

THE THEATRES OF MICHAEL BATZ



The Djeli

"I think I'm a djeli, a griot, as they say in Africa: a storyteller, witness, keeper of the memory... I think it's important to work on burning news; I also believe that art has a vital duty to remember, to pass the torch, not to forget!

Magic and Realism

We try to create a theatre of magic and Realism, therefore we also work between reality and dreams, to break and to cross the border between the living and the dead. Isabel Allende once told me that "people only die when they are forgotten, if you remember them they will always be with you". Through remembrance, art can sometimes achieve a little bit of justice. Our work, then, is also to evoke the spirits of those who are otherwise forgotten. We owe it to the dead. And to the living.

Towards a new popular theatre :

Tell stories !

Post-modern theatre is lost in the disease of abstraction, as Juan Radrigan once told me. The supreme purpose of theatre must be to tell stories. On top of that, we must attract those who are afraid of a theatre that confronts them with the too serious and negative. The genre of our time is tragicomedy: we need to rediscover the importance of laughter, in the public theatre !!! In Isabel Allende's "House of the Spirits", for example, as in Shakespeare's histories, there are many very funny scenes, even against a more sombre canvas.

In rehearsals:



with Dario Fo



with Isabel Allende



My masters, Dario Fo and George Tabori, have shown that farce allows us to address our crazy reality, - for this very reason I love Feydeau! And it was Brecht himself, who asked to ensure that the spectators have "Spas" ("joy, fun")...

The importance of Diversity

To be really popular, the queues in front of the theatre must be like the queues at the school gates: but to reach goal, you also need something else: the people on the stage must be a mirror of the people in the audience - and therefore, in society!

I am very proud to be a pioneer of "integrated casting", already when in London. My troupe has always included artists from all backgrounds, among them refugees and exiles. In France too, I want to win this essential bet, to work with people in all their diversity, all "backgrounds", be they in a wheelchair, or blind, etc...! And I hope, there's no need to say it, since I work mostly with female authors and with actresses: gender equality is an essential basis. So is avoidance of age discrimination." **MB**.

Michael Batz : the director

Continuing his aim to create a form of magical realism and give a voice to the "voiceless", Michael has also worked in recent years in France with his international troupe which features many exiled and refugee artists, after already more than 15 years in London. There he often was the first to direct major playwrights like George Tabori, Bernard-Marie Koltès, Heiner Müller, Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Dario Fo, always in close contact with the authors; many of them have become friends. His greatest creation was ***The House of The Spirits***, Isabel Allende's great novel about Chile, which he adapted together with the author: an extraordinary epic in 2 parts and 8 hours.

Her first creation in France was *La Femme Fantôme* (*The Bogus Woman*) by Kay Adshead, at the Theatre Gerard Philipe, Centre Dramatique National, in Saint-Denis, just outside Paris, and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne... - a major success, which launched 15 years of marvellous creations – see following pages:



15 years of marvellous shows in France :



LA FEMME FANTÔME (*The Bogus Woman*) by Kay Adshead

The first time that French theatre tackled the theme of refugees; at the same time, Michael's first creation in France. A huge success, premiered at the Théâtre Gérard Philippe, Saint-Denis; revived the following season; played a month at the Théâtre Vidy Lausanne, twice a month in Brussels, at the National Theatres of Toulouse, of Cergy, Guadeloupe, Limoges, Brittany, at the Stuttgart European Festival... more than 150 times.

"The brilliant performance and the deep song give all its dignity to this cantata of despair" (Le Monde)

"It's powerful, enlightening, moving. With noble means, Michael Batz succeeds his French debut with this kind of Kafkaesque trial..."

J.P. Léonardini (L'Humanité)



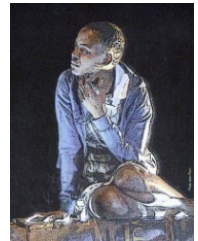
"Political theatre? Yes. Which rebels, attacks, denounces injustice as it does intolerance. With his own weapons, poetry, sincerity... A Tour de force!" Michel Caspary (24Heures - Lausanne)

Directed and Designed by **Michael Batz** www.lafemmefantome.com

BONES (*Les Os*) by Kay Adshead

South Africa today, a country of young people still weighed down by the heavy legacy of Apartheid.

"A white Lady (Nadine Sevrán, astonishingly sensitive in this role of a woman with unconscious arrogance due to her social position, made dry by a life endured and accepted) has managed to forget her past.



But in the guise of Beauty, a little sister who has become beautiful and dignified (Wilda Philippe, a revelation, both joyful and bitter, innocent and bruised, sunny and dark), the past, returns to settle its accounts... the show is based on the strength of the text and the emotion of the acting !" (Journal de Saint-Denis)

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.bones-les-os.com

RED DEVILS (*Les Diables Rouges*) by Debbie Horsfield



Created at the Avignon Festival a few years ago with great success: a comedy *"with British humour that hits the mark"* (20 minutes). *"We laugh a lot in this English play, pitched between Ken Loach and Full Monty"* (Le Progrès). This new creation will play in 2024 for the Football-Euro, and the Olympic Games.

"The public laughs to tears... desperately funny, the play translates with a raw and direct language the malaise of young people from the suburbs. Great comedy." (Le Progrès)



"Extremely intelligent... Michael Batz is full of love for these lost girls and at the same time the show really exudes violence, terror..." (Le Masque & La Plume)

"Driven like a beating drum, by amazing actresses" (Ouest France)

Directed and Designed by **Michael Batz**

www.reddevils.fr



THE CAGE by Ava-Gail Gardiner

The young Jamaican writer wrote this play for us based on a news item: She tells the fate of Haitian refugees who fail in their attempt to reach Miami, and are shipwrecked in Jamaica: the prison is overcrowded, they find themselves in a narrow cage in the prison courtyard... the World premiere was in Haiti itself, in a co-production with the National Theatres of Martinique, and Guadeloupe ...

"A text to read and reread, talented actors, and a great moment of theatre..." (newsantilles.com)

Directed by **Michael Batz**
Beaumarchais Prize for Caribbean Writing

www.la-cage.fr



Following the success of LA CAGE we have commissioned a new piece from Ava-Gail about a young female footballer growing up in the toughest ghetto in Jamaica
www.spanish-town.fr

Past Productions :

BURNING PATIENCE by Antonio Skàrmeta



Both moving and light, deep and funny: a comedy that turns into tragedy, a love story that becomes a story of loss. The staging, as always,

highlights music and images in a cinematic way.

“With this journey, deliciously supported by songs and music, we deeply and joyously immerse ourselves in the story of an entire people through the voice of a universal poet, a factor of humanity. It's overwhelming.” (Le Monde)



COMEDY WITHOUT TITLE by Federico Garcia Lorca

Spain, 1936. A few weeks after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Federico Garcia Lorca was arrested and "disappeared" - killed by the fascists at dawn on August 19th.



Sometimes reminiscent of the films of his friend Buñuel, this is his last piece, an extraordinary work which haunts the spirits, at the height of his power and his theatrical imagination, mixing fantasy and realism without ever ceasing to amaze, amuse, and provoke the viewer.
(Co-production Circus Academy Fratellini)

“A captivating piece of total theatre”
(Michael Billington, The Guardian)

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.diptyque2023.fr

A “Theatrical Diptych” :

There are so many links between the Spain of the 1930s and the Chile of Allende: the strong friendship between Neruda and Lorca; finally the tragedy of fascism. It is therefore possible to mirror Antonio Skàrmeta's comedy with the last fragmentary and very prophetic text of Lorca, if theatres so wish.

A SONG FOR CHILI

www.chansonpourlechili.com

Texts by Pablo Neruda, Songs by Victor Jara.

A cabaret-show, "Chile 50 years" commemorations (1973 - 2023)

Past Productions :



WORKING GIRLS by Isabel Allende, etc.

A Passionate show that gives a voice to prostitutes. Two worlds, two universes, served by two magnificent actresses, in an exceptional evening.

"The central theme... is the strength of these women, their resilience, how they resist... two very different atmospheres, one is dark, desperate, the other is joyful, luminous. A woman disappears; another woman becomes a myth." (Je n'ai qu'une vie)

"Go see the very interesting *Working Girls* by Michael Batz: Two strong texts, on the theme of prostitution, served by two actresses who are no less strong!" (Valerie de Saint-Do)

With **Remi Oriogun-Williams** and **Maiko Vuillod**
Assistant **Nature Hill** Set **Isabelle Colchen**

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.working-girls.fr



A CHRISTMAS CAROL by Charles Dickens, adapted by Michael Batz

A CHRISTMAS CAROL is both a "ghost story" and a very funny comedy; a realistic and moving evocation of the hard life in Queen Victoria's England, and a magical play where dreams become real... And a fierce criticism of 19th century capitalism, which is no less severe when delivered by feelings and emotions...

The first big success of the young Charles Dickens, his novel will be presented in a new version for the theatre by Michael Batz who has forged a reputation for theatrical adaptations with his success of *The House of The Spirits* by Isabel Allende.

As always in his shows, music, singing and strong images combine in an evening for the whole family! Perfect for Christmas 2024, ...

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.chantdenoel.fr



MAJOR PROJECTS

THE HOUSE OF SPIRITS by Isabel Allende

In September 2023, we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the coup d'état against Salvador Allende... Michael Batz and Isabel Allende adapted her novel into an epic show in two parts, lasting a total of 7 hours. We are very much hoping to revive it on this occasion.



“ Isabel Allende's marvellous two part play *The House of the Spirits* has a similar narrative thrust, imaginative energy and gallery of memorable eccentrics : like Dickens, Ms Allende has become the conscience and chronicler of a nation..

The story is one of **epic scope and intimate detail**. Within a four generational family saga, it offers a social history of 20th century Chile, ending with the assassination of Salvador Allende (the author's uncle). It is a **testament to the survival of the human spirit, female virtues and the socialist impulse**.

Michael Batz's production from an adaptation prepared with the author **brilliantly captures the book's vision... The masterstroke is to give the narration to the dead (the spirits), thus extending the central image**. The whole effect is richly visual. Jamie Vartan's ramshackle set (**beautifully lit by Ian Scott**) gives the impression, even when empty, that it teems with life.

And the novel's verbal exuberance is thrillingly transmuted into music and dance. The cast's energy and commitment are heroic... and the copious nudity both lyrical and poignant... eight hours of stunning theatre, which should on no account be missed... “

(Michael Arditti, Evening Standard, on the London Premiere)

Directed by Michael Batz

www.lamaisonauxesprits.com



The Press on the London Premiere :

"An absorbing, exhausting spectacle... memories harden into facts, whims into obsessions and visions into realities There are wonderful comic moments... haunting songs by the Chilenos Violeta Parra and the murdered Victor Jara beautifully sung ... Try to see both parts in one day Characters reappear like old friends."

Financial Times

"Britain's only international company, Yorick Theatre, have a positively operatic transformation live music, songs, Chilean sounds, fire-eaters, dancers, magical apparitions: the whole works a most wonderful sort-of-surreal set... I found myself the actual spirits gripped the whole time about what was happening. someone dies they don't disappear, they are there on stage... commenting on the action: I loved it very much. very strong central performances well worth seeing!"

BBC

"The theatrical potential of Isabel Allende's magic realism is superbly realised in Michael Batz' production which casts its spell with the aid of a little visual trickery and some mesmerising musical sorcery. ... an audacious undertaking... magic and mystery for a few hours."

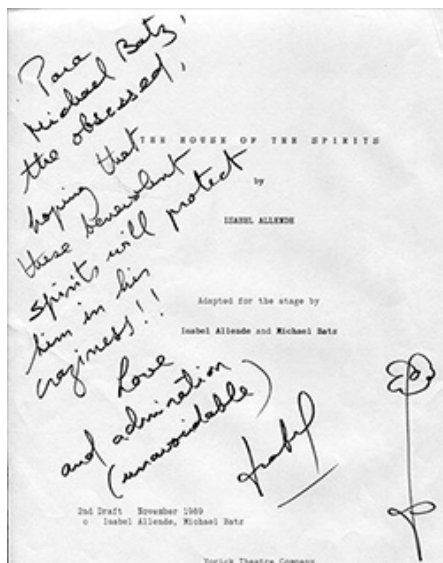
The Guardian

"It is seldom one experiences such power that is possible through the theatre. commitment of the international cast and staff is overwhelming. Josephine Welcome as Clara and Alkis Kritikos as her husband, Esteban, give overwhelming performances. As to Michael Batz one can only say to such vision and dedication go on!"

London Theatre Review

"Most astonishing... eight hours of sheer dramatic magic... this amazing production... it's a shattering show, with its rich performance imagery and musical support brilliantly catching the passion, politics and pictorial extravagance of a novel which previously I'd have thought impossible to stage."

Ian Herbert, Theatre Record, London





FALSTAFF by William Shakespeare

"Shakespeare's **Henry IV part One** and **Henry IV part Two**, are at the centre of his cycle which recounts more than 100 years of English history (from Richard II to Richard III). They are central because more than the other histories they mix politics and the life of the people : And because they are linked and coloured by this magnificent and unforgettable figure which is *Falstaff*.

Inspired by Orson Welles' film *Chimes at Midnight*, we will create a single evening of theatre, giving full value to

the most important character. **FALSTAFF** is a great tragicomic epic that plunges us into the centre of medieval life, - and reminds us with awe and laughter of our lives today.



A formidable cast: David Ayala, Hovnatan Avedikian, Serge Avedikian, Nadine Servan, Fred Kontogom, and many others...

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.falstaff.fr

PS. as a supplement, or appetizer:
Performance in English:

The company MB present,
"Sir John Falstaff presents Henry V by William Shakespeare!"

A one-man one-hour version of Shakespeare's play, the sequel to *Henry IV parts 1 & 2*.

Co-production : La Scène Anglaise – English Theatre in France



Also Part of our "Play Shakespeare !" Project will be several Professional Workshops (AFDAS), bilingual, but accessible to non-English speakers, starting in spring 2024. Following these workshops, even at times in parallel, I will stage two collages of Shakespearean scenes and monologues:



**The Hollow Crown
Lunatics and Lovers**

Flexible shows, available for theatres, libraries, social centres, schools, etc.

"Play Shakespeare !"

MAJOR PROJECTS

THE TEMPEST / LA TEMPÊTE

by William Shakespeare

With elements of
UNE TEMPÊTE by Aimé Césaire

French and English versions

Shakespeare still works on so many different levels, nowhere more so than in *The Tempest*. Love story and revenge story, discourse on magic and art, and discourse on colonialism !



In 2005 I had the great privilege of meeting Aimé Césaire, and talking to him; and of course we talked a lot about Shakespeare , and about Césaire's adaptation of *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête*. This project is largely inspired by this meeting, and by our common deduction that Shakespeare is already very close to Césaire, at least in the original, a fact which centuries of bad translations have obscured and forced Césaire to create his version..



The cast includes several of my actor friends who I met in my work in the Caribbean, alongside at least one great French actor...

We're going to focus on the French language version first, but I'm already thinking about the possibility of staging the original text, almost in parallel, if our means allow it.

Our project "Play Shakespeare !" is not going to be reduced to just these two ideas. I just as much want to stage *Twelfth Night* or revisit one of my early successes, *The Winter's Tale*. It is enough that someone gives me the means and the opportunity...

And in my head I am already preparing, finally, (but this time in English) my eternal desire, especially ever since having staged "Hamletmachine" by Heiner Müller: *Hamlet - Memories of a Ghost*.

www.michaelbatz.org
mbtheatre@hotmail.com

Coming Soon :





JOURNEY TO THE WEST by Jatinder Verma

Three plays, *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Apocalypse*, in an extraordinary, funny, and touching trilogy, which tells a story of migrations: First of the Indian workers who are brought by their colonial masters to East Africa to build the railway; then their exodus to the totally unknown “mother-country” in the 60s; finally, the situation of young people in the suburbs today.

Famous Anglo-Indian author and director, Jatinder will work in close collaboration with us, in particular by rewriting the third part to adapt it to speak equally of the situation in France today.

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.trilogievoyages.fr



TALES OF EVA LUNA

by Isabel Allende

Michael Batz worked with Isabel on the theatrical version of her incredible novel *THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*: here we continue the collaboration with several of Isabel's short stories, *the Tales of Eva Luna*: magical realism and Latin music mingle in a captivating show, erotic and with a lot of humour!

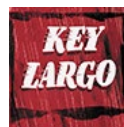
Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.eva-luna.org



KEY LARGO, FLORIDA adapted by Michael Batz
from John Huston's film and Maxwell Anderson's play

A gangster boss takes over the dilapidated hotel of an old man and his daughter... a devastating hurricane is approaching... all this forces a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, turned cynical, to face his responsibilities...



Anderson was once a famous American dramatist, and his play was filmed in 1948 by John Huston: magnificent but flawed despite a cast of Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and Edward G Robinson... In our show these two versions combine in an evening of unforgettable theatre...

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.key-largo-floride.fr

Coming Soon :



MASADA – A REPORT

by George Tabori

George was the patron of our company, alongside Dario Fo, until his death in 2007: a genius of European theatre, but also a screenwriter in Hollywood, and much more. "Together with Dario he was my master, and above all a great friend, who helped me a lot; I miss him so very much." MB. We begin with this tragic trio; and we continue with *Mein Kampf – Farce...*

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.taborismasada.fr



THE KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

by Manuel Puig

Valentin, a political prisoner, and Luis, a gay man, share a prison cell; Luis retells the old movies he loves... Against all odds, a certain complicity develops... There is also *'The Woman'*, ghostly, non-realistic: incarnation of these men's dreams in the bare and brutal cell, created with the music and dance of Argentinian tango. The success of this play inspired an Oscar-winning film...

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.femmearaignee.fr



Two projects :

CARIBBEAN WOMEN

Several one-woman-plays about important women in Caribbean history, commissioned from Bernard Lagier, Laurence Joseph, Ava-Gail Gardiner, etc...

Followed by, in a later phase of work :

SOLITUDE adapted from the novel by André Schwarz-Bart : *Solitude* is a historical character, a figure in the struggle of French Caribbean slaves for their liberation, against Napoleon's betrayal. A collaboration with Guadeloupean artists Max Diakok, Karine Pedurand, Laurence Joseph, ... with partners in the Caribbean, and elsewhere...

Directed by **Michael Batz**

www.solitude-theatre.fr

