

On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco - Concert in one act AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

FRANCE

A witty and rarely seen Chekhov one-act play with live performances of music by Bach, Tchaikovsky and Berio co-presented with Sydney Opera House



One of Chekhov's earliest one-act plays, *On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco* is rarely seen on stage. This new staging by Paris's famed **Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord** is even more exceptional – taking the form of a concert, with sumptuous live musical interludes and exquisite 19th century-style costumes by fashion icon **Christian Lacroix**.

At the command of his wife, our central character – with a bad habit of his own – agrees to give a lecture on the hazards of smoking. Instead our charmingly irritable old man unleashes an hour-long rant of grievances about his beloved but infuriating wife. A hilarious monologue of complaints, this classically elegant production is set against the dramatic backdrop of a Russian boarding school for girls.

Starring octogenarian and French film and television star **Michel Robin** (*Nioukhine*) at his grumpy best, our hen-pecked husband entertains the audience with tales of his daily routine of inane tasks. Among them, his weekly Friday night lecture on a subject of importance. At the play's conclusion, our unseen but ever-present wife is heard in the distance, and the girls and audience agree to his pleas - conspiring to keep his secrets safe.

On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco is augmented by the refined soundtrack of **Anton Tchekhov, Johann Sebastian Bach, Luciano Berio** and **Piotr Ilitch Tchaikovsky**. In a rare and dramatic addition, our lead character is accompanied by a talented female musical trio who perform solo interludes comprising **Floriane Bonanni** (violin), **Muriel Ferraro** (soprano) and **Emmanuelle Swiercz** (piano).

On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco made its debut in March 2014 at Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, with reviews describing it as delicate, striking and mysterious. Sydney Festival and Sydney Opera House are delighted to co-present this acclaimed French performance for the first time in an English speaking country. For Sydney Festival, the work will be performed in French with English surtitles.

Michel Robin's theatre career began with Roger Planchon's troupe and in the Company *Renaud-Barrault*, where he performed in Samuel Beckett's and Berthold Brecht's plays. In 1979 Michel Robin obtained an award from the Festival Jury in Locarno, for Yves Yersin's *Les Petites Fugues*, and a Molière for the best second role in Yasmina Reza's *La Traversée de l'hiver*.

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2015

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The Bouffes du Nord is an iconic French theatre company and historic theatre based in the 10th arrondissement of Paris. Founded in 1876, it had an erratic existence and seemed that it would never get off the ground. In its first decade it had no fewer than fifteen artistic directors, the most notorious Olga Léaud who fled the theater after her production failed, taking the contents of the safe with her. British director Peter Brook took over the theater in 1974 as the home for his own theater company. In 2008, Brook announced that he would slowly hand the reins over to Olivier Mantei.

Director	Denis Podalydes
Concept	Floriane Bonanni
Production	C.I.C.T. / Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Coproduction: Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Financed by: the Région île-de-France
Where	Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House
When	22-25 January at 7:30pm
Price	Premium \$65 A Reserve \$55/\$50
Duration	60 minutes
Bookings	Sydney Festival 1300 856 876 City Recital Hall 02 9250 7777 sydneyfestival.org.au/tobacco



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