

# DEAFENING SILENCE

*Physical and sound theatre*





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A SHOW BY **BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTION  
**BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD**  
WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF **NICOLAS QUILLIARD**

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY  
**DOMINIQUE BETTENFELD**  
**BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD, JEAN-PIERRE CHARRON**  
**CÉLINE DAMIRON, MARIE-PASCALE GRENIER,**  
**DOMINIQUE MOYSAN, NICOLAS QUILLIARD,**  
**NINA SÉRUSIER & JUDITH THIÉBAUT**

BODY WORK  
**JUDITH THIÉBAUT**  
SOUND WORK  
**JEAN-PIERRE CHARRON**  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
**CATHERINE SARDI & MARIE-CÉCILE WINLING**  
SET DESIGNER  
**DOMINIQUE MOYSAN**  
TECHNICAL PRODUCTION  
**DJAMEL DJERBOUA & SIMON LAMBERT-BILINSKI**  
MAKE-UP ARTIST  
**CATHERINE SARDI OR MARIE-CÉCILE WINLING**

**SUITABLE FOR ALL AGE GROUPS**

PERFORMANCE DURATION **1H30**

MAXIMUM AUDIENCE CAPACITY **600 PERSONNES**

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## PHOTO CREDIT

JEAN-PIERRE ESTOURNET & VINCENT VANHECKE

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ADMINISTRATION, TOURING AND PRODUCTION  
**VINCIANE DOFNY, CHARLOTTE GRANGE**  
**& MARJOLAINE LOPEZ**

# DEAFENING SILENCE

**A scathing and poetic allegory about the drift of modern society**

*"Whoever wants to remember must yield himself to oblivion, the risk being total oblivion, and chance thus becoming memory." Maurice Blanchot*



A globe of the earth, a car bonnet, a birdcage, a doll, a washing machine ... All of these broken bits of scrap have tumbled out of a waste skip and are hauled away by a group of fragile characters who carry it all with the strength of their own bare arms and an unwavering iron will. Shuffling slowly with hesitant steps, faces caked in dust, there is the clown, the policeman, the prostitute, the poet and all the others who drag (themselves) along the bits of waste and dump them on the tarmac, turning the space into a rubbish tip. Amidst the silence screaming out with noise, with the sound of debris scraping along the ground, the sound of crashing and mute encounters, these men and women try to find some sort of meaning in this puzzle of rubble. This choreography of shadows holds up its resistance, pushing the frontline towards unknown shores, where the madness of the wise, and the wisdom of the mad stare at one another head-on.

**The superimposition between that and those, one being thrown and got rid of.** Humans and waste are mixed up and merged as one. Objects become organs and humans become run-down machines, fit for the scrap. A globe of the earth, a bird's cage with a tiny bell inside, the wishbone from a windsurf sail, a toilet bowl, a gas cylinder... All of these pieces of scrap from out of a skip are dragged along by the arms and legs of these "inadequate" individuals, who are practically invisible and concealed. And the noise that rings out in the silence reaches our ears. All eyes follow the movement of these objects with bodies, and these body objects. Everything arrives in a jumbled heap. Scattered across the area, all the different elements are there; spoons, feathers, socks...

**«human existence» jumps out when a man is flabbergasted to see that his hands can move.** Is their final gesture made in a world where man's main (pre)occupation is action at the expense of thought and contemplation? Only those who find themselves in the airlock antechamber that leads towards death, only they get to breathe a different air, that last-chance air you breathe only minutes before existence comes to an end, so as to make the most of very second. Souvenirs for the person parting from the object, evocative objects for the person looking on. Just like looking in the mirror: we see the old-looking face, and behind it, we see how it once was before; if you prick up your ears, you will also hear the loneliness of the beings.

**DEAFENING SILENCE WON THE BEST PRODUCTION AWARD  
IN 2012 AT THE FESTIVAL DE TEATRO Y ARTES DE CALLE, VALLADOLID.**

## ARTS PROMOTION AND FINANCIAL AID

D.G.C.A., S.A.C.D. / Auteurs d'espace public, Atelier 231 / C.N.A.R. à Sotteville-lès-Rouen, Le Moulin Fondu / C.N.A.R. in Noisy-le-Sec, La Paperie / C.N.A.R. in St-Barthélemy d'Anjou, Le Parapluie / C.N.A.R. in Aurillac, Pronomade(s) / C.N.A.R. in Haute-Garonne, Quelques p'Arts... le SOAR / C.N.A.R. in Boulieu-lès-Annonay, Les Usines Boinot / C.N.A.R. in Niort

The world we live in today measures itself against the yardsticks of profitability and efficiency. Capitalism steamrollers anything that can't keep up with the pace, getting rid of the weak and useless.

A wasteland of men reduced to detritus. Shattered to smithereens, dusty and dishevelled. Humiliated men. Tattered and torn. Distraught men, fallen apart and flaking into pieces. Damaged men, damaged goods...

A zone of shame where silence is kept. That outlying dumping ground where we pile up all of our human waste is an invisible realm, yet also a sacred one. No-one wants to mention it, no more than we want to allude to the subject of death. It is glued together as a whole by silence. And so parallel worlds open up before us, a host of tiny little worlds, worlds that are constantly being shifted back and forth with the tide of waste skips and rubbish collections ...

**Barthélemy Bompard**

**Barthélemy Bompard.**

*Born in 1958 in Dakar in Senegal, he 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 12 different shows. **He won the SACD Street Theatre Award in 2006 in recognition of his work.***

## PRESS REVIEWS

### LIBÉRATION - EDOUARD LAUNET

*Deafening silence (Silence encombrant)*, the new production by Kumulus, manages to achieve the unbelievable - namely to keep you spellbound for an hour and a half with what is on paper ostensibly an un compelling performance involving nine zombies, who do nothing more than empty a waste skip without uttering a word. The soundtrack is simply the scrape of junk being dragged along the ground; **a scrap symphony, a choreography of despair.**

### TÉLÉRAMA - MATHIEU BRAUNSTEIN

The Kumulus Theatre Company, now a veteran of the street theatre circuit (25 years), has this time opted to put on a performance devoid of words. Mute but by no means silent: this is the bottomless sewer of society which drives both men and industrial products to waste, out as rubbish, accompanied by the deafening scrape of the debris that they drag along with them.

**Here in the boundless strangeness of these “ sub-humans “, who appear totally indifferent to one another, we can see traces of Beckett, Butoh, and a whole body of well-known catastrophe theatre...**

### EL MUNDO

The XIII International Street Theatre festival came to a close yesterday with the final award ceremony, with the French theatre company Kumulus emerging as grand winner for its latest production *Deafening Silence (Silence Encombrant)* – a portrayal of human vagrants and waste that walked away with the award for Best Production.

### LES TROIS COUPS - LÉNA MARTINELLI

From the deafening moment this show crashes in on the scene, up until the grand finale, it leaves a profound impression throughout. Radical and unsettling, Kumulus hits the right note making its point in a perfectly suited expressionist vein. **And this poetic explosion booms out loudly. Intentionally !**

### LA STRADDA - THOMAS HAHN

**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.

### L'EXPRESS - FROM A REVIEW BY IGOR HANSEN-LOVE

It is the outcasts' ball, the choreography of revolt.

### MOUVEMENT - JULIE BORDENAVE ET PASCALINE VALLÉE

Kumulus' old verve returns with *Deafening silence ( Silence encombrant )*, a mute, healthy uppercut.

## DANSER - THOMAS HAHN

Kept in store for the audience this year at the festival's commemorative anniversary was a major work of the tragic genre. **Human rejects become universal symbols, even realer than life itself, as they embrace the unwavering dance of time.**

## LE BRUIT DU OFF - PIERRE SALLES

Elderly people, homeless people, prostitutes ... they take out a hundred or so bits of rubbish, in a chaos that is both highly calculated and piercingly knifelike, and set about laying them out in front of the dumbstruck audience. Their odd attempts to strike up a dialogue and share emotions let us glimpse faint hints of humanity or hope for change. But then their ritual returns to the fore, and the laying out, the rhythmic ransacking keeps on going, tirelessly.

Where some artists have little cause for hope in mankind in this 2013 Edition of the Avignon Theatre Festival, Barthélemy Bompard offers us the possibility of a collective way out. Man, once rid of his own bits of waste and his rags, can find himself again, in a group, finally capable of hoping for a different future. **This is an extremely interesting project and dramatic work, which is also imbued with a distinct aesthetic appeal. We strongly recommend that you see this show.**

## THÉÂTRE DU BLOG - EDITH RAPPOPORT

We are all invited to assemble in the huge car park of the local school, Olympe de Gouges. A few chairs are scattered about, worth snapping up quickly before we see a vast disposal skip open up and spill onto the ground a heap of rubbish, covered in white. Gradually, human forms emerge, very slowly.

Humanity, white and adrift, old people, a legionnaire, women on their last legs, wounded people staggering - bit by bit they all gather up the waste they are a part of, and wander about, each slowly cutting a desperate path, at times collapsing on the legs of members of the audience, as they shift the most improbable of junk items to the far end. Piles of old bottles, a car bonnet, a sink, a bird cage, a mattress, pipes, the contours of our world adrift, in stony silence, save for the noise of jumble being dragged along the ground. This deafening silence is violently alluring!

For more than twenty years now, Kumulus has continued to stay true to itself as a wholly genuine street theatre company, which dares set off violently poetic bombs, whilst keeping all its enthusiasm intact.

**Produced in 2011. Here is our schedule since that :**

## **IN FRANCE**

Festival DañsFabrik | le Quartz - Scène Nationale, Brest (29)  
Festival les Echappées Belles | Scène Nationale 61, Alençon (61)  
Festival Mimos | l'Odyssé - Scène conventionnée pour les corps en mouvement, Périgueux (24)  
Festival Friction(s) | Château rouge, Annemasse (74)  
Saison du Train Théâtre - Scène conventionnée Chanson | Portes-lès-Valence (26)  
Festival Jours de Danse | Besançon (25)  
Festival Off d'Avignon | Avignon (84)  
Festival international de théâtre de rue | C.N.A.R., Aurillac (15)  
Festival de Chalon dans la Rue | C.N.A.R., Chalon-sur-Saône (71)  
Festival Viva Cité | C.N.A.R., Sotteville-lès-Rouen (76)  
Festival les Rencontres d'Ici et d'Ailleurs | C.N.A.R., Noisy-le-Sec (93)  
Saison des Pronomade(s) | C.N.A.R. en Haute-Garonne (31)  
Saison de Quelques p'Arts... le SOAR | C.N.A.R., Boulieu-Lès-Annonay (07)  
Festival les Turbulentes | C.N.A.R., Vieux-Condé (59)  
Festival Furies | Châlons-en-Champagne (51)  
Festival Les Invites | Villeurbanne (69)  
Festival Cergy Soit! | Cergy-Pontoise (95)  
Festival Coup de Chauffe | L'avant Scène Cognac (16)  
Saison d'Arto | Ramonville et Toulouse (31)  
Festival Carrément à l'Ouest | C.N.A.R., Port-Saint-Louis (13)  
Saison de printemps de 2R2C | Paris 7e  
Festival Roulez Carros | Carros (06)  
Festival Coup de Chauffe | Avant-Scène Cognac (16)  
Festival In Extremis / Hospitalités | L'Usine, Théâtre Garonne (31)  
Festival Faire Autrement | Familistère de Guise (02)

## **ABROAD**

Festival de Teatro y Artes de Calle | Valladolid (Spain)  
Oreol Festival | Terschelling (Netherland)  
Theater op de Markt Festival | Hasselt (Belgium)  
Les Escales Improbables | Montreal (Canada)  
Todos Lisbonne Festival | Lisbon (Portugal)  
FETA Festival | Gdansk (Poland)  
Europäisches Strassentheater Festival | Detmold (Germany)  
Passage Festival | Helsingor (Denmark)  
Teatro a Corte | Turin (Italie)

## **RESIDENCY**

14th – 26th October 2010 - Les Usines Boinot | C.N.A.R. in Niort  
4th – 16th January 2011 - L'Atelier 231 | C.N.A.R. in Sotteville-lès-Rouen  
14th February – 3rd March 2011 and  
17th – 31st March 2011 - Pronomade(s) | C.N.A.R. in Haute-Garonne  
9th – 30th April 2011 Le Parapluie | C.N.A.R. in Aurillac  
23rd – 29th May 2011 : Quelques p'Arts... le SOAR - C.N.A.R. à Boulieu-lès-Annonay





## 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.

Kumulus Theater company was created in 1986 by Barthélemy Bompard. Other compagny's work :

**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 A 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 [1995]** Barthélemy Bompard's work *Faits Divers* 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**

**ITINERAIRES SANS FOND(S) [2003]** *Itinéraires sans Fonds* 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 BOITES [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**

**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*.

**Cassandre - 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]** 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. Barthélemy Bompard and his acolytes take a direct approach, acceptingly showing "the old remains" (of talent or charm) in their wobbly gestures. At the last Chalon dans la rue street theatre festival, Kumulus deftly made the transition into Cumulus. And it was no easy task.

**Emmanuelle Bouchez - Téléràma**

**FAITS DIVERS - NO MAN'S LAND [2020]** An art intervention that shakes up the everyday. *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 the invisible, privacy and living as a community, all to re-spark your imagination. If we can't officially organize a show for an audience (because of the Covid), this production surprises people as they go about their daily lives in the street by offering different crazy situations and bizarre images that challenge passers-by.

**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**

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