

ARTISTIC DOSSIER  
**SPLENDID'S, CREATION**  
**ON ZOOM – LIVE**  
JEAN GENET  
ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL



Théâtre National de Bretagne  
Direction Arthur Nauzyciel  
1, rue Saint-Hélier  
35000 Rennes  
**T-N-B.fr**



# SPLENDID'S, CREATION ON ZOOM – LIVE JEAN GENET ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

*Splendid's* (2015) is a sensual and spectral work founded on an aesthetic research between theatre and cinema. The story centres on seven gangsters who, having kidnapped the daughter of an American billionaire, have barricaded themselves in the Splendid's Hotel. Since the creation of *Julius Caesar* in the United States in 2008, Arthur Nauzyciel has been working with the same team of American actors, joined for *Splendid's* by Xavier Gallais and Jeanne Moreau.

In March 2020, however, the borders were closed. For a long time the government quarantine made it impossible for artists and their work to tour. Hard hit by the consequences of the shutdown in the United States, and with few prospects to work, the original cast of *Splendid's* made the connection between their predicament and the play's scenario: confinement, an exterior threat, solitude. In order to escape their oppressive reality, the actors – like the gangsters who need to invent another life for themselves to bear all the isolation and waiting – decided to retell Genet's text using a video conferencing platform. Over the next two months they worked with Arthur Nauzyciel to adapt the performance to this new digital approach.

Text

JEAN GENET

Direction

ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL

English translation

NEIL BARTLETT

Assistant director

RAPHAËL HABERBERG

Screen manager

DANIEL PETTROW

Sound manager

FLORENT DALMAS

Video manager

CHARLES LEFEBVRE (TNB)

Technical coordination

ILJA FONTAINE / PANTHEA

Subtitles

BERTILLE KAPELA

Thanks to artistic collaborators

RICCARDO HERNANDEZ, DAMIEN JALET,

JOSÉ LEVY, SCOTT ZIELINSKI,

XAVIER JACQUOT

Photographs and film around creation

FRÉDÉRIC NAUCZYCIEL

On screen

DAVID BARLOW, JARED CRAIG,

XAVIER GALLAIS, ISMAÏL IBN CONNER,

MICHAEL LAURENCE, RUDY MUNGARAY,

DANIEL PETTROW, TIMOTHY SEKK

and the voice of

JEANNE MOREAU

Duration 1h50

In English with subtitles

Production: Théâtre National de Bretagne.



**CREATION 2020**

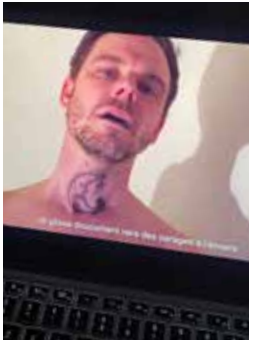
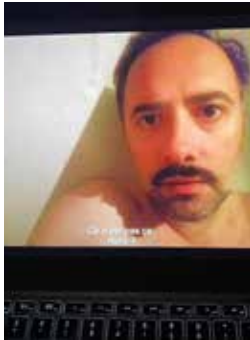
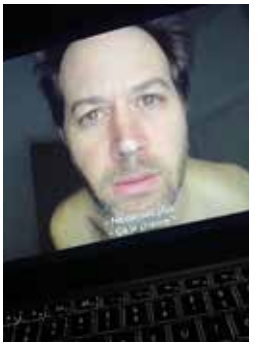
Rennes, Théâtre National de Bretagne

**TOURING**

2021/22

Segal Center Film Festival

Sibiu, International Theatre Festival (RO)



# SPLENDID'S DANCE OF DEATH

Jean Genet's two-act play *Splendid's* is a sensuous, spectral dance of death; a metaphysical rendition of a James Cagney film; a film noir haunted by baroque hallucinations and gay fantasies. Jean Genet's play has never been staged in the United States. In fact, until 1993 it was nonexistent. Around the same time he was completing his work on prison life – *The Miracle of the Rose* – Genet sent a copy of *Splendid's*, written in 1948, to Bernard Frechtman, his translator and agent for the United States. Both Frechtman and Jean-Paul Sartre praised it highly; Sartre thought it better than *The Maids*. Yet, for some reason, Genet did not wish to see it staged and, rejecting the persistent entreaties of his friends, he destroyed all the copies he could get his hands on. However, one copy, in the hands of his publisher Marc Barbezat, miraculously survived and was eventually published posthumously.

Genet was obviously fantasizing as he wrote *Splendid's*. He threw himself with delightful abandon at the imagery of Hollywood; he fantasized about his gangsters, investing them with glamor, sensuality, and poisoned sweetness. Genet, the orphaned, openly gay Frenchman, the petty criminal who leaves prison and embraces poetry, is like the policeman of the play who, entranced by the gangsters' dance of death, dreams of joining them and becoming "like them", one of them – only to betray them. After *Splendid's*, a presidential pardon and recognition as an author, Jean Genet was to direct *A Song of Love*, but never wrote about criminals and prisons anymore; the play is like a farewell to the world in which he shaped his personality and which acted as the catalyst for his imagination and fantasies.

This is Genet's version of the meeting between Douglas Sirk and James Cagney. The text is a seamless flow, like a medieval illumination where Annunciations are engraved in gold and weave a thread from figure to figure. It is the last breath of these men who, as one body, breathe a single breath that connects them. The words unfurl and spread from body to body. One head with eight mouths.

As I read the text, I immediately thought that surely the words had to be spoken in English. Like a film with subtitles where English is the original version. Such an inversion gives the text its meaning. Many times I have staged texts, originally written in French, in other languages, in the United States, in Italy, in Norway, and in Iceland, staging them later again in France. On each of these "language journeys" a new aspect of the text came into view. The language journey framed the creative process illuminating a hidden dimension. The listener hears the text in another way. In fact, a new way of hearing the text is created. In English and played by Americans actors, always so physical and inhabited, Genet's text becomes the materialization of the author's dream, a spectral apparition. *Splendid's* is deserving of its title.



# ARTHUR NAUZYCIEL DIRECTION

Arthur Nauzyciel is an actor and stage director. He studied plastic arts and cinema before training at the Théâtre National de Chaillot under the leadership of Antoine Vitez at the time (1987). At the head of the CDN of Orleans from 2007 to 2016, he takes the direction of the Théâtre National de Bretagne from 2017 where he staged *La Dame aux camélias* and *Mes frères* by Pascal Rambert in 2020.

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He started his directing career at the CDDB—Théâtre in Lorient, staging *Le Malade imaginaire* ou *Le Silence de Molière* after Molière and Giovanni Macchia (1999) and Samuel Beckett's *Oh Les Beaux Jours* (2003). Then followed various productions: Thomas Bernhard's *Place des Héros* (2004); for the Avignon Festival (2008), Kaj Munk's *Ordet (La Parole)*; again for the Avignon Festival (2011) *Jan Karski (Mon nom est une fiction)*, adapted from the novel by Yannick Haenel, recipient of the Georges-Lerminier Prize awarded by the Syndicat de la critique (Association of Art Critics); Knut Hamsun's *Faim* (2011); Chekov's *La Mouette/ The Seagull*, for Avignon Festival (2012); Allen Ginsberg's *Kaddish* (2013) in collaboration with Étienne Daho. In 2015, he staged Jean Genet's *Splendid's*. In 2020, during the confinement period, he created a new version on zoom, built live on the screens. An innovative plastic and theatrical experience presented during the Festival TNB 2020.

In the United States, but also in Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Korea, he staged works by authors such as B.-M. Koltès, Mike Leigh, Marie Darrieussecq or Kim Young-ha, but also Beckett, Shakespeare or Fassbinder. He also worked for opera, including Lady & Bird's *Red Waters*, which was revived in 2022, and for dance. He collaborates with other artists such as Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Mirosław Balka, Matt Elliott, Christian Fennesz, Valérie Mréjen, Pierre-Alain Giraud, Gaspard Yurkievich, Erna Ómarsdóttir, l'Ensemble Organum, Damien Jalet, José Lévy, Winter Family, Albin de la Simone, Boris Charmatz.

In 2019, Pascal Rambert directed him in *De mes propres mains, L'Art du théâtre* and *Architecture*, presented at TNB. Arthur Nauzyciel created this same year *Love's End*, the Korean version of *Clôture de l'amour*. This season at the TNB, he also *Le Papillon noir*, an opera by Yannick Haenel and Yann Robin.

# DAVID BARLOW BRAVO

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he played in *Julius Caesar* (2008). In Europe, he has appeared in *Babel* at the Avignon Festival, *i/o* (Théâtre Garonne), *To Whom It May Concern* (Belgrade International Theater Festival). In New York, he played in *This Is My Office* (Play Company); *Gertrude*, *The Castle*, *Serious Money*, *Victory*, *Scenes From An Execution* (PTPNYC); *Horizon* (New York Theater Workshop); *Oroonoko*, *Andorra*, *Saved* (Theater For A New Audience); *Romola And Nijinski* (Primary Stages); and his creation *L.A. PARTY* (Under The Radar Festival). He played also in *Pericles* (Berkeley Rep); *An Iliad* (Capital Rep); *The Homecoming* (Berkshire Theater Group); *Venus In Fur* (Portland Center Stage); *The Tempest*, *The Crucible* (Hartford Stage); *This Is Our Youth* (Philadelphia Theater Company); *King Lear* (Kansas City Rep).

# JARED CRAIG PIERROT

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he played in *Julius Caesar* (2008). Jared Craig graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from the School of Theatre at Boston University. He has also studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He has played in *Be.The.Dog.* at New York International Fringe Festival (2009). He has performed *The Starving class*, a reading directed by Jim True-Frost. In Boston, he has played in *The Island of Slaves*, *The History Boys*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *First Blush*, *The Red Lion*, *Lilly's Purple plastic purse*.

# XAVIER GALLAIS LE POLICIER

For Arthur Nauzyciel, Xavier Gallais played in *Ordet (The Word)*, *The Seagull* and *Hunger*. He also was nominated for the Molière (second best part) for *Roberto Zucco*. After studying at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique, Xavier Gallais worked with Michel Fau, Benoît Lavigne, Jean-Luc Revol, Daniel Mesguich, Jacques Weber, Philippe Calvario, Gilbert Désveaux, Claude Baqué, Olivier Py and Giorgio Barberio Corsetti. He played in *L'Avaleur* staged by Robin Renucci and *Des hommes en devenir* directed by Emmanuel Meirieu. He also plays for film and television : *Deux jours à tuer* and *Bienvenue parmi nous* (Jean Becker) or *Musée haut, musée bas* (Jean-Michel Ribes).

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# ISMAIL IBN CONNER LA RAFALE

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he played in *Black Battles With Dogs* (2001) and *Julius Caesar* (2011 and 2017). He is the founder of the United States Koltès Project, working in conjunction with François Koltès, on American English translations and international performances, which have produced performances in the U.S. and France: *Dans la solitude des champs de coton*, *Le Jour des meurtres dans l'histoire d'Hamlet* et *La Nuit juste avant les forêts*.

# MICHAEL LAURENCE SCOTT

*Splendid's* is the first collaboration between Arthur Nauzyciel and Michael Laurence. He has played in *Appropriate*, *Talk Radio*, *The Few*, *The Morini Strad*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Opus*, *Horsedreams*, *Diary of a Teenage Girl*, *Two Rooms*. He is the playwright of *Hamlet In Bed* and *Krapp, 39*. His television credits include: *Shades of Blue*, *The Blacklist*, *Damages*, *The Good Wife*, *Elementary*, *Person Of Interest*. His film credits include: *One for the money*, *Man on a ledge*, *The Operator*, *Follow me outside*, *Room 314*, *Escape artists*, *Claire Dolan*, *Love God*, *Particles of Truth...*

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# RUDY MUNGARAY JOHNNY

For Arthur Nauzyciel, Rudy Mungaray played in *Julius Caesar* (2017). He graduated from New World School of the Arts and went on to receive a BFA from the Acting Conservatory at the State University of New York at Purchase. His theatre credits include: *Blood & Gifts* (Lincoln Center), *Lush Valley*, *Sounding* (HERE Arts Center), *Sunken Living Room* (Southern Rep, world-premiere), *Paradise* (New Theatre, Miami). For film and television, he played in *Boardwalk Empire*, *Blue Bloods*, *Elementary*, *Power*, *Law & Order*, *Unforgettable*.

# DANIEL PETTROW BOB

For Arthur Nauzyciel, he played in *Black Battles With Dogs* (2001), *Roberto Zucco* (2004), *Julius Caesar* (2008). Actor and stage director, he has appeared in more than 60 productions in the United States and abroad. He also works for film and television. He is the assistant director and performer of *The Principles of Uncertainty*, a collaboration between the artist Maira Kalman and the choreographer John Heginbotham, played in 2017 in Jacob's pillow, Guggenheim and BAM. His next show will be a production of Mikhail Baryshnikov.

# THIMOTHY SEKK RITON

*Splendid's* is the first collaboration between Arthur Nauzyciel and Timothy Sekk. He received his MFA from NYU's Graduate Acting Program and his BA from Vassar College. He had played in *Dreyfus in Rehearsal*, *Avow*, *Do Not Disturb*, *Stretch: A Fantasia*. Timothy Sekk has performed across the United States in *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Moby Dick Rehearse*, *The Rivals*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV*, *Cyrano*. He also played at television: *The Affair*, *The Good wife*, *Elementary*, *Person of interest*, *All my children*, *Boardwalk empire*.



# FRENCH PRESS

"The experience is a strange one, at once spectral and highly embodied, calling to experimental cinema and Shakespearean theatre, and returning our attention to its two constituent elements: Genet's text, beautifully translated into English by the British playwright Neil Bartlett; and *A Song of Love*, shot in 1950 and Genet's only film, which is both a rarity and the key to his universe. The result is this *Splendid's* version 3.0, which manifests the very heart of the Genet experience: liberation through art and the imagination from the many confinements of existence."

– Fabienne Darge, Le Monde

"Forced to return to lockdown, Arthur Nauzyciel discovered another outlet for his piece bringing together an artistic team scattered between France and the US: as a live performance on Zoom. (...) Apart from being a metaphor for their own seclusion, the digital screen which united everyone in their little boxes became an opportunity to reconnect with the pleasure of acting. 'It was dizzying for me, in Rennes, to watch the performance coming back together before my eyes, in real time, as it reunited participants from New York, Boston and Paris,' says Arthur Nauzyciel. Hence the creation of this live performance which strictly respects the principles of the original piece, screening its opening film and reviving once again the unforgettable voice of Jeanne Moreau."

– Patrick Sourd, Les Inrocks

"The power of the piece lies in the fact that it is neither a recording nor a simple livestream but has been specially conceived for this endless crisis. No one knows when theatres will reopen, and it is exciting to see the artists find ways around their constraints. Marion Siéfert has done it on Instagram, Simon Senn on Zoom, and now Arthur Nauzyciel. There is no doubt that we are at the theatre, and it is live. The actors are breathtaking in a complex exercise that sees them working as both producers and actors."

– Amélie Blaustein Niddam,  
toutelaculture.com

"They quickly decided to reconnect through Zoom. From there it was just one more step to recreate *Splendid's* for the videoconferencing platform – a step which, fortunately for us, Arthur Nauzyciel did not hesitate to take. Without access to a variety of shots (Zoom being quite limited artistically speaking), the director keeps the video fixed on the actors' faces, drawing us in close to their emotion and inner tumult. The effect is arresting, all the more so as the voice of Jeanne Moreau returns to haunt this suspended moment. The experience is total. With each new session, the performance becomes ever more precise, ever more sensitive."

– Olivier Frégaville-Gratian d'Amore,  
L'Œil d'Olivier



# AFTER THE SHOW

Zoom allows for dialogue after the show and for audiences to leave a message to the artistic team via chat. Here are some feedback from spectators.

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"Thanks so much for this first time ever experience over zoom! Impressive and a digital tool with strong performance potential and unusual live audience."

"Thank you so much ! You managed to make the most of the situation – the result was brilliant !"

"Without the live feedback of an audience, does it still feel rewarding to play? Do you find it's closer to working on film, or does the live nature of the theatre event make it a completely different thing?"

"Didn't you feel 'prisoner' to your Zoom cage at first, as it prevents you from moving and forced you to stay in a small space?"

"Congrats everyone !!! Same emotion as opening night in January 2015 !"

"hi, i just wanted to thank you for this great experience, it was so nice to be able to finally 'see' a play, you did a wonderful job."



CONTACT TOURING

**ISABEL ANDREEN**

International development manager /

Crossings

M +33 (0)7 86 53 06 83

[i.andreen@tnb.fr](mailto:i.andreen@tnb.fr)

