Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord

The Suit

BAM Harvey Theater
Jan 17—19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29—31;
Feb 1 & 2 at 7:30pm
Jan 24 at 8pm (Gala)
Jan 19, 26 & Feb 2 at 2pm
Jan 20 & 27 at 3pm
Approximate running time: 75 minutes, no intermission

Based on The Suit by Can Themba,
Mothobi Mutloatse, and Barney Simon

Direction, adaptation, and music by
Peter Brook, Marie-Hélène Estienne, and Franck Krawczyk

Lighting design by Philippe Vialatte
Scenic elements and costume design by Oria Puppo
Assistant director Rikki Henry (also onstage)

With
Nonhlanhla Kheswa
Jared McNeill
William Nadylam

Musicians
Arthur Astier guitar
Raphaël Chambouvet piano
David Dupuis trumpet

American stage manager R. Michael Blanco
French stage manager Thomas Becelewski
South African writer Can Themba’s novel, *The Suit*, was supposed to change the writer’s life. Tragically, the cruel restrictions of apartheid in his native country meant that his life changed in a completely different way. He went into exile in Swaziland, his works banned in South Africa. He died an alcoholic before his most famous work was adapted for the stage by Mothobi Mutloatse and Barney Simon at Johannesburg’s Market Theatre in the newly liberated South Africa of the 1990s.

Renowned director Peter Brook, working with his long-term collaborator Marie-Hélène Estienne, staged a new adaptation of the original stage version and took it on tour in the French language. Now, returning to the source language of English, and with another close collaborator Franck Krawczyk, they have revived the play once again and set it to music from sources as diverse as Franz Schubert and Miriam Makeba.

The story of *The Suit* centres on Philomen, who works for a middle-class lawyer, and his wife, Matilda. The suit of the title belongs to Matilda’s lover and is left behind when Philemon catches the illicit couple *in flagrante*. As punishment, Philemon makes Matilda treat the suit as an honored guest. She has to feed it, entertain it, and take it out for walks as a constant reminder of her adultery. But the setting of Sophiatown, a teeming township that was erased shortly after Themba wrote his novel, is as much a character in the play as the unfortunate couple, and this production lends it life and energy even with a minimal cast.


Production—C.I.C.T. / Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord
Coproduction—Fondazione Campania dei Festival / Napoli Teatro Festival Italia, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Young Vic Theatre, Théâtre de la Place – Liège
With the support of the C.I.R.T.

The actors appear with the permission of AEA and the American Stage Manager is a member of Actors’ Equity Association.
CANODOISE DANIEL “CAN” THEMBA (author) was born in 1924 in Marabastad, Pretoria, South Africa. After graduating with a degree in English and acquiring a teaching diploma from the University of Fort Hare, he moved to Sophiatown, Johannesburg, a vibrant multiracial community. After winning a short story competition, Themba worked as a reporter and editor at Drum magazine, working alongside other aspiring black journalists who came to be known as the “Drum Boys.” These included Lewis Nkosi, Nat Nakasa, Bloke Modisane, and Es’kia Mphahlele. Themba also worked for The Golden City Post in Johannesburg. His work, including “The Suit,” won several prizes, including the 1953 Drum Award. His stories were celebrated for the way they depicted “the harsh and depressing conditions of African life in the Johannesburg townships.” Themba left Johannesburg in the early 1960s to teach in Swaziland. While there, Themba’s work was banned and he was declared a statutory communist. He passed away at the age of 43, reportedly from alcohol abuse. His work was published posthumously in a collection entitled The Will to Die (1972) and later in The World of Can Themba (1985). Themba was awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver for “Excellent achievement in literature, contributing to the field of journalism and striving for a just and democratic society in South Africa.”
Who's Who

Cast

Nonhlanhla Kheswa  Jared McNeill  William Nadylam  Rikki Henry

Musicians

Arthur Astier  Raphaël Chambouvet  David Dupuis
PETER BROOK (direction, adaptation, music) was born in London in 1925. Throughout his career, he has distinguished himself in various genres: theater, opera, cinema, and writing. He directed his first play in London in 1943, and has gone on to direct over 70 productions in London, Paris, and New York. His work with the Royal Shakespeare Company includes Love’s Labour’s Lost (1946), Measure for Measure (1950), Titus Andronicus (1955), King Lear (1962), Marat/Sade (1964), US (1966), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1970 and at BAM in 1971), and Antony and Cleopatra (1978). In 1971, he co-founded the International Centre for Theatre Research with Micheline Rozan in Paris and in 1974, opened its permanent base at the Bouffes du Nord theater. There, he directed Timon of Athens, The Iks, Ubu aux Bouffes, Conference of the Birds, L’Os, The Cherry Orchard (BAM, 1988), The Mahabharata (BAM, 1987), Woza Albert!, The Tempest, The Man Who (BAM, 1995), Qui est là, Happy Days, Je suis un Phénomène, Le Costume, The Tragedy of Hamlet (BAM, 2001), Far Away, La Mort de Krishna, Ta Main dans la Mienne, The Grand Inquisitor, Tierno Bokar, Sizwe Banzi, Fragments, Warum Warum, Love is my Sin, 11 and 12, and the opera Une Flûte Enchantée. Many of these were performed both in French and English. He directed the operas La Bohème, Boris Godunov, The Olympians, Salomé, and Le Nozze de Figaro at Covent Garden; Faust and Eugene Onegin at the Metropolitan Opera; La Tragédie de Carmen and Impressions of Pelleas at the Bouffes du Nord; and Don Giovanni for the Aix en Provence Festival. He has also written books and directed for film and TV. His autobiography, Threads of Time, was published in 1998 and joins other titles including The Empty Space (1968)—translated into over 15 languages, The Shifting Point (1987), There are No Secrets (1993), Evoking (and Forgetting) Shakespeare (1999), and With Grotowski (2009). His films include Moderato Cantabile (1959), Lord of the Flies (1963), Marat/Sade (1967), King Lear (1969), Meetings with Remarkable Men (1976), The Mahabharata (1989), and The Tragedy of Hamlet (2002, TV).

MARIE-HÉLÈNE ESTIENNE (direction, adaptation, music) worked with Peter Brook in 1974 on the casting for Timon of Athens, and consequently joined the Centre International de Créations Théâtrales (CICT) to work on Ubu aux Bouffes in 1977. She was Brook’s assistant on La tragédie de Carmen and The Mahabharata, and collaborated on the staging of The Tempest, Impressions de Pelléas, Woza Albert!, and La tragédie d’Hamlet (2000). She worked on the dramaturgy of Qui est là. With Brook, she co-authored L’homme qui and Je suis un phénomène, shown at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. She wrote the French adaptation of Can Themba’s play The Suit and Sizwe Banzi is Dead by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona. In 2003 she wrote the French and English adaptations of Le Grand inquisiteur – The Grand Inquisitor, based on Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov. She wrote Tierno Bokar in 2005 and the English adaptation of Eleven and Twelve, by Amadou Hampâté Bâ in 2009. With Brook, she co-directed Fragments and five short pieces by Beckett and, again with Brook and composer Franck Krawczyk, she freely adapted Mozart and Schikaneder’s The Magic Flute into Une flûte enchantée.

FRANCK KRAWCZYK (composer) started his musical training in Paris studying piano, analysis, and harmonization, and then studied composition in Lyon where he currently teaches chamber music at the Conservatory (CNSMD). Very early on, Krawczyk was discovered by the Festival d’automne in Paris, and started writing several pieces for piano, cello, string quartet, ensembles, and chamber choir. In 2000, he received the Prix Hervé Dugardin and the Prix de la SACEM for his orchestral piece Ruines. His subsequent artistic collaboration with Christian Boltanski gave him new perspectives on his music. With lighting designer Jean Kalman, he created a dozen pieces (“opus”) in France and abroad in locations ranging from opera houses to spaces dedicated to contemporary art. He also developed new forms of musical creations for various media: theater (Je ris de me voir si belle with J. Brochen), readings (Les Limbes,
Absence, with E. Ostrovski), video (Private Joke with F. Salès), and dance (Purgatorio-In vision, with E. Greco and P.C. Scholten). Maintaining strong links to the classical repertoire, Krawczyk collaborated with Accentus choir’s conductor Laurence Equilbey (on Vivaldi, Chopin, Schubert, Liszt, Wagner, Mahler, Schoënberg) and cellist Sonia Wieder-Atherton (on Janacek, Mahler, Rachmaninov, Monteverdi). In 2009, upon Peter Brook’s request, he conceived and interpreted a musical accompaniment for Shakespeare’s sonnets (Love is my sin). They continued their collaboration with Marie-Hélène Estienne on Une flûte enchantée, a free adaptation of Mozart’s Opera, created in 2010 at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris and currently touring internationally. His last major work, Polvere, for solo cello, instrumental ensemble, and choir, was created in 2010 with Christian Boltanski at the Grand Palais for Monumenta and was performed in New York, Milan, and Bologna. He is currently working on his third string quartet.

PERFORMERS

NONHLANHLA KHESWA was born in Soweto, Johannesburg, and raised in Alexandra. She was encouraged at a very young age by her teachers to be proud of her storytelling gifts. At age 16 she began a professional stage career on Broadway in Disney’s The Lion King. An accomplished singer in South Africa’s celebrated vocal traditions as well as in jazz and pop music, Kheswa has toured the world as a featured vocalist with Wyclef Jean and has performed regularly with her own ensembles in New York, where she has resided for a decade. She is currently planning an album with China’s most famous classical pianist, Lang Lang.

JARED MCNEILL trained at Fordham University in New York City and graduated with a degree in theater and visual arts in 2008. He had his first professional role that year in Chisa Hutchinson’s She Like Girls at the Lark Theatre. McNeill played various roles in Peter Brook’s 11 and 12 and since then, has performed in August
Wilson’s Fences at the Geva Theater Center, and various chapters of Tarell McCraney’s Brothers/Sisters Trilogy at Pittsburgh’s City Theater, San Francisco’s Marin Theater Company, and American Conservatory Theater. Most recently, McNeill completed work as an understudy in the Roundabout Theater Company’s production of Stephen Karam’s Sons of the Prophet, adopting the role of Desmond in Young Jean Lee’s The Shipment, and performed in a recent New York production of Bertolt Brecht’s Life of Galileo, in which he performed musical numbers on the trombone and harpsichord.

WILLIAM NADYLAM trained at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre, previously known as Rue Blanche. His cinema experience includes Mama Keïta’s L’Absence (2012), Claire Denis’ White material (2010), Pierre Javaux’s Les Enfants du pays, Francis Girod’s Mauvais Genres (Transfixions), Rémi Waterhouse’s Mille Millièmes, Laurent Bachet’s Le Mal du pays (Homesick), Tout le Monde descendent, and Black Micmac by Marco Pauly. Television credits include Frères de sang by Stéphane Kappes, La Guerre des saintes by Giordano Gederlini, Les Mariés de l’île Bourbon by Euzhan Palcy, Les Oubliées by Hervé Hadmar, Une Autre Vie by Luc Beraud (award for Révélation et Découverte at St. Tropez film festival), Murphy’s Law, Le Dernier Fils, Table rase by Etienne Perier, and Klear by Álvaro García de Zúñiga. On stage, Nadylam played the Magician in Une flûte enchantée, directed by Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne; Layla in Bellona Destroyer of Cities, by Jay Scheib; Aaron in Botho Strauss’ Viol, directed by Luc Bondy; Pièce africaine, directed by Catherine Anne; Conferencia de imprenta, directed by Álvaro Zúñiga; La Tragédie d’Hamlet, directed by Peter Brook; Le Cid de Corneille, directed by Declan Donellan; La Tragédie du roi Christophe by Aimé Césaire and directed by Jacques Nichet; L’Ile des esclaves by Marivax and directed by Elisabeth Chailloux; and La Servante, directed by Olivier Py. He collaborated as an advisor and director with Daniela Kurz for Nuremberg Tanzteater on Wish I Wood and Next Stop Freedom. Nadylam’s directorial experience includes, among other plays, David Hare’s Stuff Happens, which he translated for Théâtre des Amandiers in 2009 and 2010.

ARTHUR ASTIER, born in 1985, has played guitar and bass guitar with various rock bands. Drawn to innovative means of expression, he has played guitar and bass in the service of other artistic forms such as plastic arts, theater, and classical music, principally through collaboration with composer Franck Krawczyk: Je ris de me voir si belle, directed by Julie Brochen, and a host of Boltanski/Kalman/Krawczyk productions including O Mensch!, Festival d’Automne; Happy Hours, Biennale d’Art Contemporain de Lyon; Pleins Jours, Théâtre du Châtelet; Gute Nacht, Nuits Blanches Paris; Polvere, and Monumenta 2010 Paris (Grand Palais).

RAPHAËL CHAMBOUVE studied classical piano was awarded the gold medal for jazz piano at the Conservatoire National de Lyon in 2000. Over the next 10 years he contributed to several albums and concerts, collaborating with Mr. Day and Booster and Khaban’, among others. In 2008 he and his three-man band CHK won the Concours National de Jazz de la Défense. Having also completed a two-year master’s degree in visual arts, he has created music for short films and cinema concerts. Last year, Chambouvet composed and performed the music for the theater production The Sweet Hereafter, directed by Emmanuel Meirieu, at Bouffes du Nord.

DAVID DUPUIS was born in Poitiers, France. His musical education began with the accordion, after which he learned the trumpet at the National Regional Conservatories in Poitiers and Rueil-Malmaison. He trained as a jazz musician with Lionel and Stéphane Belmondo and has collaborated with various artists from the musical spectrum: Fairuz, Ziad Rabhani, Idrissa Diop, Olivia Ruiz, Dionysos, Tryo, the Ivan Julien Big Band, Laurent Cugny’s Big Band “Lumière”, the Vintage Orchestra, La Belle Image, Les Zygos, (a street brass band), and the Compagnie Champs de Bataille (dance/theater).

RIKKI HENRY (assistant director) studied film production at the University for the Creative Arts.
At the Young Vic, he directed the Young People’s production of Government Inspector, and as assistant director, Vernon God Little, Annie Get Your Gun, and the Young People’s productions of Uncle Vanya and King Lear. Other directing work includes From Dover to Calais (ATC/Bristol Old Vic/Young Vic); Jitney (monologue by August Wilson, Trafalgar Arts/The Old Red Lion); and The Moment Before (Warehouse Theatre Croydon/Strawberry Picking Festival). Assistant directing credits include When the Chickens Came Home to Roost, Urban Legends (National Theatre Studio), and Ghosts or Those Who Return (Arcola).

ORIA PUPPO (scenic elements and costume design) is a scenographer and costume designer who divides her time between Buenos Aires and Paris. In Argentina she has created stage sets and costumes for directors Diego Kogan, Rafael Spregelburd, Roberto Villanueva, Ciro Zorzoli, and A. Tantanian. She collaborated with the latter in Lucerne, Switzerland, and in Stuttgart and Mannheim, Germany, staging Kafka’s Amerika and Brecht’s The Threepenny Opera. She has worked with the Bouffes du Nord on two Peter Brook productions, Tierno Bokar and A Magic Flute. She was the technical director of the Buenos Aires International Festival from 1999 to 2007 and her creations include several stage sets and costumes for opera as well as performative installations in contemporary art spaces. She is working on the stage sets for a production of Handel’s La Resurrezione, directed by Lilo Baur for the Paris National Opera’s Atelier Lyrique and on the sets and costumes for Jean Genet’s The Maids, a Ciro Zorzoli production featuring Marilú Marini, to be staged in Buenos Aires.

PHILIPPE VIALATTE (lighting design) started at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in 1985 as a light operator on The Mahabharata, directed by Peter Brook. He assisted Jean Kalman on the lighting design of Woza Albert! and La Tempête, also directed by Brook. Since the creation of The Man Who in Paris in 1993, Vialatte has designed lighting for all plays directed by Brook at the Bouffes du Nord: Qui est là, Je suis un phénomène, Le Costume, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Far Away, La mort de Krishna, La Tragédie d’Hamlet, Ta main dans la mienne, Tierno Bokar, Le Grand Inquisiteur, Sizwe Banzi est mort, Fragments, 11 and 12, and recently A Magic Flute. He tours with these plays and adapts the lighting for each venue.

R. MICHAEL BLANCO (American stage manager) has been the stage manager at BAM for Karole Armitage’s The Predator’s Ball; Jonathan Miller’s St. Matthew Passion and Così fan tutte; Playing Shakespeare USA with John Barton; Sydney Theater Company’s White Devil and Hedda Gabler; Donmar Warehouse’s Uncle Vanya/Twelfth Night; the RSC’s Don Carlos, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Hecuba; Watermill/Propeller’s Merchant of Venice; and Vesturport Theatre’s Metamorphosis and Faust: A Love Story. At the Metropolitan Opera: Kirov Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, and Robert Wilson’s Le Martyre de Saint Sebastian.

THÉÂTRE DES BOUFFE S DU NORD is located near the Gare du Nord in Paris. Peter Brook found the former music hall in decline in 1974 and decided to honor the theater’s 100-year history by preserving it in a state of decay. Built in 1876 (15 years after BAM was founded), the theater fought an out-of-the-way location and a long succession of directors until it was finally condemned and closed in 1952. Since Brook revived it, it has presented revolutionary productions, including La Tragédie de Carmen, The Mahabharata, and Tierno Bokar. Brook and partner Micheline Rozan, in addition to retaining the building’s history, decided to make the theater as open and accessible as possible with reasonable ticket prices and family-friendly matinees. Brook stepped down in 2011, handing the directorship to Olivier Mantei and Olivier Poubelle. The renovation of the BAM Harvey Theater (previously the Majestic)—which honors the look and feel of the Bouffes du Nord—was overseen by Harvey Lichtenstein and Peter Brook for the occasion of The Mahabharata at BAM in 1987.
A benefit honoring Peter Brook’s return to BAM and the conclusion of our 150th anniversary celebration

Thursday, January 24, 2013

The Suit
Based on The Suit by Can Themba, Mothobi Mutloatse, and Barney Simon
Direction, adaptation, and music by Peter Brook, Marie-Hélène Estienne, and Franck Krawczyk

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PHYLLIS ANN HOLBROOK LICHTENSTEIN

May 16, 1942 — April 22, 2012

The Board of Trustees and Staff of the Brooklyn Academy of Music truly miss the former first lady of BAM, Phyllis Lichtenstein, wife of Harvey.

Phyllis was an ardent supporter of BAM and a warm and gracious presence in the BAM lobby for nearly three decades.

Phyllis was a great fan of Peter Brook. BAM is proud to dedicate the engagement of Peter Brook’s *The Suit* to Phyllis.
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