writing that begins to take shape.

Is this work that you do in Portuguese?

Yes, I listen to interviews that are in French or English and I write in Portuguese, then I have it translated into French.

Is the text already written when you start rehearsals with the actors?

Not at all. We meet with the humanitarians together, I write after each interview, then we rehearse with what I've already written while continuing to have other meetings, other interviews. The work phases are mixed. I don't separate the work 'on the table', as they say, and the work on stage. I like the possibility that one day we won't need to go on stage, and we'll sit down to talk, or on another day I'll be able to tell the actors and actresses not to come to the theatre, that they stay at home to learn their lines while I write a scene. Sometimes we come back to the table on the day of the dress rehearsal. I can write at any point in the process. If an idea suddenly emerges on stage, I can immediately transform it into text and then put it back into the play. It's not unusual for me to write certain passages the week before the première, because I like to leave certain details, which aren't really details, until the end of rehearsals. It's a way of keeping the show flexible, of not turning it into a monument of mastery to be reproduced as is, but rather giving the actors the freedom to continue to build and invent, even after the première.

You like fiction, yet in this project you start from reality, from the reality of these stories that speak of true events. How does the transition from documentary material to artistic form take place?

When someone tells a story – even if it's about an event that really happened – a layer of fiction already appears, which has to do with the words and the form that the person chooses to tell the story. Telling a story, even a true one, implies a plot in which processes that belong to fiction already intervene. I often write from documents, whether documentary or literary: Shakespeare's text when I rewrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, the archives of the censorship during the dictatorship in Portugal when I created *Três dedos abaixo do joelho* ("Three Fingers below the Knee") or here, interviews with humanitarians. Whether the content is real or fictional isn't really important, my intervention is pretty much the same: it always consists of establishing a dialogue with pre-existing material, and in this dialogue, I take as much liberty as I can take with the original, i.e. the document. The fictional creation therefore has nothing to do with knowing whether or not what's being told is true. It's the creation that brings what's true to the stage.

Where did you get the need to tell these stories of people working in the humanitarian field?

At one point I was in contact with several people from the ICRC and I was impressed by these people whom we often hear about but whom I'd never had the opportunity to know personally. I know about the act of caring, of relieving, through my mother who is a doctor. I think it's the only real profession. All the others are important, of course, but the most sacred in my eyes are those that deal with care. Humanitarians have access to moments and places in history that give them a view of the world that we lack. The proximity of suffering, danger and violence, but also of human dignity and resilience, gives them access to a way of reading the world that we're incapable of.

Did these meetings change your perception of humanitarian work?

Yes, I discovered the complexity of it. Before the project, I thought of them as romantic characters, heroes who really change things. When we met them – brilliant, impressive people, adventurers – they all said: no, we're not heroes, we're just doing what we can. My admiration for them only increased and I found them all the more heroic for saying they weren't. Then I discovered their capacity for self-criticism and reflection, their ability to problematise the whole humanitarian experience. They're constantly dealing with extremely complex situations in which the line between good guys and bad guys is blurred. In order to condemn those who are considered the bad guys, those who don't respect human rights, we have to ask ourselves where the source of the problem lies – and hence the source of all the suffering they've set out to alleviate – and this question almost always comes back to hit us in the face. The source of the suffering that outrages us, when we really look into it, is to be found at home, in our capitalist system that has invaded the whole planet and adulterated fundamental values. One of the humanitarians we met told us: "We're just here to buy time". Not to change the world, no, at best to try to alleviate the suffering, to buy time before the worst. When I realised that they themselves, better than anyone else, understood the full extent of this complexity, I realised that they weren't romantic but tragic heroes, like the characters in Sophocles: they know full well that they're dedicating their lives to doing something that isn't going to change the world, whereas changing the world was part of their primary motivation for embarking on this humanitarian path. The very fact that humanitarian activity exists – not only exists but is increasingly ongoing – the very fact that it exists paints a tragic picture of humanity.



2021-2022 TOUR

18 - 19 February 2022, CSS Teatro stabile di innovazione del FVG - Udine (IT)
24 February - 5 March 2022, Théâtre national de Bretagne - Rennes (FR)
10 - 11 March 2022, L'Équinoxe - Scène nationale de Châteauroux (FR)
15 - 17 March 2022, CDN Orléans - Val de Loire (FR)
25 - 26 March 2022, TPR - La-Chaux-de-Fonds (CH)
29 - 31 March 2022, CDN Besançon Franche-Comté (FR)
6 - 8 April 2022, Théâtr de la Cité - CDN Toulouse Occitanie (FR)
12 - 14 April 2022, La Coursive - Scène nationale de La Rochelle (FR)
29 April 2022, Théâtre des Salins - Scène nationale de Martigues (FR)
4 - 6 May 2022, Maillon Théâtre de Strasbourg - Scène européenne (FR)
11 - 14 May 2022, Théâtre du Nord, CDN Lille-Tourcoing (FR)
18 - 19 May 2022, Scènes du Golfe - Vannes (FR)
25 - 27 May 2022, Piccolo Teatro di Milano - Teatro d'Europa (IT)

2022-2023 TOUR

17 September - 14 October 2022, Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe for Festival d'Automne à Paris (FR)
19 - 22 October 2022, Théâtre des Célestins - Lyon (FR)
15 - 16 November 2022, Malraux - Scène nationale Chambéry Savoie (FR)
26 - 27 November 2022, Teatros del Canal - Madrid for Festival de Otoño (ES)
6 - 9 December 2022, Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne (FR)
14 - 15 December 2022, Espaces Pluriels - Pau (FR)
24 - 25 January 2023, Bonlieu Scène nationale - Annecy (FR)
2 - 3 February 2023, Scène nationale du Sud-Aquitain - Bayonne (FR)
9 February 2023, Le Préau, CDN de Normandie-Vire (FR)
16 February 2023, Théâtre du Jura - Delémont (CH)
17 - 19 March 2023, National Theater and Concert Hall – Taipei
In the framework of TIFA Taiwan International Arts Festival of Arts (TW)
25 - 26 May 2023, Comédie de Clermont-Ferrand, Scène nationale (FR)
31 May - 3 June 2023, TnBA, Théâtre national de Bordeaux en Aquitaine (FR)
15 June 2023, Filature, Scène nationale de Mulhouse (FR)
23 - 24 June 2023 at Sibiu International Theatre Festival (RO)
11 - 14 August 2023 at Edinburgh International Festival (UK)

2023-2024 TOUR

13 - 22 July 2023, Festival d'Avignon (FR)

11 - 14 August 2023, Edinburgh International Festival (UK)

10 - 11 January 2024, MAC – Créteil (FR)

18 - 20 January 2024, Théâtre-Sénart – Scène nationale (FR)

24 - 25 January 2024, Château Rouge – Scène conventionnée Annemasse (FR)

21 - 22 February 2024, Le Rive Gauche – Scène nationale de Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray (FR)

1st March 2024, Théâtre Le Reflet – Vevey (CH)

12 - 15 March 2024, Le Grand – T – Théâtre de Loire-Atlantique – Nantes (FR)

4 - 5 April 2024 à Châteauvallon-Liberté – Scène nationale (FR)

17 - 25 April 2024, Culturgest – Lisbonne (PT)

AVAILABLE IN 2024-2025

PRESSE EXTRACTS

Une bouleversante tension. Dans une langue théâtrale où rayonnent comme toujours simplicité, fluidité et limpidité, Tiago Rodrigues a réuni leurs paroles et souvenirs en un lent (trop), et triste, et majestueux oratorio contemporain sur l'enfer des guerres. (...) Tiago Rodrigues offre avec Dans la mesure de l'impossible un spectacle qui chahute d'autant plus efficacement que la guerre gronde à nos portes.

Fabienne Pascaud, *Télérama*, 13 juillet 2023

Une quinzaine d'histoires de chaos, de mort... et de petits miracles. L'art de Tiago Rodrigues est de les transformer en moments de théâtre inouïs. Par la force du verbe, de la voix et du geste, l'irreprésentable se matérialise et le « documentaire » devient odysée universelle. (...) Périlleux, mais nécessaire, le spectacle de Tiago Rodrigues nous dit mieux que toutes les images de la télé ou sur Internet « l'impossibilité » du monde.

Philippe Chevilley, *LesEchos.fr*, 13 juillet 2023

Four excellent actors – Adrien Barazzone, Beatriz Brás, Baptiste Coustenoble and Natacha Koutchoumov – lead us into the heart of darkness with unattributed verbatim-style accounts from field hospitals, jungles and mountain outposts. (...) What we do hear, devastatingly, overwhelmingly, infuriatingly, are the voices of people compelled to help, not always for pure motives, but at unfathomable personal cost.

Mark Fisher, *The Guardian*, 12 août 2023

Wisely, given the gut-punching nature of many scenes, Rodrigues treads lightly as director. The sets stop at a large white cloth that is slowly pulled above the stage. Many of the situations described are too harrowing to summarize neatly; suffice to say that, while humanitarian workers generally choose their line of work out of a desire to do good, “doing good” turns out to be a lot more complicated than it seems.

Laura Cappelle, *The New York Times*, 20 octobre 2022

Tiago Rodrigues parvient, avec sa sensibilité et son talent habituels, à mettre en partage cette interrogation douloureuse avec une netteté imparable. En revenant à l'essence d'un théâtre antique et tragique, qui accorde à la parole la première place et à l'acteur le rôle du témoin et du passeur, il trouve la forme juste, sans esbroufe, toujours vivante dans la chorégraphie des corps et des mots.

Fabienne Darge, *Le Monde*, 25 février 2022

C'est incroyable, une salle entière qui retient son souffle, bouche bée, entièrement prise par ce qu'elle voit et entend (...). Et on ignore alors que, comme les 500 spectateurs, on sortira de la représentation bouleversée, interdite, ne saisissant pas complètement par quels chemins les quatre acteurs, (...) quasiment constamment face à nous, nous auront emmenés aussi loin « dans le monde de l'impossible ».

Anne Diatkine, *Libération*, 8 février 2022

Tiago Rodrigues



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Since his beginnings as a writer at the age of 20, Tiago Rodrigues has always envisaged the theatre as a human assembly: a place where people meet, like in a café, to share ideas and spend time together. While still a student, he first came across the tg STAN company in 1997, which helped confirm his penchant for horizontal, collaborative work. The freedom he encountered with this Belgian collective was a great influence on his future work.

In 2003 he co-founded Mundo Perfeito with Magda Bizarro, with whom he created and presented nearly 30 shows in more than 20 countries. He became a recurring presence at events such as the Festival d'Automne in Paris, the METEOR Festival in Norway, Theaterformen in Germany, the Festival TransAmériques in Canada and kunstenfestivalsdesarts in Belgium. Tiago Rodrigues has collaborated with a large number of Portuguese and international artists, dancers and choreographers. He has also taught in several schools, including the Belgian dance school PARTS directed by choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, the Swiss performing arts school La Manufacture, and the international project L'École des Maîtres.

In addition to his theatre work, he has written scripts for films and TV series, articles, poetry and essays. His most recent plays, which have won various national and international awards, have brought him international recognition. His most notable works are *By Heart*, *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, *Bovary*, *Sa Façon de Mourir* and *Sopro*, which premiered at the 2017 Avignon Festival.

Whether combining real stories with fiction, revisiting classics or adapting novels, Tiago Rodrigues' theatre is deeply rooted in the notion of writing with and for actors, seeking a poetic transformation of reality through the tools of theatre. This aspiration is evident in projects such as *Occupation Bastille*, an artistic occupation of the Théâtre de la Bastille in Paris by nearly one hundred artists and spectators, which took place in 2016. In 2018 he was awarded the 15th Europe Nouvelles Réalités Théâtrales Prize.

Tiago Rodrigues is a builder of bridges between cities and countries, at the same time as he is the amphitryon and defender of a vibrant theatre. In 2015, he was chosen as artistic director of the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in Lisbon.

From 2022, he directs the Avignon Festival. In 2021, he also presented *La Cerisaie* with Isabelle Huppert in the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des Papes.

All his texts have been translated into French and published by Les Solitaires Intempestifs.