

PERFORMANCE WORLD PREMIERE COPRODUCTION

LA PARABOLE DU SEUM

PARABLE OF THE SOUR

RÉBECCA CHAILLON



FREE
REPUBLIC OF
VIENNA
FESTIVAL

11 – 14 June
Odeon

With *Parable of the Sour*, Rébecca Chaillon, who calls herself a ‘Black, fat, childless, ageing lesbian’ and who is one of the most influential new voices in France’s cultural landscape, delivers a rebellious science fiction performance full of empathy, humour and lyricism. Following Octavia Butler’s visionary novel *Parable of the Sower*, in which an adolescent girl devises her own religion, *Parable of the Sour* is an inspirational fable about the magic of faith. It focuses on a community of fat people who remain committed even in the face of a perpetual fear of breakdown, brutal crimes and collective paralysis. *Parable of the Sour* is an equally comical and radical conquest of a humane future.

Language
French

Surtitles
German, English

Duration
approx.
3 hrs 15 mins


barrier-free access

Q&A
12 June, following
the performance

WORKSHOP

14 June
Performing Intimacy
Workshop with
Rébecca Chaillon

Conception, Text Rébecca Chaillon with the participation of Alexia Alexi, Yanis Boulahia, Solenne Capmas, Céline Champinot, Hassan Gourniz, Loulie Houmed, Camille Léon-Fucien, Living Smile Vidya, Nabila Mekkid, Élisabeth Monteil, Suzanne Péchenart, Camille Riquier, Chloé Roger, Julie Teuf
Direction Rébecca Chaillon and Céline Champinot **With** Yanis Boulahia, Hassan Gourniz, Loulie Houmed, Camille Léon-Fucien, Living Smile Vidya, Nabila Mekkid, Julie Teuf **Sound design, Sound operation** Élisabeth Monteil **Set design** Camille Riquier **Video design and management** Élisabeth Bernard, Boris Carré, Tao Klos et Pauline Millet (alternating) **Light design** Alexia Alexi, Chloé Roger **Costume design** Solenne Capmas **General management** Suzanne Péchenart **Light management** Chloé Roger **Technical support** Nicolas Ahssaine **Intern in directing assistance** Marie Delpit **Administration, Production** Élisabeth Bernard, Manon Crochemore, Amadine Lorient **Production, Development** Mélanie Charreton / Bureau O.u.r.s.a M.I.n.o.r **Translation surtitles** Lisa Wegener (German), Amelia Parenteau (English) **Surtitles** Lisa Wegener **A set design production by** Le Pôle de mutualisation de services et ressources techniques **With the support of the Costume Workshop of** Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles

Rébecca Chaillon is represented by L'Arche – Agence théâtrale. www.arche-editeur.com

Production Compagnie Dans le ventre **Coproduction** Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna, Théâtre Public de Montreuil – Centre dramatique national, Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles, Les Nuits de Fourvière – Lyon International Metropolis Festival, Comédie de Genève, Dublin Theatre Festival, tnba – Théâtre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, Le Volcan – Scène nationale du Havre, La Criée – Théâtre National de Marseille, Le Carreau du Temple (Paris), Le Maillon Théâtre de Strasbourg – Scène européenne, Festival d'Avignon, Théâtre Sorano – Scène conventionnée (Toulouse) **Coproduction supported by** the cross-border programme Interreg VI France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen – EMERGE : Le Manège Maubeuge – Scène nationale transfrontalière, Le Phénix – Scène nationale Valenciennes, Théâtre de Namur, Maison de la Culture d'Amiens, Kunstencentrum VierNulVier (Gent) **A project coproduced by** the platform Prospero NEW, co-funded by Creative Europe programme of the European Union

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executed by the team of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

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BETWEEN SKY AND EARTH

INTERVIEW WITH RÉBECCA CHAILLON

In *Où la chèvre est attachée, il faut qu'elle broute*, you looked at gender through the prism of women's soccer; in *Sa bouche ne connaît pas de dimanche*, you focus on sexual orientation; in *Carte Noire nommée Désir*, you deal with desire as it is aroused or owned by black women. What's at the heart of your new show?

*La Parole du Seum** is a project about survival and the magical-religious practices you can claim for yourself to survive, particularly when you're part of a so-called minority group – queer and racialised folks and people with disabilities, for example... I realised that in the same way that feminism has reclaimed the figure of the witch, the queer community today is creating a new mythology for itself with astrology. It happens that I grew up with a mix of religion, astrology and superstition, a syncretism that I associated with my mother and my Caribbean culture, which I long rejected and that today I'd like to reclaim.

In the research process for this work you went to New Orleans for a long residency. How did that stay influence your project?

Above all, my trip to the United States fed my fear of the rise of fascism. It was dizzying to brush up against so much violence, to find myself in a country where the people around me have weapons, and to fear for my life when I encountered a police officer. I saw to what degree one can be alienated, to have a deep love for a dominant, white culture – in this case, American culture – while being threatened by the same culture. At the same time, I saw that a black diaspora with scattered roots has managed to become a powerful community, build itself community spaces, and forge a history for itself. I've seen the extent to which the rituals established, the time spent together talking, praying, dancing, eating, and making music could be powerful and inspiring.

One aspect I hadn't anticipated has to do with fatphobia. Simply by doing regular yoga in a place where there were racialised people and quite a few fat people, I came to think about the question of how to reinhabit your body, when this body is constantly singled out and made uncomfortable by the way other people look at it. I'd like to invent new narratives in

which fat characters are not secondary, in which they lead audiences to have a different view of non- normative bodies, as in the work of the writer Meg Elison. Her short stories *The Pill* and *Big Girl* changed my way of looking at my body and its possibilities.

You have also mentioned works of science fiction written by African American and Afro-British women and trans writers like Nnedi Okorafor, Octavia Butler, Rivers Solomon, and Ketty Steward to have been an inspiration. Also you connected it with Seine Saint Denis (93) in France, where you were born. How do you connect this attention to science fiction and the 93 to what your show is about?

I connect my attachment to science fiction to the idea of what is known as the paranormal, which is ultimately everything orbiting on the margins of normativity, and therefore at the heart of what has driven me since my company was founded. I like to define this play as an astrological or astronomic fable. Astrological, because defining identities through signs has been part of my

language since childhood, and it's really fun for me to conceive a kind of queer mythology. Astronomic, because the stars are also a space currently being colonised. Interfering with the moon and the sun, which is what Elon Musk is currently doing, is interfering with what makes the world go round, with the fact that we have light and heat. And that modifies nature's reactions, whether it's through the disappearance of animal and plant species, the increase in diseases among humans, or the multiplication of natural disasters.

During my last trip to Martinique, I realised that it would become uninhabitable in about thirty years, maybe earlier. Five earthquakes in one month, droughts and water shutoffs, beach erosion, algae invasion, hurricanes... Faced with that situation, I tell myself that as an artist I absolutely have to look for a place of survival in artistic creation.

La Parabole du Seum starts from my own territory: Seine-Saint-Denis (also known as the 93, after its administrative department number). The 93 is a peripheral territory of the capital, and is extremely

stigmatised. People project all sorts of violent ideas on the area, immediately connecting it with poverty, filth, migration and its deviant cultures, savagery. No, thank you. Between sky and earth, the roofs of Seine-Saint-Denis are home to satellite dishes pointed at a faraway place that is full, fragmented, already occupied. Department 93 is a space marked by French colonial history, by the neglect of public service and organised relegation, but also by strategies for living that are constantly inventing techniques of survival.

*Note on the French title *La Parabole du seum* [*Parable of the sour*]: In French, the word “parabole” means both “parable” and “satellite dish.” “Seum” is a French slang word said to derive from the Arabic word for “venom.” It is used to express feelings of anger, frustration, and bitterness. The title *La Parabole du Seum* also refers to Octavia Butler’s novel *Parable of the Sower*, which is published in French as *La Parabole du Semeur* (note that “semeur” is very close phonetically to “seum”).

BIOGRAPHY

Rébecca Chaillon, born in 1985 in Montreuil (Seine-Saint-Denis), France, is a director, performer, author, and founder of the company Dans le ventre. She stages plays and performances with a delight in the grotesque, actively positioning herself in the fight against sexual, racist, and gender-based discrimination.

Company Dans le ventre sees itself as a platform for exploring female identities and their relationship to the body and society. With a highly personal approach to writing and themes that are at once intimate, political, and universal, she has developed works in a variety of formats.

Rébecca Chaillon's productions *Carte Noire Nommée Désir* (2021) and *Whitewashing* (2023) have been shown at numerous festivals around the world. She made her debut in Vienna with *La Gouineraie* (2025) and returns this year with the world premiere of her new production *La Parabole du Seum*.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Owner, Editor and Publisher Wiener Festwochen GesmbH, Lehárgasse 11/1/6, 1060 Wien, T + 43 1 589 22 0, festwochen@festwochen.at | www.festwochen.at **General Management** Milo Rau, Artemis Vakianis **Artistic Direction** (responsible for the content) Milo Rau, Artistic Direction **Translation** Nicholas Elliot **Picture Credits Cover** © Marikel Lahana **Produced by** Print Alliance HAV Produktions GmbH (Bad Vöslau) **Design** SIRENE Studio **Layout** Valerie Eccli

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