



Faits Divers

No Man's Land



First year - 2020 Production - N° 0016 - 2020 November - € 2,935,642

**An art
intervention ...**

**...that shakes up
the everyday**

They're there, and increasingly so, waiting for God knows what!



"Faits Divers - No Man's Land" is first and foremost a production that explores the notions of quirkiness, loneliness, expectation, obsessions, survival rituals, roaming, dignity, the visible and invisible, privacy and living as a community, all to re-spark your imagination.





How the project came to life



Les Pronomade(s) en Haute-Garonne, the national street art centre based in south-west France, initially contacted us to ask if we were interested in developing a new production project in-situ in October 2020.

Their idea was to present a hybrid format, based on the theme of theatre that is alternately visible and invisible. That was our starting point to sketch out the beginnings of our project *Fait divers – No Man's Land*, and play around with it in ideal conditions. The experience was highly promising, and encouraged us to develop the project further.

"**Kumulus theatre company** was in residence in Saint-Gaudens from Tuesday 13th to Saturday 17th October. You may well have bumped into the 8 characters, hanging about the town streets, dragging their mobile furniture around with them - a bathtub, a door, a desk, or a fridge.... All portraits of modern man adrift, of humanity that has got slightly lost, looking for a place to take refuge. They moved into Place Jean Jaurès, and for more than three hours, in front of passers-by in the street, they set up residence in temporary apartments in the square, with all the neighbourhood dynamics that go with it.

The concept was developed by Kumulus in response to Pronomade(s)'s invitation to play with the population of Saint-Gaudens and the people using the town's public spaces, by seeping into daily real life in the streets, without inviting an audience or giving prior warning.

Having co-directed the Saint Gaudingue street art festival in 1995, and performed works for Pronomade(s) including *Tout va bien*, *SDF*, *Itinéraires sans fond*, *Silence Encombrant* and *Naufrage*, **Kumulus** has shown itself over the years to be firmly anchored in socially-engaged theatre, often thin on dialogue, yet making a powerful political and social comment."

Les Pronomade(s)





FAITS DIVERS

No Man's Land



For a number of years now our profession has been irreversibly hard-hit for the sake of "our safety". In addition to making public areas off limits as a result of terrorism, we can no longer perform or gather in groups in the street due to Covid. Today, more than ever, political decisions are crushing culture.

And this raises fundamental questions. How do we carry on working? How can we continue to tell stories, inspire dreams, make people laugh, cry, question, rebel, annoy and hit a raw nerve? How can we defend freedom of expression in public spaces and ensure this common property remains a shared meeting place of dialogue?



**Don't give up, keep going,
keep believing, don't let go!**

So why not use this constraint to our advantage to revisit the very essence of street theatre itself? Why not surprise people as they go about their daily lives in the street by offering a simple and adaptable format, that lends itself to different situations and crazy and bizarre images that challenge passers-by, cyclists and drivers?

If we can't officially organize a show for an audience, at a given time and place, then let's stage surprise acts in unexpected places, which are improbable and moving with poetic force, and which lead people to think:

"Is that real or not ?"



"Are they nuts?"

"Why are they doing that?"

"What does it all mean?"





PHASE 1: APPEARANCE



The first phase involves taking up position in a town for a short while, and letting the word spread.



On the first day, 8 characters appear in the town streets and find a different urban 'no man's land' to position themselves in, with no visible purpose (a roundabout, the edge of a kerb, a crossroads, the corner of a street, a space that has been developed, but which is unused, a bus stop, ...)

Over the following few days, pedestrians walking down the street, cyclists and drivers come across them, on their way to school to drop off the kids, during a coffee break, at the market, when leaving the office... They are there, and increasingly so, waiting for God knows what...





PHASE 1: APPEARANCE



The characters each take up position in their spot with everyday household objects, and busily go about their business: sewing at a bus stop, reading on a stepladder, knitting in the middle of a car park, doing sport in the rain, just waiting, making coffee, listening to the radio...



They are either in a couple, or alone, with an armchair, a table, a hat stand, an exercise bike, a picture frame, a houseplant, a pile of books, a chair, a rubber ring or a fridge. A whole host of objects that represent the characters' personal worlds.



You can see them in the distance, appearing and then disappearing, as they wander around the town and down the streets. You bump into them on a street corner, leaning against a street sign, sitting on a fridge. They are noticeably there, day after day, until a buzz starts to spread throughout town.



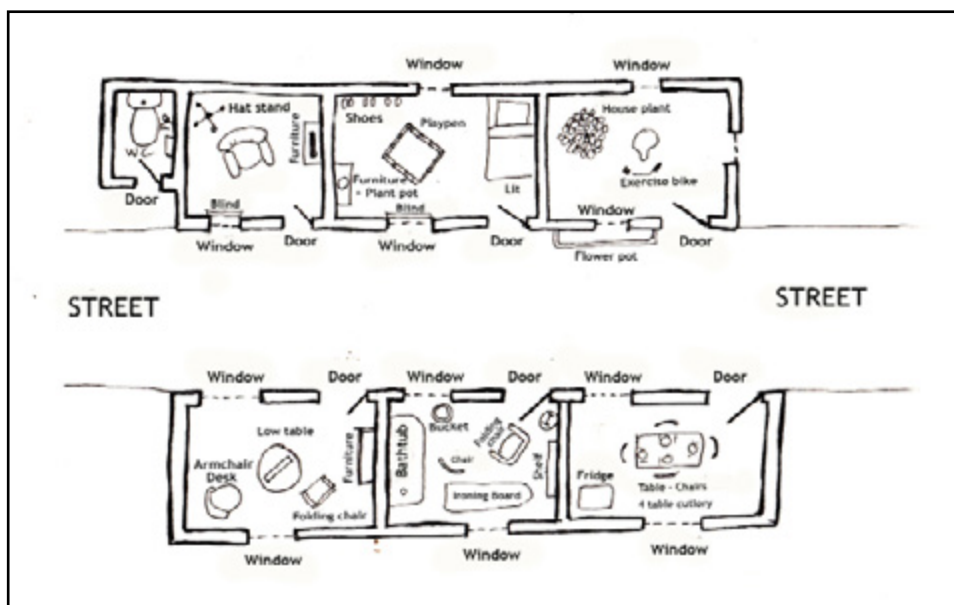
PHASE 2: SETTLING IN



On the final day, an invitation is enigmatically sent out through an article in the papers to meet in a large square.

In the square, 6 apartments are sketched out on the ground, separated by a street, just like in Lars Von Triers' film *Dogville*. White strips trace out the basic outline of the apartments, with labels to indicate the doors and windows.

Each apartment is fitted out with various odds and ends, and bits of furniture belonging to the characters, including the objects they have been carrying around with them over the previous few days. Then the characters arrive...



They converge in the square and settle in, either alone, or in couples, in their respective apartments.

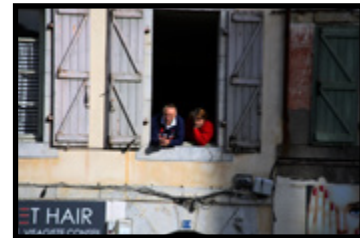




PHASE 2: SETTLING IN



For the next three hours, they reveal snatches of their everyday lives and relationships with each other. Those standing watching find themselves in the position of voyeur, peeking in on the characters' daily existence, as if they were spying through a little hole to stare in on the neighbours. Every audience member can recognize him or herself in this familiar depiction of daily reality. Passers-by are free to stay and watch the performance till the very end, or just grab snippets in passing.



The production attempts to make a bold statement by acting out reality to give insight into the private inner world of others through invisible walls.



The characters lay bare their loneliness and raw feelings. There is very little dialogue. Neighbours only interact with each other in the street, in the corridor, out of the window or through the walls. The whole dynamic of the different links between each character hinges on issues related to managing the common parts of the co-owned space.



The work explores the notion of man and his relationship with himself as well as others.





Faits Divers

No Man's Land



A PRODUCTION BY BARTHELEMY BOMPARD

WRITTEN BY
VINCIAINE DOFNY
JUDITH THIÉBAUT

INVENTED AND PERFORMED BY
ARMELLE BÉRENGIER, BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD,
RICHARD ÉCALLE, FRÉDÉRIQUE ESPITALIER,
MARIE-PASCALE GRENIER,
CYRIL LÉVI-PROVENÇAL
BERNARD LLOPIS & JUDITH THIÉBAUT

STAGE MANAGEMENT
DJAMEL DJERBOUA

SUITABLE FOR ALL AGE GROUPS

PERFORMANCE DURATION: 4 DAYS

DAYTIME PERFORMANCE

NO DIALOGUE

AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURING

ARTS PROMOTION & FINANCIAL AID
PRONOMADE(S) EN HAUTE-GARONNE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS DE LA RUE
ET DE L'ESPACE PUBLIC

PHOTO CREDIT
CHARLOTTE GRANGE,
JEAN-ALEXANDRE LAHOCINSKY, MARGO TAMIZÉ

TOUR PACK GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
CHARLOTTE GRANGE

KUMULUS
LE MOULIN, 1114, ROUTE DE NYONS
26770 ROUSSET LES VIGNES - FRANCE
+33 (0)4 75 27 41 96 - contact@kumulus.fr
WWW.KUMULUS.FR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD
ADMINISTRATION, TOURING AND PRODUCTION
VINCIAINE DOFNY, CHARLOTTE GRANGE
& MARJOLAINE LOPEZ



Extracts from Saint-Gaudens press reviews



LA DEPECHE DU MIDI DU COMMINGES

"Mobile furniture in the town streets"

"For the past two or three days, a cluster of people appear to have been gathering together various belongings in the town centre of Saint-Gaudens (chairs, bathtubs and houseplants ...), as if all part of the same thing. They are all there, wandering around down the side of the streets and along the pavements, collecting together remnants of their lives. They're not openly after anything in particular. They're just there." **Jean-Alexandre Lahocsinsky**

October 16th 2020



"Show homes, already occupied"

"The audience members were scattered around but attentive, unable to hide perplexed smiles in reaction to these beings. Those who tried to make contact with these strange neighbours were met with blanks. They were absorbed in their daily lives, quick to create clans and gang up on individuals, and instinctively retreat back inside their homes. They divulged their way of life, which was staggeringly similar to our own."

Jean-Alexandre Lahocsinsky

October 20th 2020

LA GAZETTE DU COMMINGES

"Kumulus let loose in town"

"Kumulus theatre company brought the week to a strange end having spent an impromptu few days hanging about the streets in different parts of the town. Over the course of their fleeting visit, performers have been sighted sitting outside the old garage and displaying two small cars in front of a cup, a symbol of car rallies of days gone by, walking in and out of a door set up in front of the sub-prefecture building, making a telephone call in the middle of the crossroads next to the theatre, knitting on the pavement next to the Sainte-Thérèse secondary school... Finally, on Saturday, all eight characters met together on Place de la Collégiale, and drew out on the ground the outline of a few rooms symbolizing their homes either side of a road. Then the neighbourhood came to life with characters who are alone, in pairs, friends, next-door neighbours or living on the same street. For three hours, the street theatre performers drew in passers-by as they brought alive a portrait of everyone's daily existence, with its repeated gestures and moments of joy, sadness, hope, boredom, ruses to escape loneliness, couples arguing and making up... tiny scenes for ridiculous dreams." **Régine Blancard**

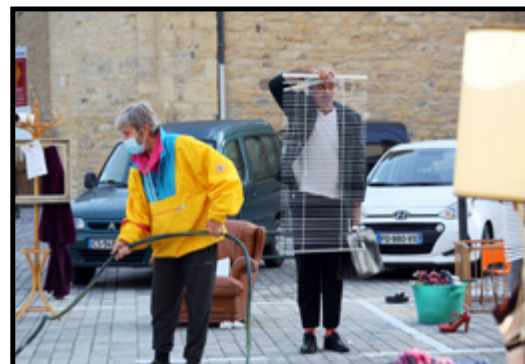


What the cast says



"I got the impression that we had gone back to the basics of working as street performers. The lengthy improvisation required for Dogville is a difficult working process but also extremely constructive, and therefore an essential step when addressing the theme of solitude and wandering. The work that we did on being in a transparent living environment, stripped bare, and on the shamelessness of neglected lives, is something that really appeals to me. I'm drawn to the idea of getting an insider's view of the world with your nose right in there at street level, bang in the heart of the action!!"

Bernard Llopis

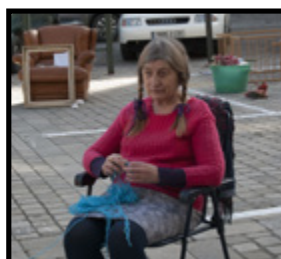
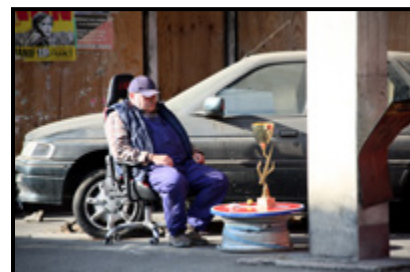


"In addition to the objects that we brought with us to use for our characters, there is a kind of magic that occurs when you find other, improbable random objects. We have no reason to be there, as we drift through this fleeting visit in the life of a town. I was surprised to see how much I genuinely believed in my little existence there, with my partner, and neighbourhood. It felt real."

Armelle Bérengier

"I felt like a ghost from the past who drifts through the streets looking for his home, his past, or more simply put, who continues going about his daily life in the private confines of his garage. My aim was to inject a bit of surrealism into the public space through a character who is very much fictional, and yet people can project their own story onto him."

Richard Ecalle



"I loved knitting, on my own or with others, on roundabouts, next to the fountain, in front of the private school ...It was at those moments when people were kind and involved in the action. There was even a man on benefit who chatted with me for a quarter of an hour, and didn't seem at all taken aback by what I was doing there, nor me gurgling away with sympathy."

Marie-Pascale Grenier

"Usually we try to catch eyes with the audience, but this time we made out like we couldn't see them. Like we were on a theatre stage, but right in the middle of the street."

Judith Thiébaud

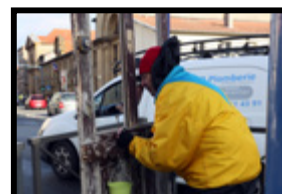


"The whole concept of 'audience' is totally excluded here, as is the idea of representation. We are in the performance, or even in a counter performance. I liked this idea of parallel lives that we developed, with actions overlapping and complementing each other and sounds that chime together."

Frédérique Espitalier

"There I was on the roundabout with the fountain, visible for some, transparent for others. Secondary-school kids were laughing loudly in mockery when I couldn't find the right key to open the door, the door which marked the entrance into a village without walls, where characters bursting with life spent the whole afternoon busying about in their improbable daily world."

Cyril Lévi-Provençal





Harsh reality and raw sensitivity.

Inspired by the work of Pina Bausch, Jérôme Bosch and Alain Platel, Barthélemy Bompard imbues his work with an air of German Expressionism, pushing emotions to fever pitch.

Kumulus, his theatre company, uses gesture, words and sound to interpret themes from daily life and current world affairs, including racism, madness and exodus...

The way in which Kumulus productions are written and staged revolves around one overriding, theatrical parameter: public spaces.

Barthélemy Bompard.

Born in 1958 in Dakar in Senegal, Barthélemy left his homeland at the age of 7. Later in Paris, he studied cabinet-making at the Ecole Boulle craft school, before going on to study commercial art at the Académie Charpentier school of Applied Arts.

It was in 1976 when he first discovered the theatre, inspiring him to create Maxibules, his first theatre company (for children). He then collaborated on setting up several theatre companies such as Zéro de conduite, Speedy Banana, Les Piétons. In parallel to his work as Artistic Director, he also branched off into cinema, and over the years he has made several short films, collecting awards at a series of film festivals (The People's Choice Award at Clermont Ferrand, the Special Jury Prize at Cannes, the Best Film Award at Nevers, Best Film Award at Prades, and the Escorial 91 Film Award). He also appears in some of his own films, as well as acting in roles for other directors, including Karim Dridi, Yann Piquer, Serge Le Perron, Jean Marie Maddeddu, Anita Assal, John Hudson etc.

In 1986 he decided to set up Kumulus, a street theatre company, which has since produced some 15 different shows. He won the SACD Street Theatre Award in 2006 in recognition of his work.

In 1992 "SDF" won the best production award at the festival Chalon dans la rue (Chalon sur Saône- France).

In 2002 "Itinéraires sans fonds " won the Beaumarchais writer's award and the best production award at the festival Teatro y Artes de Calle, Valladolid (Spain)

In 2012 " Silence Encombrant " won the best production award at the festival de Teatro y Artes de Calle, Valladolid (Spain).

" Les Squames " won the best show award during International Strassentheaterfestival of Holzminden (Germany).

LES SQUAMES* [1988] They hideously ugly : heads shaven, their bodies all skin and bones, black as soot, their red pupils nailed deep inside sunken eyes. It looks like a circus parade, plucked straight from the turn of the last century. These « beasts » walk along like apes, giving our screams, screwing up their faces and rolling around on the Tarmac. And the same question comes back again and again: "But what kind of creature is it?" Are they real-fake monkeys or fake-real men? There are a couple of knowing smiles to be spotted from those who have got it, but most of the people in the crowd watching are hanging on to wait and see, clearly disturbed by these "animal-men," with mixed feelings of both fear and shame. This production aims to excite curiosity and get passers-by talking in the street. And there is no denying that the squames is a performance which manages to do precisely that. **Le Monde - Françoise Limoge**

SDF [1992] These homeless people appear to more real than life itself. In fact, you can't even tell that the actors are acting. There is no plotline. Or at least there doesn't appear to be anything resembling a story until halfway through, when the underlying narrative machine does eventually begin to become apparent. Any onlooker passing by who stops to stare is sucked in to becoming a spectator in the most extreme sense of the word. In other words, he has become a voyeur. He takes an inordinate delight in looking at the spectacle of monstrosity; he is paralyzed by his own shame, totally forgetting the double distance, in both social and theatrical terms, that separates him from the homeless.

Jean-Michel Guy

LA NEF DES FOUS [1993] Barthélemy Bompard's work is inspired by the paintings of Jérôme Bosch, which portray how before, in past eras, society would take those who were considered officially mad and ship them off in the boat of oblivion... Through this musical production, Barthélemy Bompard makes his actors focus in particular on the emotion and instinct of their characters. The insanity of seven individuals, each with their own story, gradually unfolds before our eyes. A madness that can bring you to both tears and laughter in turn. A madness that reaches out and strikes a chord in all of us because: "the madman's great secret is to always appear wise..."

Sylvie Pomaret, director's Assistant

BAIL À CEDER [1994] Kumulus offers us the chance to walk through walls, taking us on a tour of an ordinary block of council houses. Craftily slipped between two bourgeois buildings, four floors are stacked up in front of us, giving a cross-section view into the humdrum, uninspiring life of the occupants living inside. *Bail à céder* is an urban farce, imbued with social critique that takes great delight in playing with the vertical layout of the staging, luring the spectator inside to see the sad, boring reality of what is happening, and what is being said in the neighbour's flat across the corridor. **L'Humanité - Achmy Halley**

FAITS DIVERS - BAIL A CEDER [1995] Barthélemy Bompard's work *Faits Divers - Bail à Céder* fits in logical continuation to the particular theatrical approach that he has developed over the years, namely the notion of setting up close encounters between each actor and the audience. In a space that bears no resemblance to the usual formal notions of a theater stage, with only the surrounding town as a backdrop, ten anonymous-looking characters wander on to the scene, and then start to inject into proceedings a healthy dose of offbeat madness. Each encounter sparks off a new scene, and each situation is spun into a show. *Faits Divers* is a highly entertaining theatrical and musical performance, but it is also a vehicle for introspection, and an opportunity for us to question the way in which we lead our daily lives.

FAMILY EXPRESS [1997] Family Express is a mise en abyme which mirrors our relationships with one another. It dissects our blood ties and the tiny ways in which we function, and above all, malfunction... A total of eight members of the (human) family are born in front of our eyes. Eight individuals who will all come to their end in a deliberate fashion because the thread of life always eventually frays into nothingness. Yet before reaching that point, the spectator will have followed them through every stage of an ordinary life: work, love, forbidden or not, fights. A few carpets and cardboard boxes, three musical notes and four rumbling sounds. As each scene gradually unfolds one after another, the eight clones (clowns) take you on a strange voyage, winding through moments of emotion, laughter and stupor.

TOUT VA BIEN [1999] We walk past it every day. Unconsciously our gaze is caught by the shapely curve of a breast, by gleaming blond 'Because I'm worth it' hair, or by blue Caribbean skies ... And then one day, that whole parade of signs suddenly becomes disrupted. Acting wholly out of character, the images start to come to life and speak, taking a step away from their formatted string of pre-programmed messages that usually sell us consumer desire. Real characters, as large as life, start calling out to us, their bodies trapped between the two 'Triplex' panes of glass on the Decaux pavement ad stand: an old lady eaten up by loneliness, a young woman flogging hair, dental crowns and kneecaps, her best finery, a cosmetics saleswoman peddling her miracle products, a 'Mr Detergent' ... All of a sudden, 'reality' seeps inside these blandly sterile publicity stands, and takes on the form of slices of life captured from moments of humdrum, strange and fragile humanity.

Mouvement - Gwénola David

ITINÉRAIRES SANS FOND(S) [2003] *Itinéraires sans fond(s)*, is a work inspired by the current exodus of refugees and illegal immigrants. And just like them, the actors and members of the audience all mingle together, wandering about this abandoned site that is the only place that is willing to welcome men and women who have been thrown out from everywhere else. Muttering in Slavic tones, they tell the story of what they have lost, they talk of their hopes, they cry, they sing or they keep warm huddled around a tiny fire. Each of them carries a box with them, containing their most precious items that they were able to throw together before leaving their homes and fleeing. Scattered about in several different places, the members of the cast compel the people in the audience to roam after them, and gather together in little groups, listening to one or two of the actors as they show their personal trophies. **Le Monde - Catherine Bédarida**

LES RENCONTRES DE BOÎTES* [2005] This production is created with the participation of amateur actors, and involves a 5-day preparatory workshop which is led by members of the Kumulus theatre company. *Les Rencontres de boîtes* by the Kumulus company opens with a disaster scenario:

"You are being evicted from your homes. You have five minutes to gather up your personal belongings... everything must fit into a shoebox." The story unfolds in the form of a series of face to face meetings between two actors, a mini theatre of objects acted out on ordinary tables.

Mouvement

LE CRI [2007] *Le Cri* is as hard-hitting as it is euphoric, a powerful moment brought to us by the Kumulus theatre company that is ultimately a highly moving production. Members of the audience find themselves being jostled about by a handful of ten or so actors, all in a trance, each of them embodying a different facet of social destitution. By the end of the performance you emerge in a bizarre state of calm, yet nonetheless all fired up to start campaigning a little bit further to the left of the political spectrum.

Libération – Edouard Launet

LES PENDUS* [2009] An executioner, three men, one woman. A dramatic and public death. Four done-for bodies stretched tight, hanging on themselves, all slamming-squatting-belching. These are voices that drag themselves from death, defying time. Final words with fists raised, a call to disorder, a hollering wall of laughter... This is the post-mortem cry for freedom which will never stop making itself heard.

Nadège Prugnard

SILENCE ENCOMBRANT* [2011] Striking close similarities to the expressionism of Egon Schiele, Barthélemy Bompard and his company have created a reply to one of the best shows ever seen, the famous May B, the homage paid to Beckett by Maguy Marin. And indeed the actors from Kumulus can certainly hold their heads high when comparing themselves to May B. In the silence of their permanent failure, they become universal. These people have nothing (left anymore), but they remain clinging on. Isn't what they are living here only the fate of most people? The consumer fights just like Sisyphus to inject beauty and sense into a life which will only end up as dust.

La Stradda - Thomas Hann

NAUFRAGE [2015] We are whisked away around a stage platform evoking St Tropez-like extravagance. As onlookers staring on, we are both full of desire and shock, eroticized and frustrated, rolling with laughter and desperate. And then comes the shipwreck of this world we have been reluctantly dragged along with. The overcrowded clutter of St Tropez gives way to vast stretches of desolation, as we sail out towards the seventh continent, where no one will come and save us. The genius of this theatre company lies in the actors' ability to literally transport you with the help of only a few props, some gloriously ironic costumes, semiological precision and a powerful, ingenious and efficient set design. This is the shipwreck of appearance and reality, which is shown, acted out and broken down by seven actors and actresses, all performing at the top of their game. By the end, we have reached the raft of plastic debris rippling over dead water. If "masterpiece" were ever a term applied to street theatre, then that is what I would call *Naufrage*.

Cassandra - Bruno Boussagol

SÉRIE C [2017] *Série C* is a scathing portrait of women's place in modern society. It aims to be universal in theme, and not just focus on the difficulties faced by women in Burkina Faso.

Adrien Guillot - Agence DEKart

The French theatre company Kumulus has now produced one of its best works ever, charged with the tremendous energy of Africa.

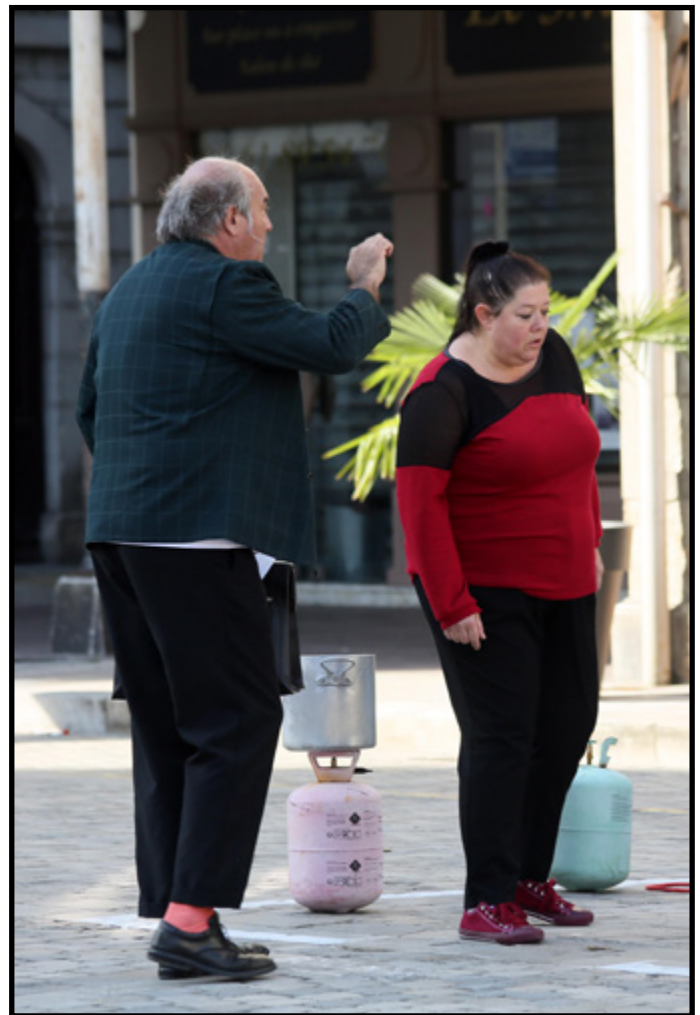
Edith Rappoport - Théâtre du Blog

NONDEDIEU* [2019] A far cry from the usually raw and frank approach of its productions, condemning the shortcomings of contemporary society, here it (Kumulus theatre company) 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.

Emmanuelle Bouchez - Télérama

FRAGILE* [2022] This is a true theatrical performance with a grand finale. Packed with excess and outrage, *Fragile* is a show that certainly won't leave you cold. You can't help but become attached to these harrowing and brutal survivors. You grow attached to their angst just as they are attached to the furniture that they drag behind them, wherever they wander, along a thankfully short, limited path. They move forward, revealing snippets of a story, and leaving it up to the audience's imagination to fill in the blanks, everyone with their own version.

Le Journal de Chalon dans la Rue - Meriem Souissi



***Performances on tour**