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Restore to them...

René Char

Conception: Ali and Hèdi THABET

A Mediterranean opera

Production

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MORE INFORMATION

Ali loves music; Hèdi has always been into poetry. But in fact, both are musical expressions that resonate in the midst of silence, finding harmony through dialogue. Ali and Hèdi Thabet practice the art of balance. They are dancers, circus performers and, most of all, artists of the imponderable; interpreters of the convulsions of time.

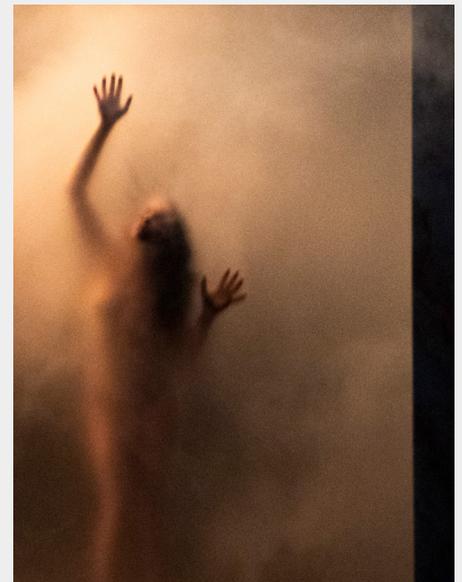
Following their dazzling rise to fame with three works (*Rayahzone*, *Nous sommes pareils à ces crapauds* and *En attendant les Barbares*), Ali and Hèdi Thabet decided to withdraw from the stage for two years, to "take a step back." Their way of escaping what might have been an artificial or inauthentic need to create. "Otherwise, we turn into business managers," they say.



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And now they are back, picking up where they left off: their attraction to Greece, cradle of Europe, to the flourishes of rebetiko, that Greek music with rebellious notes, inspired by the oriental accents of Turkey; to Tunisian traditional songs and to the poetry of René Char.

Their new piece, which takes its title from the René Char's words, draws upon the roots of their artistic process, between Europe and Orient. The strong words of Raimondakis, one of the last lepers of the island of Spinalonga resonate with the figure of Narcissus, symbol for beauty, but also for love and exile. Ali and Hedi Thabet stage a complete performance, similar to opera in its intensity and its accessibility to all.



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Six dancers on stage will embody this poetic adventure, along with nine traditional and classical musicians, including a mezzo-soprano singer that will perform medieval polyphonic pieces and Vivaldi arias. The immense mirror on stage will reflect extracts of Jean-Daniel Pollet's film *L'Ordre*, dedicated to the last lepers of the island of Spinalonga – outcasts of the past echoing outcasts of today.

By Ali and Hèdi Thabet
Hèdi Thabet
Dramaturgic design

Ali Thabet
Musical direction
Florence Samain
Scenography
Ana Samoïlovich
Lighting

DANCERS

Laida Aldaz Arrietta
Gavriela Antonopoulou
Victoria Antonova
Julia Färber
Cruz Isael Mata Rojas
Artemis Stavridi

ACTOR

Vincent Sornaga

MUSICIANS

Catherine Bourgeois
Opera singer
Mourad Brahim
Vocals, kanun
Michalis Dimas
Bouzouki
Stefanos Filos
Violin
Ilias Markantonis
Clarinet, ney, laouto
Ioannis Niarchios
Vocals, guitar
Foteini Papadopoulou
Vocals, baglamas

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION

Etat d'esprit productions

PARTNERS

Théâtre National de Wallonie-Bruxelles, les Théâtres de la ville de Luxembourg, Maison de la culture Amiens, Théâtredelacité – CDN Toulouse Occitanie, Maison des arts Créteil, la Comète – scène nationale de Châlons-en-Champagne, - Etat d'esprit productions.

With the support of the ADAM, the Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles, the Mahmoud Darwich/Bozar chair, La Villette-Paris.

Restore to Them...

Restore to them what they have no longer.

They will see again the harvest grain enclosed in the stalk and swaying on the grass.

Teach them, from the fall to the soaring, the twelve months of their face,

They will cherish their emptiness until their heart's next desire;

For nothing is shipwrecked or delights in ashes;

And for the one who can see the earth's fruitful end,

Failure is of no moment, even if all is lost.

René Char

— *Why did you choose Greece, its myths and its music as the inspiration for this new piece?*

Ali: Following the success of our three last pieces, we both needed to take a step back. Clear our minds to be able to create again. Some months ago, I moved to Athens, a place that is in line with my pathway: a place that originated the European idea and yet nurtured by oriental culture. This is where I discovered the richness of the rebetiko. Similar to traditional arab and tunisian compositions, this Greek music is a kind of oriental blues influenced by gipsy music, finely woven with an intensely modern songwriting.

Hèdi: During those two years holding back, I also looked out for renewal, questioning necessity and meaning of creation. This connected with other questions regarding poetry, music and movement. Once, after a show in Athens, a woman of the audience told me about the myth of Narcissus, that is not just about the story of the mirror, but also deals with beauty, love and exile. With that encounter as a starting point, I decided to work a free and poetic re-interpretation of that myth, inviting artisting forms that matter to me.



Picture of Raimondakis, in L'Ordre by Jean-Daniel Pollet (1973)

— *How will you take this fusion to the stage?*

Hèdi: There will be a mediterranean terrace where the nine musicians will stand as the dancers will move on the bare stage. Narcissus will not be materialized as an individual but by a body made of six dancers, guided through the piece by the voice of an opera singer. Through Narcissus' massive mirror, excerpts from Jean-Daniel Pollet's film L'Ordre about the last lepers living on the island of Spinalonga will arise. The words of a banned man will confront the intimate and social dimension of the myth.

Ali: The composition of the band also expresses our desire of a total and open art. There will be two traditional players of tunisian instruments (oud, kanoun) that are singers and drummers as well, four Greek musicians (violin, guitar, percussions and vocals, clarinet), two Belgian gypsies, and a mezzo-soprano who will be singing arias by Vivaldi as well as pieces from the Italian polyphonic medieval repertoire – which is very close from Andalusian and Moroccan musical traditions...

TOURING TEAM

20 persons
2 choreographers
14 artists on stage
3 technical managers
1 production manager

Team provenance:
Athens (11), Brussels (4), Oman (1),
Paris (2), France (2)

MINIMUM STAGE DIMENSIONS

12 m x 12 m
Adjustments are possible.

SCENOGRAPHY

- Movable video frame in the center and at the back of the stage.
- Mediterranean terrace for the musicians.
- Some tables and chairs

The theaters will provide a projector (12 000 lumens), a smoking machine and a fog machine.

TRANSPORTATION

Truck driven by technical managers.
Setting the day before show.
Takedown right after the performance.

Their first joint piece, *Rayahzone*, starring three dancers and five Tunisian Sufi singers, was created in March 2012 at the Théâtre de Suresnes Jean Vilar, and was performed at least a hundred times.

Nous sommes pareils à ces crapauds

A choreographic and musical piece with three dancers and five musicians. Featuring a repertoire of rebetiko and traditional Tunisian and Jewish music. Created in Athens in 2014 and performed more than 90 times.

En attendant les Barbares

With music from Egypt (vocals), Italy and medieval times, this piece was created in October 2015 in tribute to the shipwreck near Lampedusa, on one of the island's beaches. It was performed on an exceptional basis at the Théâtre National de Bruxelles in October 2016.



Ali and Hèdi Thabet

© Ana Samoilovich



Ali and Hèdi Thabet in *Rayahzone*

Ali Thabet's career has been filled with numerous artistic experiences. His curiosity first led him to study photography from 1994 to 1997 at the Brussels School of Photography. In 2000, he joined the National Centre for Circus Arts in Châlons-en-Champagne, France. Ever since, he has been – by turns or simultaneously – a dancer, circus performer, actor and singer, and has worked under the direction of eminent artists including Joseph Nadj (dancer-circus performer in *Il n'y a plus de firmament* – 2004), Francis Viet, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (*Tempus Fugit* – 2005, *Sutra* – since 2009, *Tezuka* – 2011), and Philippe Découflé (dancer-actor-singer in *Cyrk* 13-2002).

Hèdi Thabet started out at the Brussels School of Circus as a very young juggling prodigy and acrobat. An illness forced him to permanently give up both disciplines and find a new role on stage. He created a performance in 1997 at the Tunis National Theater with a group of Brussels School of Circus graduates. A long period of introspection followed, during which he constantly reflected on stage-related questions before creating *Ali* in 2008 with Mathurin Bolze, a two-man show which they performed more than 200 times worldwide.