



PRESS KIT

MILO RAU / IIPM – INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL MURDER

THE CIVIL WARS

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CREDITS

THE CIVIL WARS

A PRODUCTION OF MILO RAU / INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL MURDER

PREMIERE: 27 AUGUST 2014, ZÜRCHER THEATER SPEKTAKEL

FURTHER SHOWS

28.-31.08.14, Zürcher Theater Spektakel; 8.-10.09.14, La Bâtie - Festival de Genève; 2.-4.10.14, Kaserne Basel; 15.-16.11.14 Next Festival Kortrijk; 20-21.02.15 Théâtre d'Arras – Tandem Douai-Arras; 10.-15.03.15, Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers Paris; 2.-4.04.2015 Schlachthaus Bern; 17.-25. April 2015 F.I.N.D.-Festival Schaubühne Berlin

CONCEPT, TEXT & DIRECTION: Milo Rau

TEXTE AND PERFORMANCE: Karim Bel Kacem, Sara De Bosschere, Sébastien Foucault, Johan Leysen

RESEARCH & DRAMATURGY: Eva-Maria Bertschy SCENOGRAPHY & COSTUMES: Anton Lukas VIDEO: Marc Stephan SOUNDDESIGN: Jens Baudisch LIGHTING DESIGNER: Abdeltife Mouhssin, Bruno Gilbert MUSICAL ADVICE: Colette Broeckert, Eurudike De Beul DIRECTION ASSISTANT: Mirjam Knapp RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Aurélie Di Marino SCENOGRAPHIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANT: Bruno Gilbert, Aymrik Pech PRODUCTION MANAGER: Mascha Euchner-Martinez, Eva-Karen Tittmann PUBLIC RELATIONS: Yven Augustin CORPORATE DESIGN: Nina Wolters WEB-MASTERING: Jonas Weissbrodt

Production IIPM. Co-production *Kunstenfestivaldesarts in collaboration with Beursschouwburg (Brussels), Zürcher Theater Spektakel, Kaserne Basel, Schlachthaus Theater Bern, La Bâtie – Festival de Genève, Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz Berlin, Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers Paris*

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Special thanks *to Radouane Attiya, Dyab Abou Jahjah, Saliha Ben Ali, Bilal Benyaich, Dimitri Bontinck, Sébastien Courtoy, Christophe Marchand, Richard Millet, Anne Morelli, Kurt Pelda, Véronique Loute, Roland Van Der Hoeven, Cécile Vanderpelen, Jan Van Goethem, Françoise Wallemacq, Catherine Wilkin, Els Witte, Hosni Zahri.*

1. THE CIVIL WARS

What's is going on with Europe? What are these times in which we're living? With "The Civil Wars" Milo Rau stages a four-voice lecture-performance about the premises of insurrection and political engagement. Following the twists and turns of their own biographies, four actors – Karim Bel Kacem, Sara De Bosschere, Sébastien Foucault, and Johan Leysen – question the human condition in Europe at the start of the 21st century.

On stage is a living room. In it are four persons, above it are their faces and, on a screen, an oversized projection of the interior. Based on the story of a young Belgian who travelled to Syria to fight for the formation of a caliphate, they recall their own youth and tell of their fathers and how they managed to get away from them. They are telling stories of their youth, of their fathers, and how they managed to break away from them. They are telling stories of insanity, faith, and political conviction and they ask: What is left of it? What keeps society together in an era of radicalism, with the threat of climate wars and a general decline in values? How does a period of cultural upheaval translate into people's private lives? And is theatre today still as suitable a political medium of reflection as it was back then? The intimate stories of the four performers on stage reflect politics, and in them, a European picture unfolds – a living tableau of our time.

The international press reviews came to the same conclusion: Milo Rau has created a masterpiece. "Milo Rau digs for the innermost in a person and scrapes it out. This is the way he reflects the world in

»Captivating...a political psycho-analysis, a journey to the heart of the war of our time.«

René Solis, Libération



Sara De Bosschere and Sébastien Foucault.

detail." (Barbara Villiger-Heilig, NZZ). "The Civil Wars" is also Milo Rau's most personal piece so far. 'Of all the huge topics that have worried us the last few years – the Breiviks and holy warriors and right-wing populists whom we've bidden on stage and in front of the camera – it's the "little things", the private stories that have remained,' Rau comments about the piece.

"The Civil Wars" is the first part of the "Europe Trilogy", which Rau will follow up in the 2014/15 season at Residenztheater Munich and at the Berliner Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin. The director will simultaneously work on his new film "The Congo Tribunal", a German-Swiss co-production on the war in Eastern Congo.

2. PRESS COMMENTS

"The Civil Wars" uses the art of Bach's fugue to explore the unthinkable and its vanishing points: from tragedy to a documentation of society, from the "news report" to the fundamental question of the point of origin of our stories, and all of this in the first-person singular... a masterpiece."

Sylvia Botella, Mouvement

"Milo Rau digs for the innermost in a person and scrapes it out. This is the way he reflects the world in detail."

Barbara Villiger-Heilig, NZZ

"As Ingmar Bergmann did in his films, Milo Rau crawls so deep under the skin of his cast."

Pieter T'Jonck, De Standaard

"Captivating...a political psycho-analysis, a journey to the heart of the war of our time."

René Solis, Libération

"A captivating and gorgeous experience."

Christophe Fellmann, nachtkritik.de

"The Civil Wars' is magnificent, you leave the theatre deeply moved by the stories of the actors."

Guy Duplat, La Libre

"A radical diagnosis of society. The director achieves an intensity that has a real emotional impact."

Andrea Kasiske, Deutsche Welle

3. "THIS STRANGE EUROPE..." IN CONVERSATION WITH MILO RAU

In "The Civil Wars", the biographies of the actors are put in focus, but you began your research with the Belgian Salafists. How did this come about?

Milo Rau: I've been looking into Salafism, a particularly purist, extremist form of Islam, for a long time. Yet, as a portrait of Europe, as I had wanted to try with "The Civil Wars", it was ultimately only interesting as a starting point, as a particularly crass symptom of our society, as an existential possibility for each of us. This is because everything I had spoken about with the young jihadists and their families I could see reflected in the actors in a different way: Extremism, despondency, madness, the feeling of having lost one's roots, a prevailing mood almost apocalyptic in form, but also a kind of wisdom. Another thing missing, like with most Salafist youths, were the father figures, and that has become the main focus of the play. As such, "The Civil Wars" developed in this private direction as if on its own.

Is it a very unusual kind of on-stage emotional striptease?

Milo Rau: The actors talk of very personal, but also very dark moments in their lives. Here, however, the focus is not on they themselves, instead they exemplify changes in the society of Europe over the last 30 years. Like in an ancient drama, the ones speaking are special people, but they are figures who represent us all. This is why the acts of the play have allegorical titles like "The Great Movements", "The History of Madness" and "Discourse on the Method". For the actors, this has given them a voice, with which they use their own biography as a reason or special case, but translate it into something mainstream by using this strict formalisation. Moving away from the personal and towards the universal was important to us.

“The Civil Wars” has been referred to as your most personal play to date. Why do you think that is?

Milo Rau: The stories told are very personal as they really were experienced by the actors. But the play also reconsiders what it means to be an actor, that is, being on stage and simultaneously talking about oneself and society. In my work up to now, it's well known that I rejected "talking about oneself". As such, many French and Belgian critics have seen this as a major shift in my work, that someone suddenly starts saying "I" on stage; these someones being quite famous actors in Johan Leysen and Sara de Bosschere. As I said, I had been looking for this style for quite some time and once I found it, I knew immediately: This is how it has to be!

How do fatherlessness and a lack of prospects, which is said of today's society, influence the future?

Milo Rau: I believe that European society and Europe as a whole are about to experience a momentous shift, one which has been in the making for quite some time now, both in regard to our relationship with our past and with our future. There are very vague, very academic ideas as to what a collective utopia of "Europe" could look like, how a future European society will work. You can see this in the stories of my actors too: the feeling that a story is nearing completion, with all its ideologies and hopes, that the old Europe is coming to an end and no one knows exactly what's to come.

So what kind of time are we living in?

Milo Rau: Well, we shouldn't stop looking for it. The Belgian-Lebanese political activist Dyab Abou Jahjah, who helped us with our research, prophesied in the second version of "Die Berliner Gespräche" (The Berlin Dialogs): "Either we find a common story or in a few years there'll be civil war in Europe." And in my opinion, that's still putting it rather optimistically. As a NASA study recently established, there's no avoiding an ecological catastrophe, and the 21st century will be one of massive climate wars. Anyone interested in a more or less apt description of what our planet is facing from the middle of the century onwards: It is described quite accurately in the Apocalypse of John.

Doesn't that sound very pessimistic?

Milo Rau: No. Ultimately, the main focus is on commitment: As such, as early as in the prologue, "The Civil Wars" asks the question as to the possibility of becoming politically and socially active, practically as a leitmotif. However, it also vehemently asks the question: Why are we happily going on with our daily activities even though we know that the ecological collapse is coming around 2070 and all hell will break loose? Why are we pretending not to notice that Europe is turning into a fortress? Why are we tolerating all these terrible images in the news, in papers, on YouTube, without doing anything? Even though, right now, we are really being affected by, for instance, our example of the ecological apocalypse. These important political questions of our time are reflected in one way or another in the personal stories of each and every individual.

You develop your plays yourself, often together with your actors. Do you find the classical form of theatre production boring?

Milo Rau: Funnily enough, some 'classical' moments are used again in "The Civil Wars" for the first time in a long time: The actors perform a sequence from Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard"; there is music from Bach and 'Handel... But you're right, seven years ago, I more or less stopped doing classical theatre because I had lost interest in it. In truth, I'm a big fan of Chekhov, Shakespeare, and at the start of my career I did adaptations of, for example, Euripides. Classical theatre is fantastic. But it needs, for me at least, a reason, a truly compelling reason, to say something, not with my own words, the words of my time, but with those of Chekhov. In terms of "The Civil Wars", the figures of the actors are more interesting to me than the figures from the tragedy of Euripides could be. They are more exemplary. Yes, in "The Civil Wars", we behave as if we were all figures from an ancient or Elizabethan drama. As if our story was a myth, the only story worth telling. And that's what it's all about in our time: Finding as simple a language as possible for what befalls us, for these violent revolutions at the centre of which we stand.

The interview was conducted by Rolf Bossart and Andreas Frehner.

4. MILO RAU / IIPM

Milo Rau was born in 1977 in Bern. He trained in sociology, German, and Romance studies in Paris, Zurich, and Berlin under Tzvetan Todorov and Pierre Bourdieu, among others. In 1997 he started his first reporting trips (Chiapas, Cuba); from 2000, he worked as an author for NZZ, and from 2003 as a director and author at home and abroad with the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, Staatsschauspiel Dresden, HAU Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee Zurich, Teatrul Odeon Bucharest, Beursschouwburg in Brussels, and others.

In 2007, Rau founded the theatre and film production company IIPM, which he has been running ever since. His films and theatrical re-enactments have formed part of some of the biggest national and international festivals: in 2012-2013, the Berliner Theater-treffen, Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival (Groningen), Wiener Festwochen, and the Radikal Jung Festival, where he was awarded the critics' prize for direction. Alongside his work for stage and film, Milo Rau lectures on directing, cultural theory, and social sculpture at universities and colleges. His productions, campaigns, and films (including: "Montana", "Die letzten Tage der Ceausescus", "Hate Radio", "City of Change", "Breiviks Erklärung", "Die Moskauer Prozesse" and "Die Zürcher Prozesse") participated in the Festival d'Avignon, among others, and were nominated for the Prix de Soleure, while also touring the world. The Swiss newspaper Tagesanzeiger recently named him as one of the "mossought-after directors of today", with the German weekly Der Freitag calling him "the most controversial theatre director of his generation".



In 2007, Milo Rau founded the theatre and film production company (IIPM) in Zurich and Berlin.



The actors Karim Bel Kacem, Sébastien Foucault, Sara De Bosschere and Johan Leysen (from left to right) at a rehearsal in Brussels.

5. CAST

KARIM BEL KACEM, born in 1985, has Berber roots. His father emigrated from northern Morocco to France in the 1980s. Karim Bel Kacem studied drama and fine art in Paris (at the Conservatoire in the 6th arrondissement) and in Lausanne (HETSR, Manufacture). As an actor he has worked with the likes of Arpad Schilling, Yan Duyvendack and Claudia Bosse. As a director, his productions include the lecture-performance *You will never walk alone*. He also runs the Geneva theatre production office THINK THANK THEATRE.



SARA DE BOSSCHERE first appeared on stage as a child, playing one of the lead roles in Lucas Vandevorst's production of Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* at the age of sixteen. After studying drama at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, she joined the theatre company Maatschappij Discordia, which broke new ground in Dutch and Flemish theatre. With four fellow students she eventually set up the Flemish-Belgian theatre company De Roovers, which has performed in Belgium's leading theatres and elsewhere in Europe since 1994.



SEBASTIEN FOUCAULT studied acting and directing at the Liège Conservatoire following studies in French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. During his intense collaboration with the Belgian theatre director Françoise Bloch at the Théâtre National, he specialised in documentary theatre formats. In the play *Hate Radio* by Milo Rau/IIPM, he played the Belgian radio presenter Georges Ruggiu, reconstructing all the facets of his career as the "white Hutu" in Rwanda during extensive research for the play.



JOHAN LEYSEN began his acting career in Belgian and Dutch theatres. Following early film roles, he met Jean-Luc Godard in 1983 who then hired him for the role of the teacher in his film *Hail Mary*. Leysen has had numerous film roles in French and international productions, winning several awards, while still remaining loyal to theatre. His collaboration with theatre makers such as Guy Cassiers, Johan Simons and Heiner Goebbels have made him one of Europe's leading and highest-profile stage actors.

