

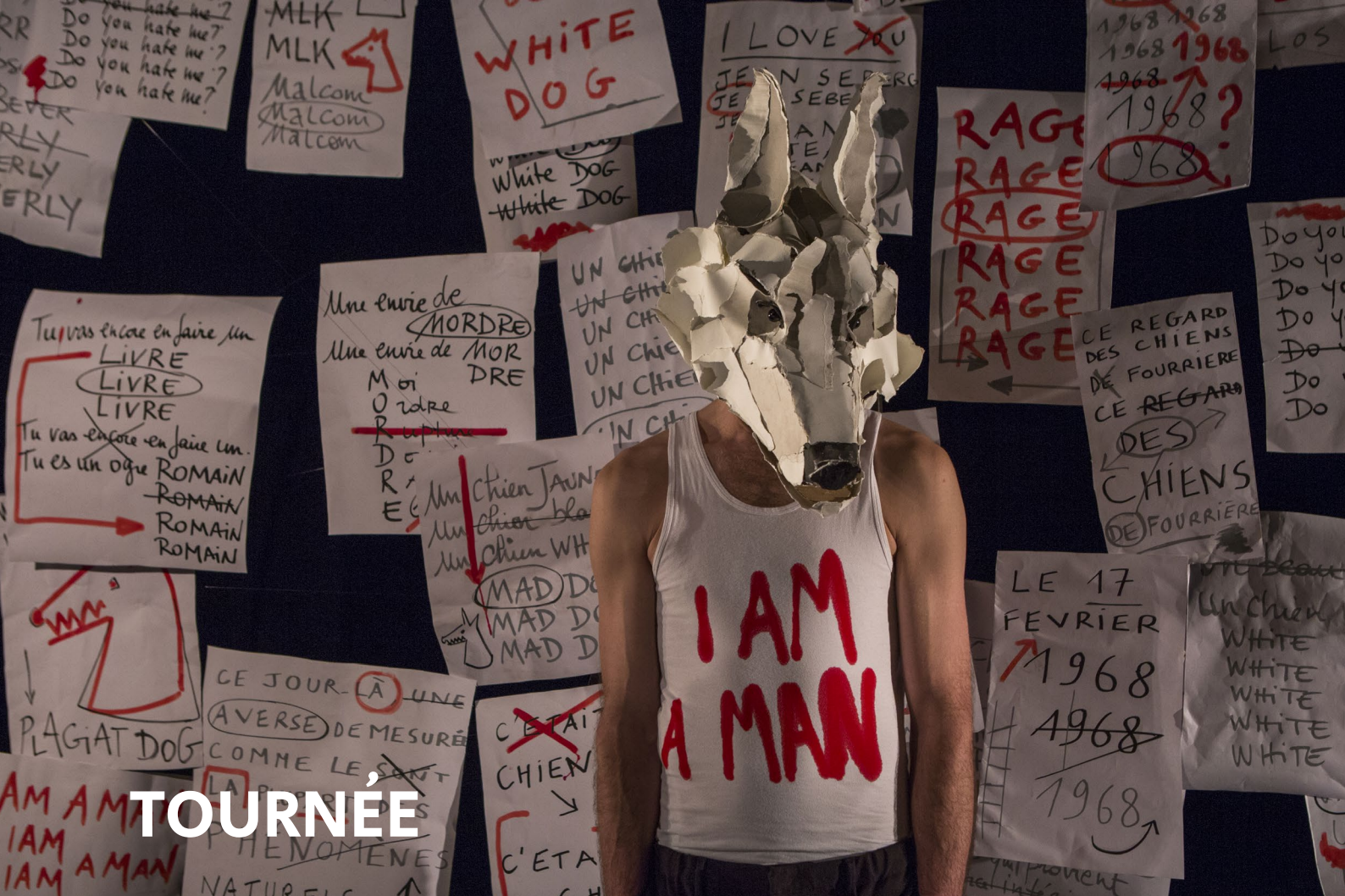


# WHITE DOG

**LES ANGES AU PLAFOND**  
**Camille Trouvé**  
& **Brice Berthoud**



**CENTRE DRAMATIQUE  
NATIONAL DE NORMANDIE**  
**-ROUEN** *Les ANGES*  
**AU PLAFOND**



## TOURNÉE

- **STRASBOURG** (67)

TJP - CDN de Strasbourg - Grand Est

→ 2 to 5 October 2024

- **ROUEN** (76)

Théâtre des deux rives - CDN de Normandie-Rouen

→ 22 november to 4 december 2024

- **CRÉTEIL** (94)

Maison des Arts de Créteil

→ 23 to 24 january 2025

- **FROUARD** (54)

Théâtre Gérard Philipe

→ 21 march 2025

- **BREZON** (95)

Théâtre Paul Eluard

→ 3 to 4 april 2025



## THE STORY

The plot of *White Dog* is set in 1960's America, plagued by violent internal conflicts. Martin Luther King has just been assassinated, and the Black community is struggling unceasingly to defend its civil rights.

It's in this violent context that the couple - Romain Gary and his wife Jean Seberg - take in an abandoned dog called Batka, and become attached to it.

The animal, who seems so gentle and affectionate, is, however, not an ordinary dog. Every now and then it shows signs of unbelievably monstrous behaviour and vicious brutality - an abrupt and total switch-over from its habitual demeanour. "Whatever is the matter with this dog?"

An investigation thus begins, to try and understand why, and attempt to cure the animal. Lighting effects, video projections, puppets and actors join forces

to rewrite - live on stage - this harrowing autobiographical text by Romain Gary. To the rhythm of jazz drums tapping out Afro-American sounds, the large blank pages on stage gradually fill up with handwriting. The pages roll out in gripping, cinematographic style, in full view of the audience - and tell of a bruised and murderous society with multiple grey areas. Two years after their production of *R.A.G.E.*, the company Les Anges au Plafond continues its examination of Romain Gary's humanism by tackling - forcefully and with perspicacity - the question of how human minds are conditioned. What hope can there be for dreams of fraternity and reconciliation when human stupidity is synonymous with bestial ferocity and when manipulation poses as training. Can we "unlearn" hate?

# STATEMENT OF DRAMATIC INTENT



## CONDITIONING TRANSFORMATION MONSTROSITY

by the puppet, and by use of shadows and magic.

A white puppeteer and a black puppeteer share all the roles in this story. The very act of puppet manipulation takes on a political dimension here.

The puppet plays its role as conveyor of empathy. The dog-object, a plaything in human hands, arouses sympathy from the audience. It has a “magic” aura and conjures up visual illusions when manipulated.

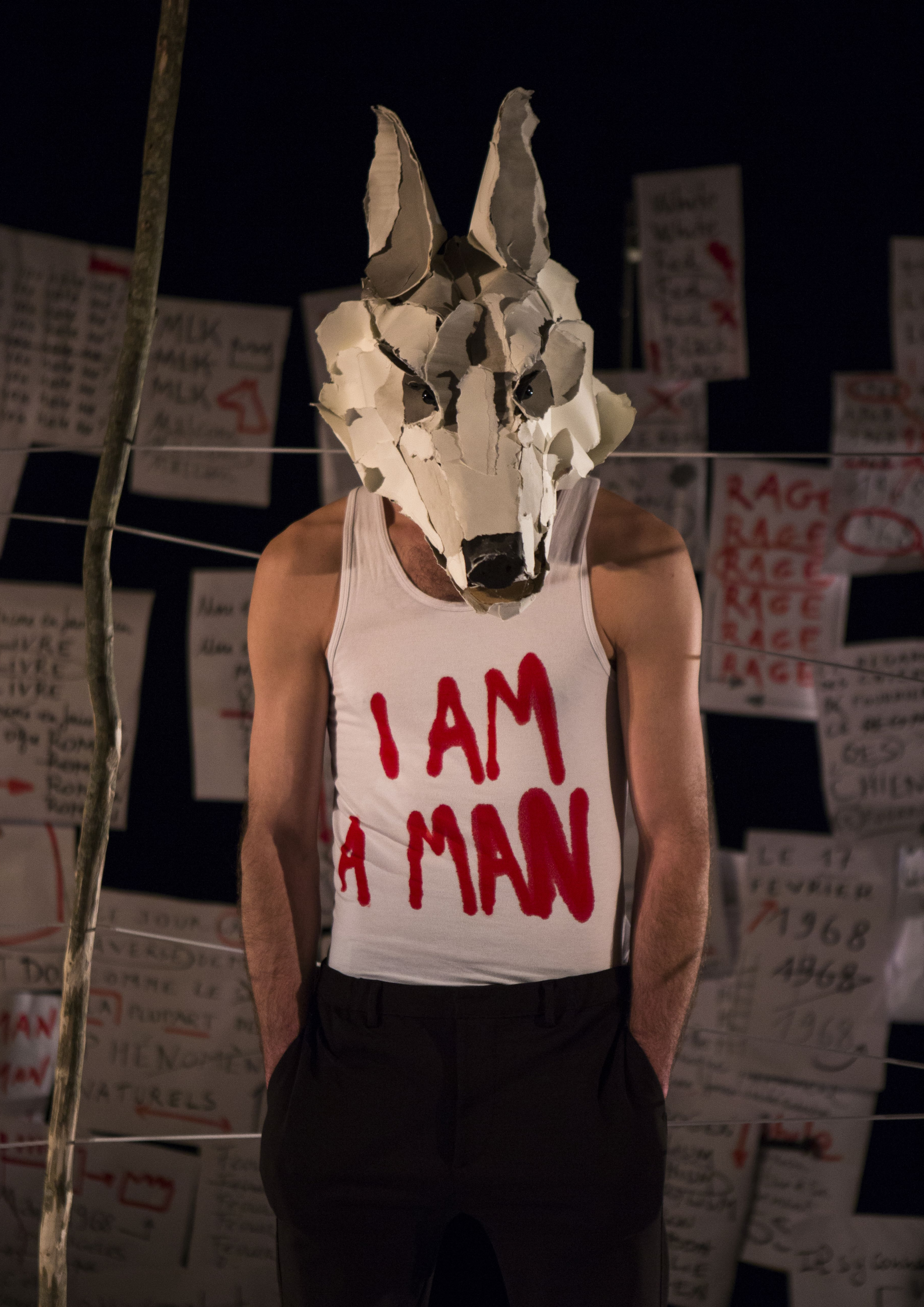
Its transformation into a ball of hate, the “abrupt switching from the familiar” that Gary refers to, is expressed by the play of shadows, used to shed light on the conflict between the dog’s fundamental nature and its reflexes conditioned by behaviour training. The gesture of manipulation ends up in deadlock on stage: what is to be done with this monster created by human folly?

## CINEMATOGRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Gary’s account is structured in a very cinematographic manner: he inserts close-ups and overall views to demonstrate a multifaceted vision of American society in the late 1960’s. While the central thread of the action remains the problem of the dog, several secondary plots arrive alongside to highlight the context of racial conflict.

Adaptation of the work was carried out jointly with a film-editor, Saskia Berthod, the aim being to construct an ensemble scenario which successfully maintains the suspense of the main plot, while remaining true to the apparent mind-wandering aspect. Special attention is paid to the narrator-puppeteer, who recounts his intimate personal experience of living through this troubled period. He acts as our guide.

In this autobiographical fiction, all is true and all is false. It’s a magnificent playing field for puppeteers and creators of shadows.



I AM  
A MAN

RAGE  
RAGE  
RAGE  
RAGE  
RAGE  
RAGE

LE 17  
FEVRIER  
1968  
1968  
1968

MLK  
MLK  
MLK

THE NORTHERN  
NATURELS

MAN  
MAN

# SET DESIGN, A MERRY-GO-ROUND OF IMAGES

The set is designed like a slot machine. It all starts with a blank page, something to write on. The narrator puts the story down on paper to liberate himself. The scenery consists of large blank pages, whose transformation live on stage brings the chapters of the book to life. There's one page per character. On-stage writing, shadows, pop-ups, sculptures and paper scenery are all used to expose the gaps in the story and reveal what is left unsaid.

At centre stage is a turntable or "lazy Susan", which enables characters and daily situations to materialise like magic. The plot unfolds in a half-open doorway, somewhere between the cosy privacy of home and the violence out on the street. The set spins round to change our perspective on the story.

The cage where the dog "in rehab" is confined appears like one of the metamorphoses of this set manipulated like a puppet.

## THE PLACE OF THE MEDIA

In his novel *White Dog*, Gary anticipates the powerful influence of the media on public opinion and describes a world which observes itself living through the television screen. The presence of the black & white television set of the 1960's is central to the story.

We also try to decipher what is perceived through the filter of the media, and what is experienced at first hand by the main characters. Archive photos, reworked and screened by overhead projector, are used to conjure up significant moments from that period.

There is no video here, the image is frozen on the projector screen, and it is the puppeteer, by the act of manipulation, who chooses what to focus on and restores a sense of what is real.

## LIVE MUSIC

The action takes place to the rhythm of drums, producing sounds that range from 1960's jazz to contemporary hip-hop groove.

A search for sound material and texture is transcribed live on stage every evening. These rhythms emphasise the urgency of the situation, the growing tensions within the couple and between the two communities confronting each other.

# CASTING

**A production by Camille Trouvé and Brice Berthoud  
Based on the novel *Chien Blanc* by Romain Gary  
(Gallimard publishers)**

**WITH** Brice Berthoud, Arnaud Biscay alternating with  
Guilhem Flouzat, Yvan Bernardet and Tadié Tuéné

**STAGE DIRECTION** Camille Trouvé  
assisted by Jonas Coutancier

**ADAPTATION** Brice Berthoud and Camille Trouvé

**DRAMATURGY** Saskia Berthod

**PUPPETS** Camille Trouvé, Amélie Madeline  
and Emmanuelle Lhermie

**SET DESIGN** Brice Berthoud  
assisted by Margot Chamberlin

**MUSIC** Arnaud Biscay and Emmanuel Trouvé

**SOUND PRODUCTION** Antoine Garry

**IMAGE CREATION** Marie Girardin  
and Jonas Coutancier

**LIGHTING** Nicolas Lamatière

**COSTUME DESIGN** Séverine Thiébault

**STAGE MACHINERY** Magali Rousseau

**SET CONSTRUCTION** Les Ateliers de la MCB

**Thanks and best wishes to Nathalie Arnoux**

**DURATION** 1 hour 35 mins  
**Suitable for audiences of 12 years +**  
**Puppets, video projections**  
**and live music**

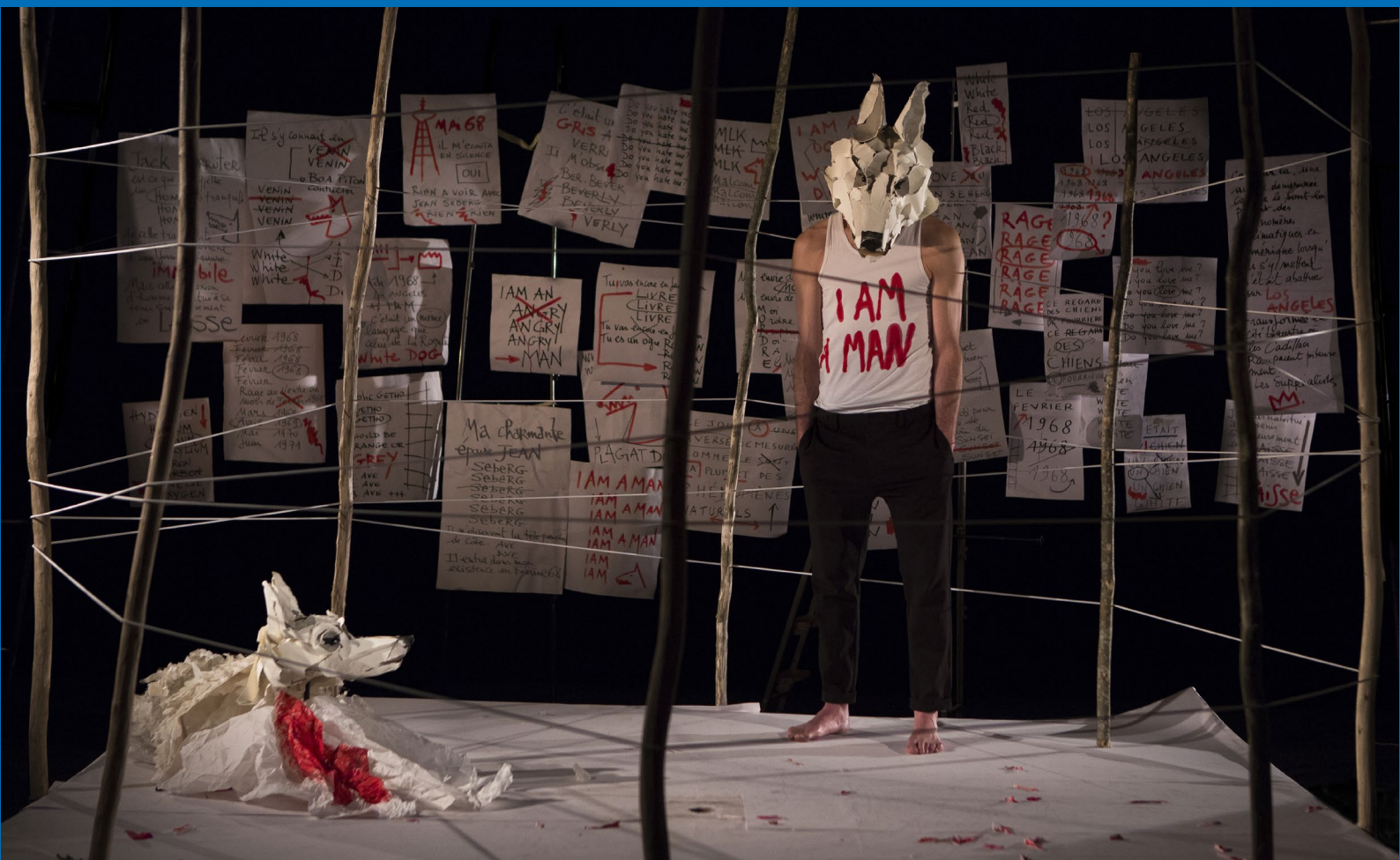
**PRODUCTION** CDN de Normandie-  
Rouen - Les Anges au Plafond

**CO-PRODUCTION** MCB° – Scène  
nationale de Bourges, Le Bateau Feu  
– Scène nationale de Dunkerque, La  
Maison des Arts du Léman – Scène  
conventionnée de Thonon-les-  
Bains, Le Tangram – Scène nationale  
Evreux, Culture Commune – Scène  
nationale du Bassin minier du Pas  
de Calais et Théâtre 71 – Scène  
nationale de Malakoff  
With the support of ARCARDI– Ile-  
de-France, SPEDIDAM and ADAMI

# LES ANGES AU PLAFOND

Since its creation in 2000, the company *Les Anges au Plafond* has favoured a multidisciplinary approach, at the junction of several art forms: theatre, fine arts, movement arts, “new magic” techniques, and music. This cross-sector approach is the real driving force behind the company’s research and contributes towards recognition of the art of puppetry as a medium for innovation and renewal of aesthetics in the theatrical world.

Camille Trouvé and Brice Berthoud, co-founders of the company, structure the expression of their artistic language on the basis of 3 central themes: epic inspiration; the physical space available; and the skill of manipulation, visible or invisible. Inspired by the desire to recount personal and spectacular stories, they transport us into life-story narratives, ranging from the founding legends of Antigone and Oedipus to the lives of contemporary cultural figures. After four productions which mix the personal and the political, portraying the characters of Camille Claudel and Romain Gary, they now feel the need to go elsewhere. Their creative inspiration no longer takes as its starting point the account of a well-known life, but the principle of manipulation itself, as driving force of the writing. With the creation of *Nécessaire Déséquilibre des choses* (*The essential instability of things*), they set out to explore the twists and turns of the human psyche.







## Camille TROUVÉ

ACTRESS – PUPPETEER  
AND STAGE DIRECTOR

Trained in the art of puppetry in Glasgow, she co-founded the company Les Chiffonnières. Until 2006, together with the other artists and musicians in the company, she carried out research into the relationship between image and music.

She acquired further skills by working alongside established stage directors and playwrights, such as Wajdi Mouawad, François Cervantes, Catherine Germain and Laurent Fréchuret, and attended training courses at the ESNAM (National School of Puppetry arts).

Camille pursued her research - as craftswoman and unusual-jointed-objects-maker, puppeteer and actress – gradually marking out, with each successive production, the contours of a visual universe both original and quirky.

Actress-puppeteer in *Le Cri quotidien* (*The daily scream*), *Une Antigone de papier* (*A paper Antigone*), *Les Mains de Camille* (*Camille's hands*), *Du rêve que fut ma vie* (*The dream that was my life*), *Le Bal Marionnettique* (*The Puppets' Ball*) and *Le Nécessaire Déséquilibre des choses* (*The essential instability of things*), she stage-directed *Les Nuits polaires* (*Polar nights*), *Au Fil d'Édipe* (*As Oedipus goes by*), *R.A.G.E*, *White Dog* et *Le Nécessaire Déséquilibre des choses*.



## Brice BERTHOUD

ACTOR – PUPPETEER  
AND STAGE DIRECTOR

Trained as a circus performer, he began as a tight-rope walker and juggler in Le Colimaçon company, creating five productions which mix circus arts with dramatic comedy.

In 1994 he encountered the Strasbourg company Flash Marionnettes, with whom he created nine productions, including *La Tempête* (1994) (*The Tempest*), *Léonard de Vinci* (1998), *Les Pantagruéliques* (2002) (*The Gargantuans*) et *Un Roman de Renart* (2005) (a collection of mediaeval animal stories written in Old French verse).

To a certain extent his manipulation technique uses juggling practices, in the dexterity and virtuosity with which he changes puppets. Actor-puppeteer in *Les Nuits Polaires*, *Au Fil d'Édipe*, *R.A.G.E* and *White Dog*, he lends his voice to more than ten characters. He staged and directed *Le Cri quotidien*, *Une Antigone de papier*, *Les Mains de Camille*, *Du rêve que fut ma vie*, *Le Bal Marionnettique* and *Le Nécessaire Déséquilibre des choses*.

**IN OCTOBER 2021, Camille Trouvé and Brice Berthoud became co-directors of the National Drama Centre (Centre Dramatique National-CDN) in Rouen, Normandy, with the interdisciplinary mission of developing a project, entitled "Vivant !" (Alive!).**

# PRESS REVIEW

TELERAMA SORTIR (What's on)

## Surprising!

WHEN HATE DISARMS

This version of “*Chien blanc*” (*White Dog*) by Romain Gary is a mixture of videos, live music and paper masks.

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Emerging from their performance of *R.A.G.E.* on the evening of the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, Camille Trouvé and Brice Berthoud reflected on the violence of our society.

“What hope can there be for dreams of fraternity when human stupidity is synonymous with bestial ferocity and when manipulation poses as training. Can we ‘unlearn’ hate?”

Brice thinks immediately of *Chien Blanc* (*White Dog*), the novel by Romain Gary (adapted for the screen in 1982 by Samuel Fuller). The writer (Gary) and his wife Jean Seberg (emblematic actress of Godard’s 1960 film *A bout de souffle*) take in Batka. Little by little they discover that this dog – who is “white” – has been trained to kill black people. Although committed to the civil rights cause, the couple refuse to part with, or kill the animal, but make every effort to re-educate it. A white puppeteer (Brice Berthoud – captivating) and another puppeteer, who is black (Tadié Tuéné), share all the roles in this autobiographical account of events which took place at the end of the 1960’s.

The dog is an object in their hands, and, incidentally, is made of paper, the material of preference used by Les Anges au Plafond company. It can be transformed at will - folded, torn, crumpled up – in an astonishing merry-go-round of images in incessant movement, blending together the characters, archive footage of race riots in the United States, and the contributions of fiery, spirited singer-drummer Arnaud Biscay, inspired by jazz and the spoken word.

14/03/2018

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## TOUR PROGRAMME AND FURTHER INFORMATION AT:

[www.cdn-normandierouen.fr/production/white-dog/](http://www.cdn-normandierouen.fr/production/white-dog/)

Photos @ Vincent Muteau

