
The Past (Le Passé)

Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe
Julien Gosselin

tour 2025



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The Past

(Le Passé)

text **Léonid Andreev**

adaptation and direction **Julien Gosselin**

duration 4h30 (with an intermission)

show not recommended for children under 15

with
Guillaume Bachelé
Joseph Drouet
Denis Eyriey
Carine Goron
Victoria Quesnel
Achille Reggiani
Maxence Vandeveldé

cameramen
Jérémie Bernaert
Baudouin Rencurel

translation
André Markowicz

set design
Lisetta Buccellato

dramaturgy
Eddy D'Aranjo

musical creation
Guillaume Bachelé
Maxence Vandeveldé

lighting designer
Nicolas Joubert

video designer
Pierre Martin Oriol

sound designer
Julien Feryn

costume designer
Caroline Tavernier
Valérie Simmoneau

props
Guillaume Lepert

masks
Lisetta Buccellato
Salomé Vandendriessche

stage direction assistant
Antoine Hespel

general stage manager
Léo Thévenon

general and stage management
Simon Haratyk
Guillaume Lepert

stage management and props
David Ferré

lighting operator
Zélie Champeau

sound operator
Hugo Hamman

video operator
David Dubost

technical trainees
Pierrick Guillou
Audrey Meunier

set construction and painted canvas
Workshop Devineau

with the team of Odéon-Théâtre
de l'Europe

premiered on September 10, 2021
at the Théâtre national de
Strasbourg

production
Si vous pouviez lécher mon coeur

coproduction
Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Festival
d'Automne à Paris, Le Phénix –
scène nationale Valenciennes pôle
européen de création, Théâtre
national de Strasbourg, Théâtre du
Nord, Centre dramatique national
Lille-Tourcoing Hauts-de-France,
Les Célestins – Théâtre de Lyon,
Théâtre national populaire, Maison
de la culture d'Amiens, L'Empreinte
– scène nationale Brive-Tulle,
Château Rouge – scène
conventionnée d'Annemasse,
Comédie de Genève, Wiesbaden
Biennale, La passerelle – scène
nationale de Saint-Brieuc, Scène
nationale d'Albi, Romaeuropa

supported by the Ministry of Culture

with the artistic collaboration
of Jeune théâtre national

with the support of Montévidéo
– centre d'art, and T2G Théâtre
de Gennevilliers

Ékatérina Ivanovna and *Requiem*
are published to Mesures editions
(September 2021)

Statement of intent

Plays never originate from an idea. Instead, they result from a perfect blend between life, theatre, things we want to achieve and others we don't. As we were rehearsing the previous show, *Players, Mao II, the Names* by Don DeLillo, I imagined staging a classic like *The Seagull*, wrecking the performance and destroying the characters right after Treplev's show. Either by armed terrorists or by the progressive disappearing of people in costume on stage. First, I thought this was once again the consequence of my anger against the world of theatre, tradition and the assumed expectations of the audience, something they already know, that is the repertoire.

A few months later, I called translator André Markowicz on the phone. I told him that for the first time I was looking for an old text and told him the story of an early 20th century society dying out. I told him I was thinking about Gorky's *Children of the sun*.

But Gorky is not really my cup of tea, it is too tough and physical for me. I didn't wish to tell anger, I wanted to tell the story of a goodbye instead. These people should not be killed by the guns of revolution. They would slowly die out in the chain of events.

I thought of Houellebecq writing at the end of *The Map and the Territory*: "The triumph of nature is total." I also thought of directors who stage classical texts. I thought of what people are accustomed to saying: "Playwrights are talking to us." "Shakespeare is more modern than any other dramatists". Then I looked back on my work until today. Those contemporary texts I worked on, as if they were lost forgotten worlds, as if contemplated from the future, at a time when our societies are dead and so is the world. Today I think that the reason why we adapt classical texts is their distance from us, not their permanent quality.

We want to see again people who no longer exist, people who departed. We want to hear languages that were changed through time, we want to understand who we were and see the dead live again. This is precisely what I tried to explain to André Markowicz. I told him I wished to produce a show that would simultaneously speak about the coming extinction of humanity and the disappearance of classical theatre. An acerbic and sincere goodbye to humanity and conventionalism.

He asked me: ! Do you know Leonid Andreev? #. I didn't at all. Reading his work was a total shock. It was the first time I had felt so humanely close to a long-departed author. Andreev is very different from his contemporary authors. He wrote plays, short stories, symbolic works. When reading Andreev's work, words that can transfix you are found in all of his scenes, dialogues, sentences. As if we were able with a few words to touch the crucial heart of pain and beauty of the world.

I will work on several plays – *Requiem, Ekaterina Ivanovna*, and two short stories too: *In the Fog* and *The Abyss*. I will work with video, music and a troupe composed with the same actors I've always been working with, some new ones too.

The play will explore new ideas as I will work with paintings, chassis, candle footlights, ancient costumes that will coexist with the camera, glazed spaces and today's images. There will be painted landscapes, salons bourgeois, winter gardens and musicians in the orchestra pit.

In *Solaris*, Tarkovski's shadow will hang over the show. Shots from his spaceship will follow pictures from one of Brueghel's paintings depicting a crowd of peasants. Through Andreev's writing, my new show will draw a similar circle. One saying that the future is the past. It will be a tribute to extinct art and humanity, to obscure times viewed from space when men used to walk in the snow as a group.

Julien Gosselin, December 2020

Léonid Andreev

Leonid Andreev was born in 1871 in Oriol, Russia. He lost his father very young and had a miserable childhood and youth. As a young adolescent, he laid down on railroad tracks just to check his own limits. He was not a crazy man though, but a man who lived a crazy life. His whole life and work were about going beyond the inherent limits of things. Many times, he risked his life (he attempted to his life several times and died in 1919 from heart failure – outcome of his rail experience as a child.) In early 1900, his first publications were noticed by Maxime Gorky, with whom he was bound by a both sincere and tempestuous friendship (their friendship broke up in 1907). Each one of his short novels is a gem. At the time, each one of them induced scandals.

However, “The Red Laugh” or “Vassili Fiveiski’s life”, whose violence and dynamism are very close to fantasy in their descriptions, were tremendous success. About forty plays were born from the hundred short stories he wrote during his life. Each one of them creating a new form with new impetus. His plays, mostly translated into German and English were staged in the greatest Russian theatres, in Moscow as well as in Saint-Petersburg, by the greatest directors, such as Stanislavski and Meyerhold, who brought about a revolution by adapting them. In 1905, he called for regime change, and yet, years after years, he progressively withdrew from Bolshevik circles. He strongly rejected the October 1917 coup d’état and died in exile. He published his own works in 1912 (his last works remained uncollected.) Today, the main part of his work still remains unobtainable in Russia.

André Markowicz

Julien Gosselin

Julien Gosselin studied at the EPSAD college of performing arts in Lille, run by Stuart Seide. Along with six other actors from his year group, he formed *Si vous pouviez lécher mon cœur* (literally, "If you could lick my heart"), or SVPLMC, in 2009, and directed Fausto Paravidino's *Gènes 01* at the Théâtre du Nord in 2010. The following year, he directed the original production of the French version of *Tristesse Animal Noir* by Anja Hilling at the Théâtre de Vanves, before taking it on tour in 2012. In July 2013, he directed Michel Houellebecq's *Les Particules élémentaires* at the Avignon Festival, *Si vous pouviez lécher mon cœur's* third production, and in March 2014 he directed *Je ne vous ai jamais aimés*, a short-form production based on a text by Pascal Bouaziz from the group Mendelson, at the Théâtre National in Brussels. In the autumn of 2015 he was back with *Le Père* by Stéphanie Chaillou at the Théâtre National in Toulouse, and that same season, at the Avignon Festival, directed *2666*, adapted from Roberto Bolaño's ground-breaking saga, before it went on tour around France and the rest of the world. At the 2017 Festival de Marseille he directed *1993*, based on a text by Aurélien Bellanger, with students from the Théâtre National in Strasbourg's year group 43. For the 2018 edition of the Avignon Festival, he adapted and directed three novels by American author Don DeLillo, namely *Players*, *Mao II* and *The Names*. The following year, at the invitation of the Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, he continued his work with Don DeLillo by adapting *Falling Man* (*Vallende Man*) with the actors of the ITA ensemble, in March 2019.

As part of the *Printemps des Comédiens* festival in Montpellier, he directed another Don DeLillo creation in the form of *Hammer and Sickle*.

In February 2021, Julien Gosselin and the Théâtre National de Strasbourg's 45 group created an adaptation of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Dekalog*.

The director returned to the Théâtre National de Strasbourg with *Le Passé*, an adaptation of texts by Russian author Léonid Andreev, that autumn.

In the spring of 2022, he directed *Sturm und Drang*, the first instalment in the History of German Literature series, at the Berlin Volksbühne.

In 2023, he directed Thomas Bernhard and Arthur Schnitzler's *Extinction*, starring actors from both *Si vous pouviez lécher mon cœur* and the Volksbühne, at the *Printemps des Comédiens* festival in Montpellier, before taking it to the Avignon Festival, Berlin, Antwerp and Paris (Théâtre de la Ville).

Since 15 July 2024, he has been director of the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe.



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Tour 2025

Salzburg Festival

from July 28 to August 2

performances with English surtitles

Contact

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