

# Press review

## Télérama

Emmanuelle Bouchez

Kumulus theatre company, founded in the 1980s and one of the pioneers of French street theatre, has now created the Cumulus (without a K) circus. Behind the name lies a farce, something audiences are not used seeing in Kumulus' body of work. A far cry from the usually raw and frank approach of its productions, condemning the shortcomings of contemporary society, here it adopts a travelling circus aesthetic to pay vibrant and derisory tribute to the life of performing artists. And more precisely, to those having a final go round the circus ring. In Gardenia, the Belgian choreographer Alain Platel delivered a highly sculpted work portraying former transvestite performers. Here however, director Barthélemy Bompard and his acolytes take a direct approach, acceptingly showing "the old remains" (of talent or charm) in their wobbly gestures. It's a simple concept: the circus ring is cut in two by a curtain and dressing rooms, and surrounded by the audience, also split in two, with each side getting to see the 'heads and tails' of the show, without having to move[...] The acts keeps coming, one after another. An acrobat girl tries to save her mother, a former leading man appears as Richard III in a wheelchair ...[...] At the last Chalon dans la rue street theatre festival, Kumulus deftly made the transition into Cumulus. And it was no easy task.

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## La Montagne

Olivier Ceyrac

**What a God-Not-Dam good performance !**

*NonDeDieu* is a two-in-one show, with an extraordinary performance put in by the performers of the Kumulus theatre company! There are two stage areas set up. The audience sits either facing the dressing rooms, or facing the stage. Because essentially the production has no wings: it is played out simultaneously on both sides of the red curtain of this whimsical circus.

On one side you see a bunch of funny chaps trying to get prepared and focus before going on stage for this performance without any real dialogue, and you get to understand that the mood of the troupe behind the curtain impacts the quality of the portrayal out on stage. So you can catch the eye of the grotesque and lecherous old knife thrower who is past his prime. And you laugh as you watch the old diva descend into the abyss as she turns desperately to her champagne bottle for strength rather than thinking about her performance to come. But above all you are moved by the actress that nobody wants, who is something of an outcast to the troupe, never

managing to fit in, either on stage or even less so behind the scenes. *NonDeDieu* offers a picture of what happens on and off stage. The audience is omniscient and made aware of the type of questions that performers ask themselves before going out and starting the show. And it is wonderfully done.

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## **Le Journal de la Rue**

**Mériem Souissi**

Bonkers and pumped up (and we're not just talking abs here), the Kumulus performers show the unshowable: varicose veins, cellulite, addictions and hopes all escape in *NonDeDieu* [...]

De Gaulle once said that old age is a shipwreck, but then he never saw the Kumulus theatre company with its performers throw themselves into this highly original circus show. Admittedly, there is a modest bit of acrobatics, but this production is mostly a pretext to sketch out a tight bunch of characters into a portrait gallery of men and women who love, hate and berate each other, but who are all united by one concern - performing. [...] It's nutty, ramshackle, joyful and caustic - and also quite tender, but not too much.

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## **Journal des Rencontres d'Ici et d'Ailleurs**

**Périne Faivre – Cie les Arts Oseurs – Editor in 2019**

Ladies and gentlemen, come on in!

Take your seats around the Kumulus circus ring, with a warm welcome from the ring-mistress!

Choose a seat and enjoy the show.

Soon, before your very eyes, you will be dumbstruck by clowns, tightrope walkers and tamers!

We will be laying on for you a display of breathtaking acts, unique feats and unthinkable tricks,... sparkle and entertainment!

But... if you look closely, you will see that the faded clowns are really going for broke to steal a smile from the audience.

Welcome to the one and only Cumulus Circus!

Between the ring and the wings, you will see performers who are much too old to be working or consumers, and who have nothing left to lose.

They tell their ludicrous stories and share the utopian dreams they still cling to, presenting their old age with courage and dignity.

With this new show, Barthélemy Bompard gives us an insight into the existence of a theatre troupe after 30 years on tour, presenting a life force for performers who are not even dead, *non de dieu* ! (god-not-damn-it!)