

Création Studio Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles 2022-2023

Le Mystère du gant Vaudeville à table ou presque

Roger Dupré
Léonard Berthet-Rivière



Le Mystère du gant

Vaudeville à table ou presque

Le Mystère du gant (*The Mystery of the Glove*) tells the story of Gérard Berni-Mollin's vendetta against his rival Raymond Duchaussoy, the day that Raymond came to kidnap his mistress, Inès Berni-Mollin, Gérard's wife, while Frédéric, Raymond's son, came to ask for the hand of Sophie, Gérard's daughter, who is pregnant fit to burst. Mixed up in this family saga: a good amnesiac, Alexandrine, a two-sided wardrobe, Chantal and Bernard Couchard, a doctor dressed as a bird, the commissioner of La Folie Titon, and Claude, an immigrant employee who gets shot at, loses an arm, gets shot again and dies. Many audience members will also perish during the performance.

A pastiche whose author, Roger Dupré, does not exist, a pretext for reviving a popular genre, *Le Mystère du gant* is an absurd vaudeville, a table reading whose characters, settings, actions and situations exist only in the public imagination.

Text extract

Raymond

Ah Inès! What a pity that we're married. Well I mean not that we are married, but that we are both married.

Inès

Yes, I too would have wanted it to be different, but...

Raymond

(Interrupts) But that's why I'm here, so that it be different. Come with me, I'm taking you away!

Inès

What do you mean taking me? Where are you taking me to?

Raymond

It doesn't matter, wherever you want, to Puteaux!
Ah my Inès, my youth, my princess...

Inès

Ah my Raymond...
(Searching for a rhyme)
My Raymond.

Staging

We sit in on a play reading by two actors.

As the public enters, a table and two chairs stand centre stage. Functional furniture necessary for reading a text. From this sober installation the audience project themselves into the story of the actors. They make up their own idea of the characters, and create a mental architecture of the décor. They imagine and embroider.

Let them do it, it's beautiful.

A few simple props appear throughout the show, small theatrical artifices: balloons, a fake arm, moustaches... As if the actors, getting more and more into the game of reading, had taken what they had on hand to illustrate their point, going deeper into the characters and plots.

The increasing absurdity creates a profusion of images and twists by the end of the play. A tempest of twists and turns overflows into the room, the audience become part of the intrigue.

The play is no longer read but performed by the actors, but nothing is added to the scenography, we're in the same place, the viewer mentalises.

The denouement is coming and everything could end there, but...

Suddenly a complete set appears, or at least the idea of a set incorporating the elements and objects present in the room, a very busy and colourful, almost abstract, evocation of the living room in which the play *Le Mystère du gant* could have been performed. A large painted curtain unrolls in the background, pop-up objects appear on stage, a fake jet of water shoots out of the wings

The austerity of a undressed stage suddenly gives way to a multitude of pictorial objects in the centre of which the actors change scale, drown, almost disappear.

The set which suddenly appeared at the very end of the show, remains visible until the audience leaves, underlining the derision, the weight of the imagination and the absolute volatility of the theatre. Going from asceticism to overload leaves the audience with an absurd and aberrant image of the performance they have just witnessed.



Muriel Legrand Performance

Muriel Legrand studied at the Royal Conservatories of Liège and Mons, in the music and vocal arts sections.

Her professional career began in 2006 with Frédéric Dussenne, Michaël Delaunoy and Xavier Lukomski. She continued her path working with Thibaut Nève, Céline Delbecq, Jessica Gazon, Aurelio Mergola, Sophie Linsmaux and Christophe Sermet.

Daniel Cordova introduced her to Thierry Poquet under whose direction she performed in *L'Opéra du pauvre* de Léo Ferré (Léo Ferré's *The Poor Man's Opera*). She also performed in *Le Complexe de Thénardier* (*The Thénardier complex*) by José Pliya directed by Denis Marleau and Stéphanie Jasmin; *Les Femmes Savantes* (*The learned women*) by Molière directed by Denis Marleau; *Les Passions Humaines* (*Human Passions*) by Erwin Mortier directed by Guy Cassiers. In 2016, she performed under the direction of Anne-Laure Liégeois at the Festival au Carré in Mons. Her artistic collaborations take her everywhere in Belgium, France, Switzerland and often Quebec.

Generally directors give her the opportunity to jointly exercise her talents as a musician, singer and actor.

Having taught the vocal training course at the Royal Conservatory of Mons for seven years, she led a drama workshop at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels in 2018.

Muriel Legrand also collaborates with the company Still Life: she performs in *No One* created at the Les Tanneurs theatre in Brussels and presented at the Festival d'Avignon in 2022. She is currently on an international tour with the show *Dimanche* by the companies Focus and Chaliwaté.

Léonard Berthet-Rivière Text, direction and performance

Between 2004 and 2009, Léonard Berthet-Rivière studied under Jean-Luc Galmiche at the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique in the 18th arrondissement, staged four amateur actors in a play by Dario Fo and Franca Rame, collaborated with the director Ladislav Chollat at the Théâtre du Beauvaisis, took part in Frédérique Pierson's contemporary theatre workshop, and assisted the author and director Frédéric Sonntag on the creation of *Toby ou le saut du chien*.

He then worked as a film assistant before entering ESACT in Liège, where he graduated with great distinction in 2016.

Between 2011 and 2018, he created in the city of Biscarrosse, humorous guided tours in the guise of several characters and he wrote *Le Mystère du gant* de Roger Dupré, an absurd vaudeville created at the Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles in September 2022.

Between 2018 and 2022, he performed theatre under the direction of José Besprosvany, Dominique Serron, Frédérique Lecomte, Thibaut Wenger and Yves Beaunesne.

On screen, he appeared in *Vous n'aurez pas ma haine* (*You will not have my hatred*), a feature film directed by Kilian Riedhof, and in season two of the series *Ovni(s)* directed by Anthony Cordier.

Jérôme Souillot Staging

The visual artist Jérôme Souillot lives and works in Toulouse.

Graduating from ESAC (Ecole Supérieure des Arts et Communication) in Pau, he moved to Toulouse in 1998 where he joined the PMA dance theatre company, directed by Claude Bardouil, as an actor. After several years in the field of theatre and dance, visual arts and scenography now central to his work. As a visual artist he enjoys collaborating with directors. For the choreographer Coraline Lamaison, he designed the sets and costumes for the *Narcisse* trilogy for Claude Bardouil and the set design for *Désastre ou la fascination du pire*.

He worked on the costumes for *Werfen*, the dance piece by choreographer Audrey Gary. His pictorial work addresses subjects such as memory, intimate life and dream life. He creates and accumulates «decor» images, in which he seeks the disorientation and the feeling of refuge.

scenojeromesouillot.tumblr.com
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Christophe Van Hove Light design

Since 2009, Christophe Van Hove has been general manager and technical director of cultural projects. He was technical director of Atelier 210 in Brussels, a place dedicated to young theatrical creation and emerging current music. He was also technical coordinator of KIKK festival, an organization which develops links between art, science and technology by promoting digital cultures.

Active in the performing arts, he has participated around forty theatrical projects led by Jasmina Douieb, Clément Thirion, Frédéric Dussenne, Philippe Sireuil, Benoît Verhaert and Isabelle Jonniaux, among others.

Today, he contributes to theatrical projects through multi-faceted technical and logistical support.

Élise Abraham Costumes

For four years, as a dresser at the Théâtre royal du Parc, Élise Abraham designed the costumes for shows by Thibaut De Coster and Charlie Kleineremann, Natacha Belova and Anne Guilleray. Outside of the theatre, she also assists Marion Jouffre in creating the costumes for the circus show *De nos jours, Notes On The Circus* by the Compagnie Ivan Mosjoukine.

Since 2014, she has regularly designed the costumes for Compagnie Gazon-Neve's shows: *Synovie*; *The Little Humans*; *The one you believe*; *But you disturb badly I am a novice sorry*; *To put an end to Eddy Bellegueule*; *marcel*.

She designs costumes for film, notably for the short films *Contre Courant* by Gaetan D'Agostino; *Non Merci* by Joachim De Smedt; *D'office* by Othmane Moumen and David Leclercq; *JNSPA* by Grégory Carnoli and Thibaut Wohlfahrt; *Titan* by Valéry Carnoy.

Recently, she created the costumes for the feature film *Totem* by Fred Deloof.

Sometimes, it would be nice if everything could be just for fun!

In *Le Mystère du gant* by Roger Dupré, Léonard Berthet-Rivière found the material for his first creation. With Muriel Legrand, he shakes up the Vaudeville genre, seated at the table, and manages, in a beautiful acting partnership, to grant it (once again) – its pride of place.

The heart of the play is vaudeville, which is often considered a lesser, extremely codified genre: light comedy. It boils down to the wife, the husband, and the lover. Why perform in a vaudeville in 2022?

Léonard Berthet-Rivière. To start with because this is not a vaudeville that can be summed up as the wife, the husband, and the lover. There is a doctor dressed as a bird in *Le Mystère du gant*, for example! That's worth noting! And he flies out the window, which is worth noting too! It's above all an absurd vaudeville... If I borrow certain codes when writing a pastiche, it's out of love for what I found there, in these texts.

I don't know if these are lesser genres. Feydeau and Labiche have always performed a lot of them, including at the Comédie-Française. And Feydeau has just been published by La Pléiade! Maybe acting in a vaudeville goes against current theater trends? But maybe if we always followed current trends, the theater would become monotonous? When I started writing *Mystère du gant*, I didn't know where I would go with it. I was simply enjoying the pleasure of writing, of unfolding situations as if they were coming back to my memory. When I was little, I was part of an amateur theater troupe and I knew by heart texts by Ionesco, such as *La Cantatrice chauve*, or Alfred Jarry. Later, I read Beckett. It is also these authors who lead me to believe that behind the absurd hides a certain depth of existence that escapes us.

Muriel Legrand. And above all, making people laugh is your primary intention! No!?

LBR. Yes! I like to make people laugh. To me, it's a form of courtesy. It's hard to explain what makes people laugh in theater. You never really know how laughter is born. I believe very strongly in the fact that, when you're working on the staging and a scene which is not comic turns out to be comic, it's because we are touching the essence of the writing. Well, that can't be true for all of Racine's scenes, either!

ML. *Le Mystère du gant* is not just about vaudeville! It is above all a vaudeville at the table, and gender-neutral: an actor and an actress play 13 characters. It's an incredible challenge. I fell in love with *Le Mystère du gant*. And *Le Mystère du gant* fell into my arms. I grew up in the world of operetta. In a way, the vaudeville genre also resonated with my childhood. I deeply love this theatrical genre that many consider «obsolete». Today, more than yesterday, I need to laugh. Léonard too, I think. He constantly seeks this courtesy. I find it essential. It makes me feel good. Based on experience, I'd say it's also good for the audience.

LBR. I like to hear the audience laugh. It's like a kind of machinery that starts up.

ML. Or not (laughs).

You make the radical choice of a pared down arrangement. There is a kind of discrepancy between the simplicity of the scenic approach – you read at the table – and the complexity of the comic impulses of vaudeville.

LBR. In *Le Mystère du gant*, there is no scenery. We are at the table. We play all the characters in pairs, sometimes with a few props that remain very rare and unexpected. Everything comes together in the imagination of the audience. We were talking about the outdated nature of vaudeville, which may be a thing of the past. But this past also tells a story. Perhaps the imagination works, because it reconnects with its own images of the past, where there is a form of joy in experiencing an old-fashioned project, where it recovers a certain love of theater?

ML. Like this, I'll show you: a door slams. This is how it goes. (Muriel Legrand mimes the gesture)

What does laughter make us discover about the characters?

ML. The finesse of their minds (laughs).

LBR: If we laugh, it's because we become very attached to each of the characters, to their struggles, their flaws, their pains, their fears.

ML. I put on a mustache. This gesture reveals something. The writing and the rhythm also reveal something. There is nothing psychological in it.

LBR. We look for what amuses us. Like in life, like children. Suddenly, Muriel makes me burst out laughing. For example, when the mustache falls off and it goes «plop»! This situation surprises us, sweeps us away. We try to reproduce it with all our love. In vaudeville, there is intrigue. It develops gradually, it is very careful.

LBR. The plot is very important. To tell the story of an emergency which is perhaps a matter of life or death for the characters, without overlooking anything. Moreover, the so-called «secondary» characters must have a real part. Chantal Couchard participates in the plot. The character of Chantal isn't just part of the décor, even if she is very decorative (laughs).

ML. Alexandrine, too.

LBR. It is the spirit of seriousness that is banned! At least, I hope so.

ML. It's not easy to make clear the story of 13 characters played at the table, by two! Sometimes I was reading without hearing, there was a small spotlight on that area. It is a succession of small illuminations and clearings to make everything extremely clear. It has a rhythm...

For communication

To maintain the pretense as to the author of the play, it is important that the title and subtitle of the show be followed by the name of the (fictitious) author and by the name of the director.

Namely, for all media and communication formats the following details :

(Title) *Le Mystère du gant*

(Subtitle) *Table vaudeville – or almost*

(Author/by) Roger Dupré

(Director) Léonard Berthet-Rivière

Duration of the show : 1hr 10mins

Regarding the summary of the show, we request that public digital and/or printed communication follows this text :

A table vaudeville – or almost. Four acts. Twelve characters. An actor and an actress.

Le Mystère du gant (*The Mystery of the Glove*) recounts Gérard Berni-Mollin's vendetta against his competitor Raymond Duchaussoy, the day the latter came to kidnap his mistress, Inès Berni-Mollin, Gérard's wife, while Frédéric, Raymond's son, came ask for the hand of Sophie, Gérard's daughter, who is pregnant up to her eyes. In the middle of this family story: a good amnesiac, Alexandrine, a two-sided wardrobe, Chantal and Bernard Couchard, a doctor dressed as a bird, the commissioner of La Folie Titon, and Claude, an immigrant employee who will in turn be shoot it, lose an arm, get shot again and die. Many audience members will also perish during the performance.

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Costumes @lyzedt

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Le Mystère du gant Vaudeville à table ou presque

Roger Dupré Léonard Berthet-Rivière

Création Studio Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles

Co-production Théâtre de Liège

Writing, direction **Léonard Berthet-Rivière**

With **Muriel Legrand, Léonard Berthet-Rivière**

Scenography **Jérôme Souillot**

Music composition **Maxence Vandeveld**

Light Design **Christophe Van Hove**

Dressmaker **Élise Abraham**

Textile production **Cathy Péraux, Eugénie Poste, Manon Bruffaerts, Marie Baudoin, Jérémy Sondeyker**

Special effects **Stéphanie Denoiseux**

Fight choreographer **Émilie Guillaume**

Assistant director **Kalya Barra**

Stage manager **Benoit Ausloos**

Production **Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles**

Co-production **Théâtre de Liège**

A partnership with **La Chaufferie-Acte 1**

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Photos **Noémie della Faille**



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