



66<sup>e</sup> FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON

la **colline**  
théâtre national

## La nuit tombe... (Night is Falling)

text and direction **Guillaume Vincent**

A single place – a hotel room – for three stories that cross and intertwine: that of two sisters, Wolfgang's and Susann's. The play imagined by Guillaume Vincent seems like a script that would be used to do theatre. "A stage machine" as he calls it, which undoubtedly found its inspiration in the film-makers he particularly likes (Bergman, Bresson, Buñuel and Fassbinder) and plunges us into a universe where fantasy and reality are closely entangled, where the past and the present sometimes merge, where the living and the dead talk to us without worrying about their status. A fantastic evasion that plays with the reversal of situations, while relying on a dramatic framework peopled with small pebbles that permit the spectators to follow this twisting path, like children entering the world of fairy-tales. Guillaume Vincent chose to develop his story, the setting of a hotel room, a place that we pass through without really stopping, a place bearing the memory of those who were there before us and who, perhaps, like ghosts, may reappear. So, in this imaginary hotel somewhere in old Havana or Shanghai in the 1930's, in South America or today's Russia, strangeness is acceptable. We hear stories about family, sisters and father, marriage and separation, love and disaffection, hopes and failures that carry us along in a fascinating rondo, that of the suspense of life.

Jean-François Perrier (Festival d'Avignon)

"In writing *Night Is Falling*, I tried to transcribe a world that is not realistic but a world that becomes twisted under the weight of the real. A world in which reality substitutes for a fantasy. The fantasy being equal to the real. I attempted to remember very precise sensations, the loss of points of reference, of borderline... And I wrote having the stage and the actors as the sole objective. I was not concerned about creating literature, my objective was not to invent a language. I wanted to create a stage machine, a script. I only thought about the show to come."

Guillaume Vincent

Everything happens in a hotel room, a single set, a place common to strange stories whose threads perhaps cross. A play of echoes. As if the dead at least, shared, could go from one story to another. Who are our dead? Or whose dead are we?

Three threads, the time frames are not the same and the narrative logics either; with Susann, we go back in time a little farther with each scene; with Pauline and Émilie, each reappearance seems to go closer to a death that seems to be desired. As for Wolfgang, he seems to be caught in the snares of a suspense film, in which everything would constantly remain to be explained. The dead, witnesses of what can be summoned: additives in the quest for a version of the facts to be established; or rather, of a "reality" to be established. Insofar as they do not claim to be dead people. But the film would still not be edited, a chaotic time line, unable to be reconstituted. And we go from one face to another, from one time to another, without any point of reference.

Even at the very beginning, everything in the hotel room seemed to be a mess. Without any explanation. As if an unknown person had looked at the things hung upside-down. Or as if, taken down, he was loaded onto a man's back, with his head downwards and that we saw through his eyes the surrounding world, which had been jolted. Something a little cinematographic perhaps. Something like the point of view of the dead.

A hotel room: that place in which you do not live, in which memory has very little hold in general. In which, around you, you do not know either the room or the world that stretches out downstairs. In which unfamiliar noises replace familiar sounds – nothing more that is immediately recognizable. The "not at your home". A place of passage, movement or travel, micro-exiles, flights or escapes: skips in time – as it is said of a record that skips. Everything skips.

With what can be carried along of the fantastic.

Strangers, those who appear one after the other on stage, are fairly often actors with whom Guillaume Vincent has already worked. Some of them can come back and play several characters. Life is still changing. The play was written with them in mind and will continue in part to be written with them, from the stage. Here, writing the text of the show is therefore not shifting towards literature. Or then in fact towards fantasy literature. And it is perhaps to further underscore the sensation that we are in the place of every possibility, that French is not the only language that we hear. Unless this is also because it is the most common experience in life.

Let us set out a hypothesis: perhaps the idea is for us to look towards a "genre theatre", as people say a genre film. A disreputable theatre: no more fallback positions that stand, the private islands are threatened, vacillate, attacked. And if our ghosts are not the phantoms of the place, they are clearly the dead come back – ours?

Then perhaps that we move forward with the fear in our gut of losing too. Thirty-year-olds, often caught between elderly grandparents and young children, have a latent sort of obsession, the dread of their own disappearance. A gentle or visceral fear. Our dead, our dear dead to come. Except if death does not change anything about the situation, anything about our terrible fear. And the hypothesis becomes comic, if not burlesque even a clown; a hotel room is then not necessarily made more uninhabitable by being peopled by our dead. By us, dead men and women.

**Marion Stoufflet**

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