

# **MARIE LOUISE BISCHOFBERGER**

## **Biography**

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## MARIE LOUISE BISCHOFBERGER– BIOGRAPHY

### Stage Director

As Stage Director, in 1997, wrote and directed “*Juana la Loca*” performed at MC93 Bobigny (Paris); in 2000, adapts Thomas Bernhard’s “*Am Ziel*” (*Straight to the Point*) performed at Théâtre de Vidy-Lausanne and MC93 Bobigny, in 2001 “The end of Love” by Christine Angot at the Ménagerie de Verre in Paris; in 2002, “*Visits*” by Jon Fosse at Festival d’Avignon and the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris; in April 2006 she adapts and directs William Shakespeare’s “*The Rape of Lucrece*” at MC93 Bobigny.

In January 2009, Marie Louise Bischofberger was hosted at Théâtre de la Madeleine (Paris) where she directed Natalie Ginzburg's «*I married you out of carefree happiness*» and followed up in May 2009 with Marguerite Duras's "The English Lover" with Ludmilla Mikael (Interpretation award of Syndicat de la critique), André Wilms and Ariel Garcia-Valdès.

Acted as literary advisor to Luc Bondy from 1989 for many of his creations: in 1990, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Theater an der Wien, Austria); in 1992, Botho Strauss's *Final Choir* (Schaubühne, Berlin), Richard Strauss's *Salome* (Salzburg Festival); in 1993, Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borckman* (Théâtre de Lausanne and Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Paris), *The Round dance*, opera by Arthur Schnitzler; in 1994, Botho Strauss's *A Balancing act*, Peter Handke's *The Hour we knew nothing of each other* (Schaubühne, Berlin); in 1995, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (Salzburg Festival); in 1996, Sacha Guitry's *Confessions of a Cheat* and *Let's have a dream* (Schaubühne, Berlin), Verdi's *Don Carlo* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris), in 1997, Strindberg's *Playing with fire* (Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and Bouffes du Nord, Paris); in 2003 and 2004, Yasmina Reza's *A Spanish play* and in 2004 and 2005, *Mademoiselle Julie*, an opera by Philippe Boesman; in 2007, reprise of *Salome*, by Richard Strauss, at La Scala di Milano with a new cast.

As a dramaturgist and librettist, in 1999 she adapts Ödön von Horváth's *Figaro gets a divorce*, directed by Luc Bondy. With Luc Bondy she co-signs several librettos for Philippe Boemans: *The Winter Tale*, in 2000, *Mademoiselle Julie*, in 2005, *Yvonne, a Princess of Burgundy*, premiered at Opéra Garnier in January 2009.



**Marguerite Duras**

L'AMANTE ANGLAISE

THE ENGLISH LOVER

April 2009

## LE FIGARO – Armelle Héliot

### AN “ENGLISH LOVER” FAITHFUL TO DURAS...

*Ludmila Mikaël, Ariel Garcia-Valdes, André Wilms inject their powerful lifeblood into the work of Marguerite Duras*

Stage director Marie-Louise Bischofberger can count on these three exceptional figures to inject their actor's lifeblood into the words of Marguerite Duras. Their energy instils a dance-like rhythm to the perpetual movement of bodies (even though Pierre Lannes remains seated on his chair, facing the audience), which casts a new light upon “The English Lover” (*L'Amante anglaise*).

Claire Lannes' sensuality gives the spectators a better insight into the two lovers; or will they prefer André Wilms' ironical tension in the role of the Question Man, or again be captivated by the subtlety of Ariel Garcia-Valdes' acting and the dimension of complexity he contributes to the character?

And what of Ludmila Mikaël's tactfulness, depth and intelligence as she portrays a Claire that Marguerite Duras would have adopted had she not created her. And most importantly, however often you have seen “The English Lover” on stage, what strikes you is the force of its writer. A very strong and beautiful moment.

## TELERAMA – Fabienne Pascaud

### FRAGILE CITADELS

(...)Under Marie-Louise Bischofberger's stage directing, so cruelly simple, Ariel Garcia-Valdes brilliantly impersonates the complacency, cowardice and secret sufferings of someone who has loved and has never been loved in return. His character radiates with inexplicable cracks which he renders poignant without any pathos: a form of abdication, self-denial which causes one not to let go of this *other one* which is no longer really here. Why does one stay behind? And Ludmila Mikaël is no doubt so attractive and sensual in the role of this enigmatic murderer!

The trio chosen for this play quite obviously revels in this dazzling variation on death and defunct pleasure.

## LIBERATION – René Solis

### LUDMILA MIKAEL SUBLIMATES DURAS

At the Theatre de la Madeleine where Marie-Louise Bischofberger stages her « English Lover », she has followed Marguerite Duras's instructions: *“the performance should be barren, without any set or props, in front of an iron curtain”*. And she is right *“not to indulge in some kind of Durassian melancholy”*, as she puts it herself. Neither melancholic, nor over-detached, her show pulls on the rope and never gives any slack: not a word is lost in a story – a pain- treated as a documentary and upheld by three actors with great inner strength. More radiant in André Wilms (the Question Man), always on the verge of anger and yet ever-more attentive. With Ariel Garcia-Valdes, this strength is more contained, he is like a block of softness, revealing cracks here and there but never insistently. More complex is Ludmila Mikaël, she who knows all about grace, violence and absence. One is certainly right to say that Duras did a better job writing for women than men. Ludmila Mikaël turns every word into a weapon and shield, never ostentatious, assuredly alien to vulgarity.

## LES ECHOS – Pierre Chevilly

### NECESSARILY SUBLIME

[Marie-Louise Bischofberger]'s tight-fitting stage directing beautifully serves Duras's play with a golden triangle of actors. “The English Lover” tells of the gratuitous act, such as in the manner of Gide or Camus, of (extra-)ordinary madness, but also of solitude, lost loves, of the absolute disconnect with life – necessarily sublime.

Marie-Louise Bischofberger's acute directing brings this intriguing and macabre play to the stage of Theatre de la Madeleine. Abiding by Duras's “instructions”, the play unfolds against a drawn iron curtain, to better circumvent them (the rail tracks, as elusive as the nicks and crannies of human soul, are projected against the grey metal curtain), she refuses to indulge in the temptation of aesthetics or mind-wandering. What she carves out of the text is a frightful reality : images, gestures, sounds and lights are nothing but means to uphold the “dispirited” words of the three characters. Every word weighs and seethes with its own mystery. Only outstanding tight-rope walkers could hold their balance on the high-voltage lines of this script. Ludmila Mikaël (Claire Lannes, the murderer), Ariel Garcia-Valdes (Pierre Lannes, the husband) and André Wilms (the Question Man) are the ideal partners in crime for that matter.

**“THE ENGLISH LOVER” OR THE QUEST FOR THE “WHY’S” OF A CRIME**

“The English Lover” is on the bill at Theatre de la Madeleine, with an outstanding stage direction by Marie-Louise Bischofberger. (...) The whole stake that underpins “The English Lover” is this unanswerable question which throws everyone back into the abysmal regions of conscience where the perception of reality wavers. At the Theatre de la Madeleine, everything compounds to give flesh to this obvious feeling. André Wilms (the Question Man), Ariel Garcia-Valdes (Pierre Lannes, the husband) and Ludmila Mikaël (Claire Lannes, the murderer), play in front of an iron curtain, thereby complying with Marguerite Duras’ wish. It is like they are writing the play live as they act it out: every new word, adding up to the previous one, pulls on a disquieting and fascinating string, just as the images of rail-tracks do against the backdrop of this iron curtain (the images are the doing of Caroline Champetier). Ludmila Mikaël had not taken to the stage for eight years. The choice was hers. She wanted to live her life “outside” the actress. She is back with a flabbergasting performance and she could never have dreamed of better partners to share the stage as Ariel Garcia-Valdès and André Wilms. Together they form a golden trio that takes you along the road of life: another unanswered “why”.

(...) Interrogation on stage is a favourite dramatic technique, from full court scenes to *Frost/Nixon* jousting. What is striking here is the moral insulation : not a whiff or good/bad, justice/injustice or indignation. The “huge lump of deaf meat” that gets murdered is incidental as Marie-Louise Bischofberger’s skilful production draws us down sinuous mindtracks, framed by grainy film of rattling trains. The structure is simple. Two symmetrical interviews, of husband Pierre and killer wife Claire, are linked by the questioner desperate to thicken “the motive?” box.

Duras wanted and gets a bare stage backed by an iron curtain. It is a pitiless setting for this verbally dense text that leaves a shaky actor nowhere to hide. This play needs maestros and in this production gets them.

**IF YOU CAN WALK IT, RUN THERE!**

The role was first created by Madeleine Renaud in 1968, under Claude Regys' direction, and later taken over by Suzanne Flon. Today, it is in the hands and voice of Ludmila Mikaël who returns to the stage after a long break. She is just bewildering in her calmness. So calm that she unsettles you. She unnerves you with her formal hairstyle, flat shoes, stern dress-code and sparse gestures. Ludmila Mikaël bestows on Claire Lannes the traits of a woman who is still beautiful but sadly common. When she answers the questions of the Question Man (who is not a cop by the way, for Claire has already confessed her crime, but maybe a psychiatrist who knows? Anyway Duras won't tell us...), she looks like she is trying to revive some extinct regions in herself, a fragrance of mint or a teenage love in Cahors. She is like a bottomless pit, now and again suffocating under the resurgence of youth and rebellion. Everything in her is twitching. She is a butterfly turned chrysalis again, pinned against a grey iron curtain by Marie-Louise Bischofberger's stage directing, the iron screen criss-crossed by oppressing images of railroad switches and trains. André Wilms, the Question Man, swoops down on Claire, like a dense block of energy impelled by the desire to know. At the other extreme, opaque and curled into himself, Ariel Garcia-Valdes is Pierre Lannes, the husband, also full of secrets. In such company, needless to say one cannot but feast on the artfulness of Marguerite Duras in her stubborn pursuit of souls lost under the crust of mundaneness.





**Natalia Ginzburg**

JE T'AI ÉPOUSÉE PAR ALLÉGRESSE  
I MARRIED YOU OUT OF CAREFREE HAPPINESS

February 2009

## **LE MONDE – Fabienne Darge**

### **VALERIA BRUNI-TEDESCHI RETURNS TO THE STAGE WITH A FLOOD OF SENSITIVITY**

As usual and ever, Natalia Ginsburg's deceptively simple writing slowly but surely uncovers the lids of family stewpots. This Italian writer of Russian-descent, thoroughly bred on Chekov, excels at describing with melancholic humour those people who float about without anything particular to anchor them into life.

Thus, little touch by little touch, she weaves an uplifting, ironical, sweet and sour comedy with family feuds looming behind and where love is virtuous enough not to speak in its own name. Top-notch partners.

Against a realistic set where the marital bed covers the whole space, Marie-Louise Bischofberger's stage direction is served by an outstanding cast of actors. Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi (Giuliana), atmospheric and ultrasensitive as ever, is as usual teamed with top-notch partners. Stéphane Freiss (Pietro) is funny, moving and shines with elegance. Edith Scob revels in the role of the stern neurotic Catholic mother-in-law Marie Vialle, one of the best upcoming actresses, is altogether amazing in the role of the hysterical soubrette. Armelle Berengier is both strange and moving as the sacrificed sister. (...)

## **LES INROCKUPTIBLES – Patrick Sourd**

The mythical image of the "Girl with a suitcase" so oftentimes pictured in the glamour films and literature of the seventies in Italy, gives us a chance to discover a Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi (Giuliana) acting out the "life-loving" girl, brimming with energy and deliciously spicy, when everybody thought she was the kind to lock herself up, albeit with a touch of humour, into the thin-skinned mode of "existential spleen versus leaking eyeliner".

The show is conducted at brisk pace by director Marie-Louise Bischofberger whose cast of Stéphane Freiss, Edith Scob, Marie Vialle and Armelle Bérengier instils a sense of nimbleness that contrasts with the revelation of a transgression: the joy of witnessing the first steps of an actress venturing unperturbed into a playground she had promised never to tread into.

<b>LE FIGARO – Armelle Héliot</b>
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### **ITALIANO E NON TROPPO – WHAT A TREAT!**

Marie-Louise Bischofberger has brought together an excellent cast, co-translated the original text and made sure that every actor would look at their best in the stage set (signed by Arthur Aillaud): perhaps not the best choice for the voices, but beautiful indeed! Pietro's mother is coming to inspect the troops. Edith Scob, stiff, bitter and scatterbrain couldn't be better. Armelle Bérengier enacts a very likely old-maid gone berserk. Vittoria, the littlemaid is as witty as superb Marie Vialle can get, offering a happy foil to the beautiful, subtle and accurate melancholy-ridden Giuliana (Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi). Stéphane Freiss, a fascinating actor, is like Pietro in that he does a marvellous job. Really, what a treat!



**William Shakespeare**

LE VIOL DE LUCRECE  
THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

May 2006

## **PURE TRAGEDY – TRAGIC PURITY**

Drama - Marie-Louise Bischofberger's proposal is just outstanding as she transposes Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece* onto the stage. Rachida Brakni portrays Lucrece, and she is also the one addressed by the narrator, who also plays the son of Tarquin (Sextus Tarquinius). Pascal Bongard who co-signed the adaptation with Marie-Louise Bischofberger gives an impressive rendition in his role. In their elaborate approach, the two have mixed Shakespeare's poem, translated by poet Yves Bonnefoy and passages of Saint Augustine referring to this crime case which was to change the course of the history of Rome.

Everything here is done with utmost sophistication: space is treated with extreme care, a superb moving platform designed by Raymonde Couvreu, not to speak of the costumes designed by the stage director and Jean-Daniel Vuillermoz, and some rare props --such as the armours borrowed from the Comédie Française—or the lights signed by Marie-Christine Soma and sound engineered by Nathalie Cabrol, the movements choreographed by Arco Renz against the subtle and sometimes unsettling background music from various origins.

We shall not here tell you about the plot of this famous episode of history which inspired many a painter: if any young people did not know of this story, then let us not spoil their pleasure and allow them discover it for themselves as in the same breath they discover this sublime Shakespeare poem. For, and this further emphasises the strength of this politically engaged, intelligent and highly sensitive work: it is accessible and open. The fact that this theme, treated as it is, is hosted by Bobigny's MC93 gives it even more political relevance. Elite work for all, this resounds with significance.

It would take forever to analyse the beauty of the acting, the subtlety of the two actors' presence on stage. Rachda Brakni is magnificent in her depth and grandeur, Pascal Bongard superb in his kindness as in his brutality, the two of them tuning to the moment: just huge!

## **TELERAMA – Fabienne Pascaud**

### **CRIME WITH SOUL**

With great temperance and restraint in the intentions, Marie-Louise Bischofberger has adapted Shakespeare's (much too scarcely played) long dramatic poem in the manner of a drama exercise that two actors would indulge in. And it must be said with Rachida Brakni and Pascal Bongard, this proves a successful experience as they work wonders playing to the score of oppressor v. the oppressed. Shakespeare's tumultuous lines certainly do not play second fiddle to this score, but being able to suggest more than physical and moral oppression right amidst a rape scene, like Rachida Brakni does, was indeed taking it to yet another dimension. And so does Pascal Bongard, wriggling with the anguish and appetite for a crime that he cannot help committing. You come out like blood-drained and shattered after this strange theatrical performance. Both detached and fully inside themselves, in and out at the same time, these actors thriving in minimal space have taught us to boot out our passions, fears and sufferings.

## **LIBERATION - René Solis**

### **SHAKESPEARE FROM THE EPIC TO THE INTIMATE**

Because her husband, one evening, over-praised the beauty and chasteness of his wife Lucrece, Tarquin, son of Rome's last king, decides to feast on the young lady. The story of this rape, as recounted by Livy and Ovid, inspired Shakespeare with a dramatic poem, which he probably composed at about the same time as Titus Andronicus, one of his bloodiest plays where rape holds the front-stage. The poem is a two-fold tale: that of Tarquin who speaks before the act, and then Lucrece who tells of the aftermath. Marie-Louise Bischofberger's aim was to make the text sound familiar so that it may resound even more clearly in our ears. And that, it does indeed. A couple in the present tense, reminisces this old story and revives demons of the day. Both the costumes and scenographic work compound to convey this nagging clash between the archaic and the contemporary, the constant pendulum movement between the epic and the intimate. Of the two actors, it is Pascal Bongard who most takes on this dual dimension, with a mix of detachment and extreme precision in enunciating the horror. Rachida Brakni is more unruffled. There is nothing to help the two streams of words converge, although they do cross paths at times, nor make up for the irreparable. Not even the beauty of the text which Marie-Louise Bischofberger adds at the end of the story, where Saint Augustine rises up against the disgrace suffered by raped women and against the suicide of Lucrece.

In Yves Bonnefoy's translation, Shakespeare's language is first like music to one's ears before it sharpens to become clear and frightening in its simplicity and the ruthless portrayal he unfolds of relationships between men and women.

## **A LONG POEM OF SHAKESPEARE**

If Titus Andronicus is a pure tragedy, the Rape of Lucrece is a long dramatic poem that one is given to hear in Bobigny where Rachida Brakni and Pascal Bongard have lent their voices and acting under the direction of Marie-Louise Bischofberger and a truly beautiful translation into French by Yves Bonnefoy. A man and a woman, thus, with two voices to tell the story of a rape, harsh as it may seem, the fact is depicted in a language and tone that carry something almost condoning with them, just as it might be the case in a fairy tale where horror seems not altogether erased by time but the worst things can be told without allowing violence to defeat the purpose of that tale.

“Do you want me to tell a story?”, asks the man to the woman. They could be a couple in our modern times just the same, he wearing a dark suit and she in a long white dress. He lights the candles while she unfolds a bed sheet on the ground and lies down. They are soon hidden in the veil of night, the space around them is both the abode of today’s lovers and the locus of an ancient memory echoed by a tin water basin and bits and pieces of an armour.

Although Marie-Louise Bischofberger’s stage direction does not shun the temptation of affectation, it emphasises what is most important : the voices of two prominent actors recounting the drama of a life that, alas, does not pale in the face of today’s reality: echoes of molestations within the family circle, or “round-robin” and other ethnic rapes. And played to the score of Shakespeare’s dramatic poem, this drama turns into a psalmody.

## **LES INROCKUPTIBLES – Patrick Sourd**

To play to us the song of this tragic tale of this dramatic poem, The Rape of Lucrece, written by Shakespeare in 1594 (the same year as his terrible Titus Andronicus), Marie-Louise Bischofberger sets her story against the reassuring and intimate stage of a lovers’ face to face. She thus invents a cruel game blending history and the mundane, the present and legend, a game interwoven with the words exchanged between the two lovers. Donning nudity as the last rampart of virtue, Rachida Brakni, who shines in this role, takes up the cause of Lucrece, a woman abused and raped by the powerful Tarquin, to send an eternal message of protest echoing the repeated offenses suffered by women over and over again to this day. Pulling the strings as a rapist and blackmailer, always on the lookout and acting as the occasional messenger, Pascal Bongard illuminates this story with a masculine presence readily bending to the act of denunciation. And if Lucrece eventually commits suicide, this is just because that is how the story ends... These last words are those of a warrior who never gave in: *“No, no 'No, no,' quoth she, 'no dame, hereafter living, By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving”*



**JON FOSSE**

VISITES

VISITS

July and November 2002



## **THE THEATRE OF SECRECY**

Les Bouffes du Nord is currently showing *Visits*, in a beautiful rendition by stage director Marie-Louise Bischofberger, and we would like our readers to share with us the very special happiness that we experienced during this performance.

Special in that it reaches the most sensitive and secret regions in ourselves, provided we are receptive to it and remain oblivious to the “white noise” effects of drama. The play’s plot is a tenuous one: it is about, and in a very mundane situation, the uncomfortable relationship between a mother, her two children and her lover. The text itself is discreet, the writing self-restrained, swift and subtly repetitive. But precisely, it creates a rhythmical music that overwhelms you, enshrouds you in a mildness that exudes a form of violence. The less is said, the more it means. Under the guise of apparent restraint, the text delivers a sub-text of great intensity which expresses the most intimate truth of all four characters. The woman’s bitter submission, the lover’s cowardice and the children’s rebellion are not necessarily expressed, they are barely perceptible. A word will suffice, a gesture, a silence, a glance and the tragic is back, and pain too, right here staring at you. Everything in appearance is simple, but the tumult of souls is brewing under this coat of ordinariness, making it all the more menacing. A strange light pervades this show, a light from the North, opaque, dull albeit treacherous. It shines through the darkness of human mystery, more intrusive than the glaring Mediterranean sun.

Marie-Louise Bischofberger’s contribution is utterly outstanding. It will be clear by now that this text is all about nuance, a text which requires utmost delicacy and precision. Audrey Bonnet and Renaud Bécard are just the perfect cast for the children. But the lion’s share goes to Dominique Reymond, a graceful and intense actor, and even more to Hugues Quester, the lover, who reigns on the ambiguity of his character.

A moment of grace against the current backdrop of theatrical monotony.

## LIBERATION – René Solis

### Visits, by Jon Fosse – A journey into Sentimental wilderness

“*Someone is going to come*”: such was the title of Norwegian author Jon Fosse’s first play, in French “*Quelqu’un va venir*”, when Claude Régy brought it to the stage. “No-one’s going to come” would be the leitmotiv of *Visits*, a play by the same author directed by Marie-Louise Bischofberger at the Bouffes du Nord. Expectation, silence, absence, it always remains a universe of void, where the characters struggle to finish their lines, to live together or even simply to exist. In *Visits*, the Daughter (Audrey Bonnet) catalyses the pervading feeling of unease. It’s her 19th birthday and her mother (Dominique Reymond) has invited a bunch of friends to “*give her a treat*”. The young woman already knows that no-one will come because she has done all she could to have no friends left. Most importantly, she knows that her father will not come. In the house, there are two men: the Brother (Renaud Bécard) who is yearning to get out of this stifling environment, and the Man (Hugues Quester), i.e. the mother’s lover. Between the two there is loaded atmosphere, almost sordid, but Fosse’s theatre has nothing naturalistic, it is all about repetition and musicality. Marie-Louise Bischofberger’s stage direction avoids any form of pathos or miserabilism. She manages to reverberate Jon Fosse’s humour and even inject a measure of lightness, in particular in the last scene which is astoundingly fluid.

## LE CANARD ENCHAINE – Bernard Thomas

### NOT MUCH ADO AMONG THE NEAR TO NOTHINGS

Not a hell of a fun universe that of Norwegian author Jon Fosse, who finally was attracted to playwrighting after publishing some fifteen novels, essays and poem collections. A very special music, close to Duras at her best, bordering on the unspoken, between light and shade. How can a young girl express her existential crisis when she has grown up for nothing among the “no future” horizon of a destitute local population with unemployment as its sole prospect? Even these “things”, almost deprived of speech faculty, may shelter within themselves something akin to a soul. Swiss director Marie-Louise Bischofberger uncovers this ruthless suffering with infinite tactfulness.

## THE JON FOSSE ENIGMA

In Avignon, Marie-Louise Bischofberger creates « Visits », by Norwegian playwright Jon Fosse. “Moments” of complex truths like a train of thoughts taking you beyond the mundane world of clichés. Set against a backdrop of ark blue drapings, the minimal stage direction of Marie-Louise Bischofberger is not in the business of casting light upon the equivocal. On the contrary, she thrives on leaving the spectators in the grips of a direct confrontation with Jon Fosse’s words, an extraordinary mix of the simple and the learned, oscillating between apparent triteness and long tales of obsessions, just as thoughts that twist your head, monomaniac rodents boring their way into your brain to haunt its abysmal depths.

We are taken into the realm of “nothingness”, one that is all the more frightening as it encompasses the “whole”. Just like musicians turned tightrope walkers on a score woven along the themes of absence --that of the father first and foremost-- of solitude, of the impossibility of being and of communicating with the others, the actors shun the pitfalls of crude realism and anecdote: Audrey Bonnet, with the sheer strength of her disquieting fragility, is Siv, the daughter who has dropped out of school and lives on the fringe of world of fantasies, Jeremie Lippman is the son who acts as the “male” in the family to the point of engaging in a mind-blowing game of cat and mouse with his mother’s “friend”, whom he suspects of having molested his sister. This “friend” is Hugues Quester, a virtuoso acting on the razor’s edge of the unspoken, elusive to the point his status remains unfathomable: is he or not the mother’s lover, or “just a friend”? Is it true he tried to abuse Siv?

Last but not least is Dominique Reymond, a “mother courage” bogged down in the slimy routine of daily chores, who sees nothing around her, or pretends to. She relentlessly pours out her flow of words, like trying to fill up the void of her existence and that of her relatives around. To the point of blowing up one’s head, of tearing one’s heart apart.



**Thomas Bernhard**

AU BUT

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

January 2001

## **LE FIGARO – Frédéric Ferney**

### **A TRIBUTE TO WRETCHEDNESS**

(...)A monster in other words..., but Bulle Ogier, however magnificent an actress is not a monster.

Thomas Bernard makes her a spokeswoman of contemporary theatre. When she vents her indignation, one feels the author is relishing this mirror of the conservative Viennese public's criticism against him: "Always more of this filth on stage, until the whole place is covered with rubbish. And then eventually the curtain falls on this foul vision."

(...) Great work of young stage director Marie-Louise Bischofberger, although some might say the set, by Gilles Aillaud and Bernard Michel, is somewhat over-sophisticated. Jerome Nicolin bursts onto the stage as a dirty wild writer and certainly doesn't go unnoticed. But the purest and most elevated joy of this show is offered to us by Helene Alexandridis in the role of the victim where she is just breathtaking. Bernhard depicts the rituals of domination and servitude in a way reminiscent of Genet's "Les Bonnes" and some of Pinter's works. In this mode, alternating between tragic and burlesque, Alexandridis is constantly riding the crest of our emotions.

## **TELERAMA – Joshka Shidlow**

A newcomer to stage direction, Marie-Louise Bischofberger succeeds in making the Austrian author's writing incredibly and vividly intimate. With imperial grace, Bulle Ogier takes on this daunting role. In Hélène Alexandridis and Jerome Nicolin she finds outstanding partners to share the stage with amidst superb sets and costumes. A guaranteed treat!

**BULLE OGIER AS THE IRON LADY**

She rants about /against authors who paint everything black, against the way the world goes, against her daughter whom she oppresses, against the tea that is not brewed as it should. This mother sure has everything against her! And her meanness is utterly pleasurable. In brief spells, (by blinks and spells), Bulle Ogier will remind you of Madeleine Renaud, with her trademark mix of vanity, fragility and ruthlessness. And even if the mantel of Bernhard's score weighs a little more than she can wear, you will discover her in a brand new style. Jerome Nicolin cheerfully portrays the parody of greasy-haired playwright in a dark suit. H el ene Alexandridis is the oppressed, autistic girl waiting for her time to come. Each one of her silences and gestures goes "straight to the point". First and impeccable effort of new stage director Marie-Louise Bischofberger, superb set signed by Gilles Aillaud, and dazzling dresses galore courtesy of Jean-Daniel Vuillermoz: this will take you straight into the universe of Thomas Bernhard and sure not to leave you unturned!