

AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR

المرآة العربية



25th January 2011, Tahrir square, downtown Cairo / © Pauline Beugnies



ESTELLE CLEMENT-BEALEM / ANNE FERRET / RIAD GAHMI / SOLAFA GHANEM / FLORENCE GIRARDON / JULIE-LOLA LANTERI-CRAVET / BOB LIPMAN / **SCARLET MARESSA RIVERA** / CATHY RAY / PHILIPPE VINCENT

Rhône-Alpes



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Rawabet Space

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AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR

Text: Riad Gahmi and Philippe Vincent
Arabic translation: Nabil Gahmi
English translation: Bob Lipman

Directed by: Philippe Vincent and Florence Girardon
Music: Bob Lipman
Costumes: Cathy Ray
Lights: Julie–Lola Lanteri–Cravet

with:
Anne Ferret
Riad Gahmi
Florence Girardon
Bob Lipman
Philippe Vincent
And Scarlet Maressa Rivera (USA)
or Solafa Ghanem (Egypt)
or Estelle Clément Bealem (France)
and the voice of Catherine Hargreaves

Philippe Vincent, cell phone : (+ 33) 6 08 33 16 49
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Coproduction: Scenes, Theater of Venissieux (France), CCN–Rillieux la Pape (France), Theatre of Marseilles Bernardines (France), Forum Freies Theater Düsseldorf (RFA).
With the help of Institut Français and FACE (French American Cultural Exchange)

WEB SITE OF THE COMPANY : scenes.free.fr

Company subsidized by the Regional Department of Cultural Affairs: DRAC Rhône–Alpes, the Rhône–Alpes Regional Administration, and the city of Lyons.

PRESENTATIONS OF AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR

26th and 27th june at 8:30pm

RAWABET SPACE

3 Hussien el Me'mar st, off Mahmoud Bassiouni st, beside Townhouse Gallery, Downtown, Cairo (EGYPT).

21st july

CENTRE CHORÉGRAPHIQUE NATIONAL

30 ter av. Général Leclerc / 69140 Rillieux–la–Pape (FRANCE)

1st until 11th february 2012 at 8:00pm

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CLIMATE REFUGEES FLEEING FROZEN EUROPE, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WARM WINDS OF REVOLUTION.

What pride can we still take in being French? Egypt looks like a political laboratory where a new human organization is about to put itself in place. The Egyptians pierced the abscess. We are here in the gap between the old and the new. At a moment where nothing yet is done and where everything is about to happen. In our luggage, paper, pencil, tape recorder and microphones to capture the new wind. To record the air pocket. We can not do a performance on the Egyptian revolution. The first act of the performance has already taken place on the main stage of Tahrir Square. We are some French who brush the Egyptian soil in search of clues about what is most intriguing to the West, and which mobilizes our media, our discussions, in our parliaments, our cafes, our apartments: the Arab world. Sort of archaeologists of the Present. During this interlude we contaminate our artistic work with this new revolutionary virus. Scientists who place themselves at the moment «t +1» of the big bang, and observe the expansion of minds.

Our theater is a distorting two-way mirror. The Egyptians could perhaps recognize themselves, or see how the Westerners see them. It's a difficult exercise where the reflections, and therefore the interpretations of the image are multiple. But what would be a revolution without danger...

The show "El Miraya El 'Arabia", was presented in Cairo for the first time the 26th and 27th of June at the Rawabet Townhouse as a work in progress and will be in various theaters in Germany and France during March and April of 2012. The show was presented in Arabic and interpreted by Egyptian actress Solaf Ghanem.

Bin Laden is dead. America cheering, as if in a football match, celebrates the death of the enemy, consummating its revenge just ten years after September 11. The World Trade Center against the nightmare of Iraq and the Afghanistan quagmire, against Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

Our project takes root in the light of the Arab spring and failure of the conservative rhetoric of the Bush era. The nature of the revolts that still run from Tunis to Damascus, via Sanaa, the awkward silence of our diplomacy, even its complacency in dealing with dictatorial regimes in place in the region, have laid bare the shortcomings of our democratic system and its contradictions.

WHO ARE WE? WHAT IS FRANCE? WHO IS IT?

Through a gallery of portraits, from person in charge to simple witness, from the Algerian war to the Egyptian revolution, through the attacks of September 11, we paint an intimate picture of the story of these relationships, sometimes of attraction, sometimes of repulsion, of the love and hate which bind the West to the so-called «Arab world». A sounding board for the multitude of voices that make up this story, insoluble in the politics of Manichaeism.

Fifty anachronistic individualities: French, foreigners, gas station attendants, traders, barbers, hostages, policemen, unemployed, shoe shiners, a stewardess, WTC1 bellhop, from the sixties to the present day, gathered together in one place. Here, it is less the answer we are interested in, than the multitude of sensations, of points of view, less the answer, if there is one, than history on an intimate level».

REGARDING THE TITLE.

It is the Arab who imposes himself differently in the mirror of the West. Behind the face of France, of Europe and as far as the United States, there is an Arab who is elbowed out of the reflection. The Arab confined to his role of Islamist rabble, and on whose back the West fabricates its spectacle, forces another face. With the Arab revolutions, it is he who hands out his lesson of democracy, while Europe tries to save face, stutters, stammers, panics and fails. The deception bursts open. We are laid bare. The Arab mirror, because it forces us to look back on our history and on ourselves.

REGARDING THE WORK WITH THE ACTORS.

The work with the actors is rather particular. The permanent staff of the show consists of five actors (as well as director, musician, author, choreographer). The show can be played in several languages (Arabic, French, or English). In each country, we need to find one or two local actresses to take charge of 80% of the text in their own language. And of course a couple of weeks of rehearsal are needed before the performances. In Egypt, we worked with the actress Solaf Ghanem who played the texts in Arab. In the United States, this season, will be one actress aligned with a New York Theater, who will take on this role in the piece. Like a choir, the permanent staff of the show gives the structure with a score (more choreographical than theatrical). The guest actress must slip into the mirror and interpret a role she has not created, but that she will evolve. In changing the language of the actress, the show will also certainly change in its meaning.

Our need to work with a native speaker is intimately linked to the subject of the performance. Indeed, the four French players here are deprived of language, and therefore dependent on the actress who is the lone speaker. The problems we encounter in the creation process itself will be the problems of the created performance. How to understand ourselves? How to have a common discourse? How to accept the word of the other and speak it on stage?

LINK TO VIEW THE ENTIRE MOVIE OF AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR

Click on the link to download



ENGLISH VERSION, VERSION EN ANGLAIS (Irondale – New York)

<http://dai.ly/Hylh8a>

EL MIRAYA EL 'ARABIA – EXTRAITS DE LA VERSION ARABE

<http://dai.ly/JoFkYF>

FRENCH VERSION –VERSION EN FRANCAIS (CCN Rillieux–la–Pape)

<http://dai.ly/GVcspF>

WEB SITE OF THE COMPANY

<http://scenes.free.fr>



INSIDE AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR

BY HADJAR AOUARDJI

«An Arab in My Mirror» offers an interesting reading of the relationship between the West and the so-called Arab world and raises a certain number of issues. First, that of a people's aspirations and their portrayal in the media. From the Setif and Guelma massacres to the events of October 17th 1961, to the recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, how has the western world's perception of these Arab social movements evolved ? The western media commentators and analysts were quick to salute the Arab citizen's aspirations for liberty and democracy, often suggesting that until now the social movements in the Arab lands were but a question of bread and butter. Moreover, to what extent do the measures of repression of yesteryear adopted by the French colonial power differ from those adopted by the middle-eastern authoritarian regimes of today ? Does, in the end, the supposed difference between the FLN militant thrown into the Seine in 1961 and a Tahrir square activist thrown from the 6th of October bridge in Cairo not reside in their respective portrayals in the media. Even more interesting is the question of the face of the enemy. How has it evolved? If before, it was about liberating oneself from the yoke of the colonizer, the oppression that has now driven the demonstrators into the streets takes its form in the authoritarian regimes of the region. Furthermore, the Arabs did not wait for the awkward pronouncements of Michèle Alliot-Marie or the wait-and-see policy of Obama to denounce the western support – principally French and American– of these brutal and repressive regimes. The American reaction is particularly surprising given the means deployed by the State Department to diminish anti-americanism in the Arab world and promote their diplomacy (thru soft power and smart power). Reversing the mirror. Who says that the Arabs, Muslims, are not preoccupied with the image they are sending to the West ? Allegory of the cave : they say «Hira», and an echo calls back

«Tora Bora». Thus, if the Arab uprisings have surprised the world, they have also «disarmed» the terrorists. «No thanks we don't need your bombs to unseat the «Near Enemy» « «Unity in numbers and in organization by social networking rather than your suicide vests.» What if the demonstrators of the Arab world are killing two birds with one stone : unseating authoritarian regimes and at the same time pulling the rug out from under the feet of the terrorist. Would it not follow that the response to transnational violence (terrorism) is in societal integration rather than in military intervention ? Public diplomacy, political violence, social unrest, interventionism, the role and power of the media, are some of the themes brought to light in the impressionist tableau of Arab–Western relations that is : «An Arab in My Mirror».

Translated by Bob Lipman.

Hadjar Aouardji is a political analyst specializing in international relations and Middle–East studies.

IMPRESSIONS IN AN ARAB MIRROR

thedailynewsegypt.com
beta

BY CHITRA KALYANI / SPECIAL TO DAILY NEWS EGYPT
JUNE 27, 2011, 3:45 PM

Phillipe Vincent pinches bits of air around the table when describing his play to Daily News Egypt. Despite what the title suggests, "An Arab in My Mirror" does not provide a reflection of one community in another, but rather several impressions of characters in both worlds.

"The present is an air pocket," said the director. The play aims "just to have a little light" on the complex relationship between the West and the Arab world.

The characters in "An Arab in My Mirror" provide Arab and Western points of view of the past 50 years in an impressionistic form. Over a dozen texts were penned by Libyan–French Riad Gahmi and the French Phillipe Vincent and translated into Arabic by Gahmi.

The project initially began as a play called "Black Box" that would echo voices in the wake of September 11. Yet the Arab spring took over those plans, said Vincent, "the world had changed at this moment." It created an even more complex kaleidoscope, even more difficult to encompass.

In the dimmed lights and sparse setting of the Rawabet on Sunday night, you find the sole figure of Riad Gahmi singing out Frank Sinatra's "It Was a Very Good Year." When he reaches the age of 35, he stops and Egyptian actress Solafa Ghanem steps in from the dark. Further from being an enactment of the text, the play is a dance, where the performance adds yet another layer of meaning.

One text dramatizes the thoughts of a stewardess Betty Ong in the 9/11 flight. A water bottle is swayed on screen as a pendulum to indicate the passage of time, and is as menacing as the sword of death hanging over the passengers. Actress Florence Girardon remains silent, while her thoughts and voice are embodied by Gahmi, who holds a hand to her head, and leads her through the aisle, as their monologue is disturbed constantly by a passenger requesting a whiskey.

The following monologue juxtaposes an almost identical movement yet the voice has changed. Ghanem plays the terrorist who is to bring the flight down.

"The point is not to justify terrorism but to explain it; why it is like this," Gahmi told DNE.

The text alludes equally to the destruction of the Buddha in Afghanistan as it does to the burning of the Quran. "No one is innocent," said Ghanem.

"She calls it an 'accident,'" Vincent points out, noting the word Ghanem uses as she speaks of the Lara Logan incident.

"We needed Solafa because we speak mostly in French. We are in her country to make a play with her and we need her. It is interesting to have our point of view through her," said Vincent.

The Lara Logan 'accident' is seen through two points of view. The first of an imaginary harasser, a police officer. Ghanem takes on his uncouth mien and perspective onstage. "I want my piece of the celebration. I will take it," goes the performance in Arabic.

The speaker points to "these dogs of international journalism licking their lips, happy, like at their own celebrations. This blonde from CBS posing with one man after another...I also want to pose — pose in front of the camera with my arm against her waist because my hand is attached to her ass. We'll see well whether she smiles again."

In the following monologue, you hear a radio voice of Lara Logan that grows increasingly robotic.

Flags are folded ceremoniously and opened up again, used as a rug mimicking the prayer ritual. One dancer has increased bouts of spasms as the speech progresses.

Some monologues give voice to material and ethereal matter, such as the right shoe of Muntadhar Al–Zaidi, the Boeing 767, laughter and sobs, and Tahrir Square.

Props too add to the array of impressions: passports and money are exchanged. Anne Ferret's character offers the French constitution like a donation which Ghanem refuses. Chairs are shifted around, a bottle of water threateningly circles around characters, shoes abound, water is sprayed from a bucket mimicking the streets of Cairo.

All props are thrown into the background by the other actors while Ghanem continues, "I am in Tahrir Square. I'm Solafa Ghanem. I have hope." Toy bicycles ride on one side in the background to be met by toy soldiers shooting from rifles on the other.

The program officially announces that they "cannot do a performance on the Egyptian revolution. The first act of the performance has already taken place on the main stage of Tahrir Square." Yet in the moment of chaos, as the stage is strewn with odds and ends, flags and shoes, 'toy people' from two sides, bikes versus guns, and an impassioned Ghanem speaking, the chaos and courage of Tahrir could never have been recalled as eloquently.

Yet, true to what Vincent says, the play should only be understood as an attempt at understanding the other.

"We can't change the world, and I can't be more intelligent about the [Arab–French] problem. I can just show what I see," says Vincent.

"I still feel cynical," says co–director Girardon about being in two different worlds. "I don't feel very comfortable in my French position here, and my position as a woman."

Gahmi would agree, despite his half–Libyan heritage. "I cannot speak from an Arab point of view. It was my main purpose to come and work here, but I'm French before all. I am raised French, I speak French, and I think in French."

"I believe it is now time for art in Egypt," Vincent nevertheless offers, disagreeing with the (albeit ironic) title of another play.

"An Arab in My Mirror" will travel to Castillo in New York in September and will also later be performed in French with American and French actresses respectively to replace Ghanem's character.

<http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/theater/impressions–in–an–arab–mirror.html> Théâtre



"An Arab in my Mirror" play at Rawabet really good. Very untraditional, abstract series of interconnected images from Arab history & revolts

26 Juin via Mobile Web

Retweeté par Cethura et 1 autre

BY MAY SÉLIM

AL-AHRAM HEBDO-CAIRO – JUNE 29TH TO JULY 5TH 2011, N°877

Theater. After its premiere in Cairo, the play: An Arab In My Mirror, by the Lyonnaise «Company Scenes», will be touring in France, the United States and Germany through 2012. A critical view of the relationship between East and West.

Self-confrontation

What rapport does the West maintain with the Arab world ? A rapport of mistrust, repulsion or rather one of attraction and encouragement ? Throughout history, relationships of love and hate have interweaved. The stakes are higher since the attacks of September 11 and less undefined since the Arab Spring. Such is the view taken by the Lyonnaise «Company Scenes» in its show: An Arab In My Mirror, which has just been presented at the Rawabat Theater in Cairo, in a stage production of Philippe Vincent. «Initially, our theater project was based on a German text addressing the September 11th attacks. We had planned to tour the Arab world. We came to Cairo last March and after the Arab revolutions, we had to do tabula rasa with our preparations. We wanted to address the Egyptian revolution, but since we are not Egyptians, we worked on the idea of the position taken by the West and especially France vis-à-vis these revolutions and the Arab World», explains the director.

Written by Philippe Vincent and Riad Gahmi, the play is based on real testimonies of people who found themselves in emblematic places and who offer us their points of view with regard to the events. A series of monologues in Arabic, French and English, by or concerning Laura Logan, Michele Alliot-Marie, Satam al-Suqami, Betty Ong, Muntazar Al-Zaidi, Fadia Hamdi, Ramy Abdullah, Kamel Mansour, Commander Massoud, Gilad Shalit, Omar Zemmour, Salah Hamouri, Jadwiga Schatz, David Ben Gurion, Sandra Kha, Rachid El-Ouaer Bouraoui, Kateb Yacine ...

Sometimes these monologues are also accompanied by excerpts from press articles ... Vincent plunges us into the different political events and generates humor in offering a critical view of French and Western politics.

In presenting these monologues, the staging respects neither a chronological nor a spatial construction. Instead, a coming and going takes place between the different countries, the important dates, the famous political figures and ordinary witnesses.

On stage, four French actors (including Anne Ferret, the director, choreographer: Florence Girardon and the co-author). Added to them, Solafa Ghanem, an Egyptian actress who plays in Arabic.

In several scenes, she is the key figure, who launches her discourse, imposes her gestures and manipulates her intonation. She is sometimes a man, sometimes a woman ... The other actors participate in the game, the choreography, the mime ... Sometimes, even the roles are reversed. The actors move, create their decor on stage consisting of simple elements and forge their scenography. Everything is based on their movements, their positioning on stage and their accessories.

The monologue of a police officer translates into firm gestures, where the actors are manipulated rather like puppets. Solafa uses her arms and hands to get into his skin.

The media information on the harassment of the CBS announcer is followed by remarks condemning the Arab and Muslim societies. Throughout the choreography, three actresses use the flags of Egypt, France and Tunisia as prayer rugs, prostrating themselves. The monologues continue and the scenes follow one another, proposing a calling into question of the relations between the West and the Arab world.

<http://hebdo.ahram.org.eg/arab/ahram/2011/6/29/arts3.htm>

LE PROGRES

Le Progrès (Lyon)

69G

Lyon nord > Rillieux et le Val de Saône, dimanche, 24 juillet 2011, p. Lyon nord > Rillieux et le Val de Saône11

Vie Quotidienne et Loisir

zoom

« Un arabe dans mon miroir » très applaudi par le public

Pelmard - Barbara (519852); Pelmard - Barbara (519852)

zoom

zoom

Jeudi soir, a eu lieu au Centre chorégraphique national, la représentation de la pièce « Un arabe dans mon miroir ».

Une pièce qui a fait salle comble. Créé à New York en septembre 2011 et orchestré par la compagnie lyonnaise Scènes, le spectacle offre une vision critique du rapport Orient Occident.

Et tout cela, à travers un voyage dans le temps, où théâtre, musique et danse se mêlent, de la guerre d'Algérie à la révolution égyptienne en passant par les attentats du 11 septembre 2001.

Sur scène, tantôt hommes, tantôt femmes, les six comédiens interprètent des personnages, basés sur des témoignages réels, qui donnent leur point de vue sur les événements.

Tout s'appuie sur leurs mouvements, leurs dispositions et les accessoires.

Un spectacle qui s'est achevé sous un tonnerre d'applaudissements dans la salle et qui sera en tournée dans divers théâtres en France et en Allemagne courant 2012.

Note(s) :

zoom

BY NICOLAS BLONDEAU, THE PROGRESS MARCH 14, 2012
THEATER. A PIECE TREATED LIKE A PUZZLE ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE ARAB WORLD AND THE WEST.

What are the relationships maintained between the Arab world and the Western world? How is Arab man seen by Western man? These are the questions that are at the origin of the latest creation of Philippe Vincent: «An Arab In My Mirror.» But it does not pretend have an answer. It attempts to offer us a fractured, fragmentary reflection on these topics. Its text, co-written with Riad Gahmi presents to us excerpts from the press, testimonials of people who have found themselves witness to great events that have marked the relationships between the Arab world and the West over the last fifty years. Evoked, therefore, the decolonization of the early sixties as well as the recent Arab revolutions, passing through the September 11th attacks to the death of bin Laden. This is a puzzle in which we perceive no vision of the whole, but the pieces thrown into a striking disorder. The staging is of an impeccable aesthetic, relying on an impressive interpretation by the actors.

«An Arab In My Mirror» at the Theatre de Vénissieux, 15th and 16th of March at 8PM

Lien :
<http://www.leprogres.fr/art-et-culture/2012/03/14/un-arabe-dans-mon-miroir-au-theatre-de-venissieux>.



BY JEAN-CHARLES LEMONIER, EXPRESSIONS MARCH 2012
«AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR»: THE SHOCK OF IMAGES, THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

The «Company Scenes» proposes on the 15th and 16th of March, «An Arab In My Mirror». Previously presented in Egypt and in New York, this show depicts nearly seventy years of history and the relations between the West and the Arab countries, from the Setif massacre of 1945 to the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.

In 1967, Godard's: «La Chinoise» begins with a heading: «A film in the making». Jean-Pierre Léaud, Juliet Berto and Anne Wiazemsky speak there of Marxism-Leninism, of the rupture with the PCF, the war in Vietnam, Mao, Johnson, Kosygin, Pompidou, Mitterrand ... In a train, Anne Wiazemsky has a discussion with the philosopher Francis Jeanson, a meeting point between the recent past (the

war in Algeria), and a future in preparation, May 68. Similarly, one could say that «An Arab In My Mirror», a show by the Company Scenes staged by Philippe Vincent and presented at the Théâtre de Vénissieux the 15th and 16th of March, is a play in the making.

I will not do insult to Philippe Vincent in resuming on his behalf the slogan of a famous French weekly. Yet his «Arabic In My Mirror» is full of strong images («the shock of pictures») and his words still echo in our minds long after the curtain has fallen («the power of words»).

«An Arab in my mirror» is an even stronger show since it directly addresses recent events, those of the Arab spring, put in the context of our own history (the massacres of October 17th, 1961 in Paris or of May 8th, 1945 in Sétif).

«We had already put on a show in 2007 linked to the presidential elections,» All Is Of The Possible In The Best Of Better Worlds, « explains Philippe Vincent, the last performance having been given on the eve of the first round.»

«An Arab In My Mirror» takes its source from a previous work that the company had to prepare on the subject of September 11th. «We had made reservations to go to Egypt when the Arab revolutions broke out. We found ourselves in Cairo, the month of March, and we thought about it with Riad Gahmi, who is an actor and author: our text on September 11th had started to grow old. It was thrown aside and we wrote this form, which is not yet fully completed today. «

«Everyone remembers what they were doing on September 11th»

It is true that in the rushing pace of events, the two authors could also add Syria. Already shown in Egypt and New York, where it received «an amazing welcome» (in slightly modified versions, the U.S., for example, offering texts on a soldier killed in Iraq and the arrival of his coffin in Reno, awaited by his widow, Katherine Cathey), «An Arab In My Mirror» sweeps through the disorder of nearly seventy years of events.

«I admit that there are some historical errors, as noted by a journalist from Gaza about the passage in his hometown of Michele Alliot-Marie, victim of thrown eggs and shoes, in January of 2011, but it is the first time we see a show that puts our own history at a distance. Everywhere we went we presented ourselves as French. The show starts with the year 1961, a way of saying this is our history, after which we will talk about you, and of the manner in which we see you. «

If words have any weight, the company also knows how to compose stunning images on stage, thanks to a staging that is stripped down but full of ideas. Such as these suspended bottles and the piled up boxes that, Philippe Vincent tells us, facilitate traveling on tour. But also the strength of speeches in Arabic, the burning of the Koran in Florida by the fundamentalist pastor Terry Jones, the immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan by the Taliban, etc..

«Everyone knows what September 11th is, continues Philippe Vincent. And everyone remembers what they were doing at that moment. It is a precise moment of history that is strong. «

The attack against the Twin Towers is at the heart of the show without the act being condemned or justified. In an interview given to an Egyptian site, Philippe explained: «The piece should not be interpreted as an attempt to understand the other. We can not change the world, nor can I be any smarter with regard to Franco-Arab problems. I can only show what I see. «

«An Arab In My Mirror» at the Theatre de Vénissieux, 15th and 16th of March at 8PM

Lien :

<http://www.expressions-venissieux.fr/culture/un-arabe-dans-mon-miroir-le-choc-des-images-le-poids-des-mots-11039/>



BY CELINE PAUIHAC, FRANCETV – CULTURE BOX MARCH 1ST, 2012

«AN ARAB IN MY MIRROR»: AT THEATRE DE VÉNISSIEUX

Inspired by current events from the Arab countries, the Lyonnaise company «Scenes» has created «An Arab In My Mirror.» A theater piece constructed like a documentary, in which fifty or so characters embody the complex relations between the West and the Arab world for over half a century.

Laura Logan, Satam al-Saquami, Kamel Mansour, Commander Massoud ... They are witnesses, anonymous or famous, to the events which have marked recent history such as the war in Algeria, the attacks of September 11th, 2001 or the Egyptian revolution. Only six actors make up this gallery of fifty portraits! Estelle Clement-Bealem has the lead role, energetic one-woman band of this fresco an hour and a quarter long. At her side, Riad Gahmi, Anne Ferret, Florence Girardon, Philippe Vincent and Bob Lipman play a quasi-choreographic score. Their performance, singular, keeps the public in suspense from beginning to end.

The show in French, was adapted into English and Arabic. In each country where the piece tours, a local actress plays the main role and handles 80% of the text in her own language. «By changing the language and the actress, the show will certainly change in its meaning,» hopes the Company Scenes. El Miraya El'Arabia was presented in Cairo for the first time on the 26th and 27th of June 2011, then in New York in early February 2012 under the title An Arab In My Mirror. On the 15th and 16th of March 2012, An Arab In My Mirror will be played at the Theatre of Venissieux.

Culturebox met the two authors of the play, Philippe Vincent and Riad Gahmi.

Culturebox: Where did you get the idea of writing An Arab In My Mirror?

Philippe Vincent: Initially we were supposed to put on a play about the attacks of September 11th, in 2011, Blackbox. That was the plan, we were to play it in New York ... and then when the Arab revolutions broke out, all of a sudden the text aged ten years, all of a sudden everything changed in the rapport with terrorism, and the rapport with Arabs changed. Strangely, we found ourselves in

Egypt in March of 2011. We began to meet people, to look at places, to think about what we could do ... We abandoned the project in progress and when we returned to France in May, the two of us started writing, then went back again to Cairo for one month. We sent the text by mail to Riad's father so he could translate it into Arabic for the Egyptian actress. She had fifteen days to learn it. Everything went so fast!

Culturebox: Why did you translate the text in Arabic and English?

Riad Gahmi: The piece is also to be adapted into German! The principle is that the actress of the country in which we play is a local actress. She speaks in her language and we also speak in her language, so it's a re-creation each time. The context not being the same in the U.S. as in Egypt, the text changes in meaning to the ear of the public.

Culturebox: Are you both very well versed on the history of the events you evoke in the piece?

Philip Vincent: Yes, but at the same time we tried not to stick too much to reality. I would compare our way of proceeding to that of Picasso when he painted Guernica. His work is not realistic! Even if people are not familiar with the event, they can still find meaning. The idea is to choose an event and «focus in» on someone that was there at that time, see if she could have done something different, like the flight attendant Betty Ong aboard one of the aircraft launched into the World Trade Center.

Culturebox: Your «take» on these events, is it not partisan?

Riad Gahmi: We tried to avoid being partisan or activist ... But the choice of events is already partisan in itself, I think. The play was well received in Cairo, where we played in June of 2011. We were more fearful than the actress, Solafa Ghanem. She was uninhibited. There was only one text that posed a problem for her, that of journalist Lara Logan raped in Egypt, she didn't want to say it...

Lien :

<http://www.francetv.fr/culturebox/un-arabe-dans-mon-miroir-au-theatre-de-venissieux-83859>

BY PHILIPPA WELHE, MOUVEMENT N°63 / APRIL–JUNE 2012
REFLECTIONS OF HISTORY

Three mirrors held out by French hands from Cairo, New York and Marseille, form three angles from which to capture the moving pieces of our historical relationships with the Arab lands. An Arab In My Mirror adapts to the languages and places of its transmission, entrusting the lead role to Solafa Ghanem in Cairo (Rawabet Theater, in Arabic), Scarlett Maressa Rivera in New York (Irondale Center, in American English) and Estelle Clement Bealem in Marseille (Theatre des Bernardines, in French). After the piece's New York premier the authors, Riad Gahmi and Philippe Vincent (director) and choreographer Florence Girardon explain.

Who is this «Arab in my mirror?»

– Riad Gahmi:

«The Arab in our mirror makes direct reference to history, and firstly, to the history of France, to its history with the Arab world, an anchoring point from which we enlarge the scope of our investigation. It was important, as much in Egypt as in the United States, to situate ourselves as French people about to take possession of a part of history both Egyptian and American. For example, the first scene of the French version took place on the Pont de Neuilly, October 17, 1961, when Papon suppressed the protests of the FLN in Paris, throwing Algerians into the Seine. An Arab In My Mirror refers to the sum of these events that haunt our history, and, to some extent, weigh upon the present. The show draws from the tangle of events accumulating in time through to September 11th and then on to the Arab revolutions. The title makes reference to that which the Arab revolutions have brought up to date in our own societies and in our own histories, while forcing us to confront them again.

What is the rapport with history, what historical thread do you follow?

– Riad Gahmi:

«The rapport with history is not always linear or chronological. Here in New York, the show begins in Nevada in 2005, and a minute later, we are in Setif in 1945. History is subject to the dramaturgy, and functions by strokes, reminiscences, evocations. The texts are very short, voices come to the surface here and there in no particular order, a little bit like memories. Then these memories organize themselves and sketch out a drawing that becomes more and more legible.

– Philippe Vincent:

«The choice of subjects and characters was very personal for us. The writing unfolded a bit similar to the form of exquisite corpses. Most subjects are drawn from real events. The writing is documentary but passed through a poetic mechanism. We draw inspiration from the document and look at it in the mirror with our faces superimposed. The literary constraint was to begin each text with: «I am ... (such or such a character).» The show's title also responds to this constraint.

After many improvisations with the actors, the stage chronology was determined by questions of dynamics, by the rapport between subjects, and responses to questions. In Egypt, the idea of first treating subjects relating to France, was a way to position ourselves as French, Europeans. This could be simplified in one phrase: «This is how we, the French, see Arabs. You, the Arabs, look at yourselves in the distorting mirror of France. You will not see yourselves, but you will see how we see you. «

What do you expect from this diffracted presentation and what were the reactions in Cairo and in New York?

Philippe Vincent:

«It was impossible to encompass all the history we wanted to address. The subject was too broad. We decided to concentrate on the details of history, on the characters at the interior of an event. Characters who were neither the leaders nor the victims, but who, at the heart of the situation, had the possibility to make it evolve. In Cairo, the room was concentrated, waiting for a political misstep on our part. But rather than being political, the show is a stage work, with a certain distance with regard to history. We do not claim to provide a solution or a balanced view of history. The facts are presented with our point of view. In New York, the situation is much the same, especially on a subject as complex as the September 11th attacks.

How does the presence of a different local actress in each country influence the piece?

– Florence Girardon:

«The handing over of the role of principal actress in a new country, leads us each time to a re-creation and not merely to a reprise. If the nationality of the actress changes, so does the context, her country's rapport with history (its history and its view of history). Particularly since the events are also in movement. So the texts are rearranged or added to in response to changing events. There is a necessary fluctuation to the staging to which is added the inevitably unique interpretation of each new actress in the leading role. The musicality of each language has also its own different rhythmic imprint, adding yet another fluctuating layer onto the form of the work.

– Philippe Vincent:

«The presence of this actress, a native of the place where the play is performed, gives the viewer the sensation that the piece comes from their own, that it is a local production. It installs a kind of normality that removes the exotic side of the presentation of foreign shows. It is an anchoring to the reality of the country through which we pass.



Scarlet Maressa Riviera New York



Solafa Ghanem in Cairo.



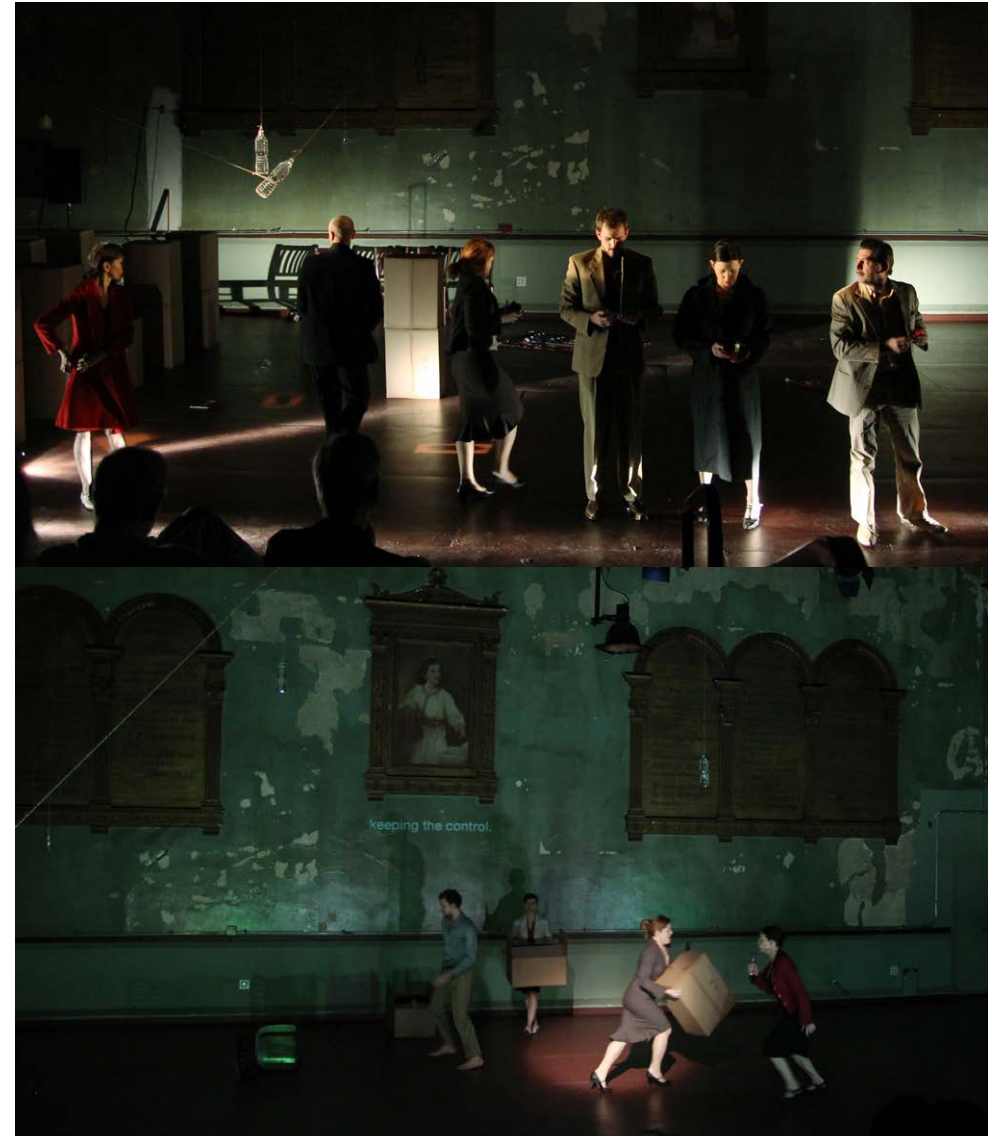
Estelle Clément Bealem in France.



At the CCN Rillieux-la-Pape (France) – Photos : Pierre Grange



At the Rawabet Space Cairo (Egypte) – Photos : Pauline Beugnies



Irondale Ensemble Space Brooklyn (NYC)– Photos : Pierre Grange



CREATIONS BY PHILIPPE VINCENT FOR THEATER

WOYZECK by Georg Büchner (2009)
Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse. (Creation november 2009).

THE CABINET OF THE DOCTOR NARCOTIC by Philippe Vincent (2009)
Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse. (Creation november 2009).

NICO MEDEA ICON after Nico and Heiner Müller (2008)
Forum Freies Theater Düsseldorf (RFA) / Casa musicale de Pigna (Corse) / La Chartreuse Ville-neuve lèz Avignon / NTH8 – Lyon / CDN Sartrouville / Les Bernardines – Marseille / CDN Besançon / Théâtre Saint-Gervais – Genève.

ALL IS OF THE POSSIBLE IN THE BEST OF BETTER WORLDS

by Philippe Vincent (2007)
Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon / Comédie de Saint-Étienne / Théâtre Paris-Villette.

RUDIMENTARY SYSTEM after August Stramm (2006)
Düsseldorf (RFA) / Halle (RFA) / Munich (RFA) / Berlin (RFA) / Lyon / Sartrouville / Marseille / Saint-Étienne / Vénissieux / Lyon / Pigna (Corse) / Bourges / New York / Annaba (Algérie).

PATRIOTISMUS
by Thomas Martin after Mishima (2005)
Théâtre du Point du Jour – Lyon.

ORESTEIA 1 , 2 ET 3 (L'enfant des rêves, Entretiens et Victoire sur un paysage)
by Thomas Martin (2004/2006)
Les Bernardines – Marseille / Théâtre de Vénissieux / NTH8 – Lyon / Casa musicale de Pigna (Corse).

MAN EQUALS MAN by Bertolt Brecht (2003)
Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon.

HEIMASTUCK by Thomas Martin (2002)
Les Subsistances – Lyon / Comédie de Saint-Étienne.

ANATOMY TITUS, FALL OF ROME by Heiner Müller (2001/2002)
Festival d'Avignon in / Théâtre de Gennevilliers / Comédie de Saint-Étienne / Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon / Comédie de Caen.

FATZER after Bertolt Brecht (2000/2001)
Les Bernardines – Marseille / Centre Culturel Charlie Chaplin – Vaulx en Velin / Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon / Les Subsistances – Lyon.

WAITING FOR RICHARD after Shakespeare (2000)
Théâtre de Gennevilliers / Comédie de Saint-Étienne / Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon.

I SHIT ON THE ORDER OF THE WORLD 3

Duo performance with Louis Sclavis and Philippe Vincent (1999/2001)
Théâtre de Gennevilliers / Salle Jeanne d'Arc – Saint-Étienne / Les Subsistances – Lyon / Théâtre de Vénissieux.

MAUSER by Heiner Müller (1993 / 1999)
Théâtre de Vénissieux / Marienbad – Saint-Étienne

THE TASK by Heiner Müller (1998 /1999)
Théâtre de Vénissieux / La Friche – Saint-Étienne / Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon / Espace Malraux – Chambéry.

QUARTETT by Heiner Müller (1999)
Théâtre de Vénissieux.

GERMANIA 3 by Heiner Müller (1996 /1999)
Théâtre de Vénissieux / Festival des 7 Collines Saint-Étienne.

THE MAIDS by Jean Genet (1997)
Théâtre de Vénissieux / Comédie de Saint-Étienne / Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse – Lyon

MOVIES DIRECTED BY PHILIPPE VINCENT

ERROR_1067 (digital 35mm / color / 120 minutes / 2011).
Production : Scènes, Virus productions.

FATZER after Bertolt Brecht (35 mm / b/w / 100 minutes / 2003).
Production Scènes, Virus productions, Théâtre des Bernardines, Centre Culturel Charlie Chaplin, les Subsistances, Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse, Scènes, La Ville de Berlin, le Centre Culturel Français de Berlin, le Goethe Institut.

APRES TOUT C'EST DES CHOSES QUI ARRIVENT ... (Video DV / color/ 76 minutes / 2000).
Directed by Pierre Grange, Philippe Vincent. Production Théâtre de Vénissieux, Un été au cinéma, Cinéville, Scènes, Virus productions.

MAUSER (16 mm / b/w / 40 minutes / 1999) after the play of de Heiner Müller.
Production Théâtre de Vénissieux, Scènes, Virus productions. Edition DVD in Germany (Theater der Zeit, Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus).



SCÈNES

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