

# les Squammes



compagnie  
**kumulus**



# *les Squames*

A SHOW BY  
**BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTION  
**BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD & CLAUDE MEISTER**

PERFORMED BY  
**JACQUES BARRÉ, ARMELLE BÉRENGIER,  
ERIC BLOUET, BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD,  
STÉPHANE CIVET, CÉLINE DAMIRON,  
BARTHÉLEMY DHENIN, NICOLASQUILLIARD,  
NINA SÉRUSIER, JUDITH THIÉBAUT & AMY WOOD**

MAKE- UP CREATION  
**ISABELLE DARDE**  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
**CLAIRE SALMON-LEGAGNEUR**  
SET DESIGNER & BUILDER  
**FRÉDÉRIC BARRY**  
MAKE-UP ARTIST  
**MARIE-CÉCILE WINLING & ANNE VERGNAULT**  
TECHNICAL PRODUCTION  
**DJAMEL DJERBOUA & SEBASTIAN PUEYOLARREA**

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**PHOTO CRÉDIT ALGO**

**KUMULUS**  
114, ROUTE DE NYONS, LE MOULIN  
26770 ROUSSET LES VIGNES - FRANCE  
**+33 (0)4 75 27 41 96 - CONTACT@KUMULUS.FR**  
**WWW.KUMULUS.FR**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
**BARTHÉLEMY BOMPARD**

ADMINISTRATION, TOURING & PRODUCTION  
**VINCIANE DOFNY, CHARLOTTE GRANGE  
& ALEXANDRA VIGNERON**

# Sles Squames



Strange humanoids from the mountains of Central Europe are led under close guard to their final destination – the cage. As they come to the end of their last journey you will begin to notice how these strange beings, the only few remaining on earth today, are far from a silent minority.

**So, a word of warning – stay on your guard!**

The Squames were first discovered in the 1970s in the mountainous region of central Europe. They feed on vegetables, fruit, eggs, seeds and roots. They live together in organized hordes, with families grouped together in tribes. The dominant males are responsible for providing protection for the group, as well as keeping order within each family unit. It is thanks to this particular social structure that they have managed to keep up such long-running resistance against their greatest of enemies: man and civilization.

These days they live in reserves, kept under observation by eminent ethnologists. Not a single specimen has been found in the wild for some two decades. In order to raise awareness, an event has been staged to bring these creatures to public attention. This is the explanation given by the guards in answer to the barrage of questions asked in the street as they attempt to satisfy the curiosity of passers-by:

“What do they eat?” - “Are there others still surviving?” - “How do they reproduce?”

## **Real-fake monkeys or fake-real men?**

The Squames look like humanoids. Their bodies are the colour of soot, with bloodshot eyes, a thin layer of hair and deformed heads. They walk and behave like primates: letting out sudden screams, screwing up their faces and rolling around on the ground.

You can come up close and look at this species through the bars of a cage, and see how they go through the routine of their daily gestures, and observe their rituals, pecking order and their emotions.

Yet although the bars may protect you from their sudden, excessive outbursts, they cannot protect you from the deep-seated memory of the Squame lying inside you, being awakened and stirring within ...

**BEST SHOW AWARD**

**DURING INTERNATIONAL STRASSENTHEATERFESTIVAL D'HOLZMINDEN (GERMANY)**

**KUMULUS PRODUCTION**



The first show that Kumulus ever produced echoes back to the spectacle of the fairs and ethnological exhibitions that were put on in France less than a century ago, and which can still be seen today, especially in Asia.

This theatrical work urges us to question how we view others and how we react to differences, while openly denouncing all different forms of racism, without actually naming them.

It confronts the critical gaze of the passer-by in relation to authority, (which is here acted out by the guards,) but also in relation to the other members of the crowd watching. It invites the people in the audience to react and to strike up conversations with each other. And all of these debates and reactions that are triggered off are as much a part of the show as the actors' performances.

#### **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

## LE MONDE - FRANÇOISE LIMOGÉ

There are a couple of knowing smiles to be spotted from the people who have got it, but most of the crowd watching are hanging on to wait and see, clearly disturbed by these “animal-men”, with mixed feelings of both shame – “and why isn’t the animal protection society coming to do something about this?” – and also fear – oh, what utter terror on the faces of some people when one of the creatures managed to break out of its cage later in the day! This production aims to excite curiosity and get people talking in the street. And there is no denying that *The Squames* is a performance which manages to do precisely that.

## LE PARISIEN

“What the hell are they?” one woman asked as she walked past. The female cage guard walked up to answer her: “Well actually, they’re *Squames*.” “*Squames*?” “It is an endangered species, half-animal, half-man. There are only a few specimens left alive in Romania,” she went on to explain. “And so who are you?” another bystander asked. “We are employed by a research centre that is working on a study project to analyse them. We are putting them in the public eye like this so as to raise awareness about their fate.” “Ah..., I see.” An offended woman suddenly had an angry outburst: “It’s outrageous to put on them on show like this in such a degrading fashion!” An old man suddenly broke through the crowd, laughing out: “They are monkeys dressed up as men!” A few young girls approached the cage, shaking with nerves. “Don’t be scared, it’s only theatre!” someone burst out. Indeed it is: the Kumulus theatre company acting up again.

## L’HUMANITÉ

*The Squames* was a mind-boggling display of ape-like men locked up in a cage that was parked in the middle of the Jardin des Carmes for a whole afternoon. A parody put on by the Kumulus theatre company.

## TÉLÉRAMA

*The Squames* is heavy duty, laden with history. The show is now 20 years old, and the performance is worthy of Kumulus - as grand-scale as what the company has become today.

## L’ANJOU LAÏQUE

### JEAN LOUIS GRÉGOIRE

Intrigued by the description of *The Squames* in the festival programme, I decided to make my way to the Place de la République where it was due to be shown. Things were taking longer than expected for the show to get underway, before finally someone from the theatre company came forward to announce that the Mayor of Angers had decided that the performance would not be going ahead at all. The mayor’s decision was a clear case of censorship in the true sense of the word as defined in the Petit Larousse dictionary: “Censorship : control exercised by government, authority over the press, over performances, etc .... intended for public consumption.” In fact, the reason given to explain the ban only served to further reinforce it. Does it only take “certain members of the audience” to be “shocked” by the show for the mayor to impose a ban? And is he really the person to be championing accepted standards of behaviour? Did he at any stage look into whether these “certain members of the audience” were actually capable of understanding the meaning of what was to be shown?

Did he go to any lengths to find out what the writer was aiming to convey through this production? And had he ever actually seen the show? Or did he not in fact draw a link – an obvious one indeed – between this show and the exhibition currently being shown at the Angers Natural History Museum, entitled “Human Zoos : Creating Savages”. Fundamentally, this decision by the council raises the issue of the very nature of the festival itself, as well as the creative freedom of expression of modern culture

## **Bis repetita**

Only a few weeks after the event, which had certainly left a deep impression on people's minds, the local council suddenly struck again. The city hall issued an order to take down two of the twenty panels put on display by the Kel Imenas Association, depicting images of the crisis in North Mali, and life in the refugee camps. Two acts of censorship in the space of only two weeks

## **LE FIGARO**

"Hey, look, prehistoric men!" – "Looks like it. They walked and talked like that. I bet they are trying to show how man has descended from the ape." – "Yes, that's right, first there came the ape, and then came man." – "Come on, let's go!" – "You're not scared are you?" – "No, it's just they're so ugly they're freaking me out."

- "They've wheeled out a bunch of nutcases." - "They really shouldn't. It's far too scary." - "The guards are prison wardens, so no need to be scared." Yesterday, during *The Squames*, the performance was out on the street. But the best actors were the people out and about wandering through Lyon, who hadn't had a chance to talk to each other like that since the public transport strike.

## **ÉCRITS DANS LA MARGE**

### **LACHAUD / MALEVAL**

There is a double audience here. The spectators are either in the know, or they're not. They are either there to watch, or just passing by. If they are there to watch, then they get to see a 'total' show, both inside and outside the cage, as they look on with amusement and sometimes worry at other people's reactions in the audience. If they are just passers-by, then they end up getting doubly taken advantage of, not just by the actors, but also by the stare of all the people who are 'in on the joke'. You could even argue that the audience itself unwittingly ends up being part of the performance too, coerced into acting out the story as defined and agreed by the Kumulus Theatre Company.

## **LE SOIR (BELGIUM)**

*The Squames* produced by the company Kumulus is undoubtedly the most confusing. True wild or fake civilized?

## **24 HEURES (SWITZERLAND))**

Everybody knows that when you go to the zoo, you are not really sure who is looking at whom: is the animal inside, or outside the cage? Although it is quite rare for a human being to be compared to a hippopotamus, and far from pleasant, being compared to a monkey is undoubtedly very frequent, and indeed disturbing. Once or twice one of the squames managed to get away, but was quickly grabbed by one of the guards. Yet the crowd seemed more worried and inquisitive once these creatures were locked up behind bars. Some people stayed for two, three or even up to five hours in front of the cage. Come nightfall, the audience was totally captivated, surprised, and even fascinated, but above all utterly struck by the strangeness of the show, and the rigorous performance of the actors. Others hung around for only a few minutes before walking off, finding the whole thing stupid, or at the very least anecdotal. This looked nothing like a happening, but rather it verged on an urban event, extremely well crafted, and increasingly inventive as each day went by. You can go to the zoo fifteen times, you can look at yourself in the mirror every morning, but no matter how often you do so, you are never left indifferent ...

## **SUB-ROCK - BERNADETTE BAYONNETTE**

We are treated to an aesthetically shocking spectacle, as if watching deadly violence being exorcised. The focus is on dressing up different forms of racism and genocide that are linked to the theme of the fear of others, that we can all have curled up festering inside us. It's possibly a more lucid and useful angle than just staying with the softly-softly approach of a humanist and educational denunciation, which often comes out having a perverse effect.

**Produced in 1988,**  
**Here is our schedule since that**  
*Non-exhaustiv list*

## **IN FRANCE**

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)

Saison des Usines Boinots | C.N.A.R., Niort (79)

Festival Les Noctibules |  
Boulieu Scène Nationale, Annecy (74)

Festival Mimos | l'Odyssée -Scène  
conventionnée pour les corps en mouvement,  
Périgueux (24)

Festival les Echappées Belles |  
Scène Nationale 61, Alençon (61)

La folle histoire des Arts de la rue |  
Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (13)

Festiv'Artère Publique | Nil Obstrat,  
Agglomération de Cergy-Pontoise (95)

Festival Fest'Arts |  
Théâtre le Liburnia, Libourne (31)

Festival Rayons Frais | Tours (37)

Festival Art Rock | Saint-Brieuc (22)

Festival Fête dans la ville | Amiens (80)

Festival Les Invites | C.N.A.R., Villeurbanne (69)

Le 1er Mai du Familistère | Guise (02)

Les Indésirables | 2R2C, Paris (75)

Festival Sorties de rue | St-Jean-de-Vedas (34)

Festival Cergy Soit! | Cergy-Pontoise (95)

Festival Parades | Nanterre (92)

Festival Rue et Cie | Epinal (88)

Festival Off d'Avignon | Avignon (84)

Jardin dans tous ses états | Assier (46)

Festival international RITEJ | Lyon(69)

Coté Jardin | Marseille (13)

Les Allumées | Nantes (44)

Festival les Accroche-coeurs | Angers (49)

Festival des Arts dans la Rue (FARSe) |  
Strasbourg (67)

Festival des Vendanges | Suresnes (92)

## **ABROAD**

Oerol Festival | Terschelling (Pays Bas)

Straattheater Festival | Hengelo (Hollande)

Festival international de théâtre |  
Sao José do Rio Preto (Brésil)

Festival Imaginarius |  
Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal)

Festival Les unes fois d'un soir |  
Lessines et Ath (Belgique)

Festival Mostra de Arte | Sao Paulo (Brésil)

Festival Folklore | Wiesbaden (Allemagne)

Zomer Festival | Menen (Belgique)

Paleo Festival | Nyon (Suisse)

Festival Miramiro | Ghent (Belgique)

Festival Im Puls | Dornbirn (Autriche)

Straat festival | Vlissingen (Pays Bas)

Festival Pflasterspektakel | Linz (Autriche)

Stichting Straattheater Festival | Delft (Pays  
Bas)

La Mercé | Barcelone (Espagne)

Institut Français | Stuttgart (Allemagne)

Köln Sommer | Cologne (Allemagne)

Theaterfestival Etcetera La Strada |  
Amersfoort (Allemagne)

Festival de la Cité | Lausanne (Suisse)

Festival Actes | Bruxelles (Belgique)

La Piazza | Augsburg (Allemagne)

International Straßentheaterfestival |  
Holzminden (Allemagne)

Strattheaterfestival |  
Doetinchem et Dresde (Allemagne)

Passage Festival | Helsingor (Danemark)

Modern Art Days Festival (Pologne)



## 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 :

**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. corridor.

*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. **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 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

**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 - Télérama**

**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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