



La Princesse de Clèves

By Madame de La Fayette

Show and dinner

Conceived, produced and interpreted by Benoit Schwartz
Scenography : Elisabeth de Sauverzac and Benoit Schwartz
Lights by Nicolas Villenave

Production : Compagnie La Bao Acou. Touring France since 2000.
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La Princesse de Clèves

An evening at the King's court

Intrigues at the Court

Once upon a time the Princess of Clèves, Henri II and Catherine de Medici's court...

Human beings whose hearts, bodies and minds were subject to passions, intrigues, love, pleasures, seduction, mutual attraction, libertinism...

Pleasures

The story of the Princess of Clèves is being told at dinner time. The right time for tensions to ease up, giving way to frailty and receptiveness. A propitious time to fully understand the drama where soul movements and psychology are so perfectly described.

Suitable for 15 years and over

La Princesse de Clèves

An intimate passion unveiled

Emotions and gastronomy

Benoit Scwhartz is an actor and a storyteller, enjoying the pleasures of the table as well as the pleasure of taking up his pen. He acts out Madame de la Fayette's text, around a strangely baroque elegant dressed table. He is ready to share complicity with every single guest. And gastronomy and court emotions get intertwined.

The story is scattered with strange medieval or early renaissance phrases, then Benoit Schwartz asks the meal to be served. The meal has been concocted in keeping up with the spirit of the times.

The alchemy occurs during the evening. It is an alchemy that goes beyond the accumulation of pleasures. Complicity between the guests develops subtly as they embody, without ever acting, legendary men and women and eventually share the feeling of having gone through a journey deep in the heart of an intimate passion that has eventually been unveiled....

"Spectators sitting around the table are both my guests and the embodiment of characters that belong to the story. The delicate style is always there and as concrete as the food on the table reminiscent of the food served at the time. There is no longer any distance between the poetry of the text and the spectators' senses. Poetry becomes organic, so much so its forms disappears."(Paul Valery). "BS



La Princesse de Clèves

The place of women in literature

First psychological novel

La Princesse de Clèves is a novel that was anonymously published by Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette in 1678.

It is a historical novel whose backdrop is the Valois court, in the late years of Henri II's reign. The classical opus is considered as one of the earliest psychological novels

Roman majeur du XVIIe siècle

Considered as a watershed in the history of the novel during the classical period, The book highlights the place of women in French literature as well as in the 17th cultural life. With *La Princesse de Clèves*, a masterpiece of rarefied style (*préciosité*), Marie-Madeleine de La Fayette, an avid reader of Madeleine de Scudéry, became a fine representative of the «précieuses » ideas conveyed in the Marquess of Rambouillet's literary salon that she attended assiduously

The novel was published in early March of 1678. The book was warmly received by the public. In fact, never did a novel raise such passionate discussions.



La Princesse de Clèves

Press clippings

Libération - Bruno Masi

« It was something of a gamble : Madame de Lafayette's La Princesse de Clèves is one of the most complex and exacting novels in literature. Benoit Schwarz made light of the formidable task that lay ahead of him with the talent of a straightforward storyteller who knows his stuff... »

La Montagne

"Fond of words and food, the gourmets who were at the Théâtre de Cusset last night thoroughly enjoyed the subtle refinements of La Princesse de Clèves. The spectators were first puzzled as they walked on to the stage. They were welcomed by Benoit Schwarz who made them feel comfortable and gently placed them around a table set with glasses and plates, food and drinks. The actor then sketched life at the court of Henri II. It was a hangout for beautiful women and handsome men where pleasures of the flesh and pleasures of food were their daily lot. It was wonderful to see with what eloquence the story unfolded. Then it was followed by different flavors, those of dishes and drinks that had been concocted by the royal of Cusset. kitchen brigade of Cusset ».

Le Trégor

"La Roche Jagu Castle : a magnificent decor ! Fifty spectators, or rather guests around a table, that of Catherine de Medici. The meal is served as Benoît Schwartz reads from Madame de Lafayette's La Princesse de Clèves adding here and there historical anecdotes. The actor, always close to his audience, feels comfortable with these atypical theatrical performances. »

Villeneuve le Comte - bulletin

« Benoit Schwartz invited the spectators around a baroque-style dressed table with a nice interplay of diffused light and the scent of orange blossoms. They were the characters of the story that took us back four hundred years without being the actors. Historical re-enactment went as far as serving a meal prepared by Benoît Schwartz himself : rabbit terrine, honey baked ham, spicy poached fruit, spice-flavored wines and infusions."

Le Pays briard

« I was one of them (...) Benoit Schwartz made his guests go through the heroine's stages of passionate love and the havoc it created. He studded the story with witty digressions on the origins of a few French phrases. A pause between the pangs of passion... The show was followed by a dinner and everyone went back to being themselves again. ... As she was walking over the drawbridge to go back to her country home, a lady of the local gentry was enthused by the evening... « I almost felt home... Unusual, eery, friendly ambience... Everybody played along. A super evening.»"



La Princesse de Clèves

Gastronomy

How the meal is conceived and prepared...

There are 4 solutions :

- Sylvie Tiger, our chief, on behalf of Benoit Schwartz, prepares the meal, something she has done regularly since the first day. That's what she did during a prestige evening organized by la Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques in Paris).
- Sylvie Tiger manage a team of local volunteers who will concoct and prepare the dinner, on behalf of our team. It is for them the opportunity to discover the French gastronomic heritage of the time (vegetables and dishes that have been forgotten, ingredients that were inexistent then, ways of preparing meals, different cooking times and service).
- Organization of a partnership with any teaching institution dedicated to gastronomic catering. Sylvie Tiger and Benoit Schwartz will help it to conceive and to elaborate the meal. The meal is prepared and served by the students. We have been carrying out an experiment with the Lycée hôtelier de Lannion (in Brittany). The project places students at the heart of a unique literary and culinary experience during 8 exceptional evening.
- On behalf of our team, a chef in your area conceives and prepares the dinner. Early 16th century in France saw a gastronomic revolution and a 21st century chef could, if so she/he wished, show her/his creativity, It could range from the simplest to the most sophisticated approach.

Lecture on French gastronomy in medieval times and early Renaissance days.

Benoit Schwartz who is fond of French gastronomy is most willing to tell everything he has gathered about medieval and early Renaissance cooking habits.



La Princesse de Clèves

Masterclass with Benoit Schwartz, after Michel Bernardy's « the verbal game»

"Emotions, musics and rythms of the French language"

Michel Bernardy, a boarder of La Comédie française from 1960 to 1972, a professor of diction and phrasing at the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique of Paris from 1972 to 1994, is considered in France as a master of language. He is the author of « Verbal game, a treatise of modern diction for the honest man ».

Benoit Schwartz, who followed the teaching of the master for almost ten years, proposes master classes and workshops on the musicality of language, metrics and languages. He bases his teaching on major classic texts (Racine, Corneille, Hugo..) and on French poets such as Villon, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Valéry...

The aim of the game is to understand the deep structures of a text so as to enhance the actor's or orator's performances. They must give flesh and blood to the words. Benoit Schwartz propose the participants to explore the tools of language and to put them at the disposal of orality in all its forms : theatre, stories, poetry, speech, lecture. They will essentially be working on classical texts. Contemporary authors have integrated and digested the syntactic rules and the poetic means to help actors. It is more telling and more readily understandable for young actors to learn the ropes on texts where tools are sharpened on crystal-clear rules. This work then will enrich the interpretation of any contemporary work.



La Princesse de Clèves General technical conditions

NO RENTING OF LIGHTING AND SOUND EQUIPMENT

POSSIBILITY OF PLAYING TWICE A DAY at lunch and dinner time

CAPACITY: from 30 to 50 guests (maximum). Capacity will mainly depend on the size of the table and the size of the room.

TO BE PROVIDED BY THE ORGANIZER

ANTECHAMBER TO WELCOME THE AUDIENCE

PERFORMANCE SPACE: space that can accommodate tables and chairs, according to the implementation plan hereby.

Between 30 and 50 spectators should be able to sit around the big table + a space for circulation around the audience. For the actor and the food service.

PROPS FOR MEALS (Adaptations for an international tour)

White Tablecloth (cotton sheets) and white linen napkins

service of white plates, glasses and cutlery (forks, spoons and knives) for the audience around the table, water jugs, bread baskets.

CONSUMABLES FOR DECORATION OF THE TABLE (Adaptation for an international tour)

Consumables for the decoration of baskets placed on the table and wine served during the meal : fruit, vegetables, spices, dragées, wine, according to the list drawn up by Benoit Schwartz. The list will obviously take local conditions into account.

Depending on how fresh the consumables will be, they can be used three days in a row provided the show takes place in the same venue.

EQUIPPED KITCHEN SPACE : near the performance space

LIGHTING : Black in the room itself – Warm intimate atmosphere to welcome the audience.

1 extension cord, 220V supply and a multiple socket.

SOUND : a CD player and 2 or 4 loudspeakers.

PERSONNEL REQUIRED : 1 person for unloading operations and setting up of set, striking the set and loading.

4 people minimum for serving the meal and dishwashing (according to number of spectators).

MEAL: organization depending on the option chosen.

La Princesse de Clèves

General financial conditions for a sale contract

NO VAT

NO EXTRA COST FOR FREIGHT

COST OF A SHOW (Not subject to VAT)

1 show: 1100,00 Euro

From 3 shows on : 900 Euro per show

Up to 2 shows per day : 800,00 per show

(N.B. Commercial price in France: 1400 euro per show. Cie is not subjected to VAT)

Price doesn't include consumables for the decoration of the table and for the dinner served to the audience.

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TRANSPORT (Team and equipment) – 3 passenger + 80 kg freight (20 per passenger in the hold) + hand luggage

3 people (leaving from Brittany) : the actor, the chef, the production director

The set and the props that have to be carried have been adapted so as to baggage weight.

Extra equipment will have to be found locally. We fully realise that we will have to adapt to local conditions.

ACCOMODATION and FOOD

To be paid by the organizer + meal expenses for domestic and international trips.