

théâtre/garonne
scène européenne

8 > 11 NOV

THE EVENING

Richard Maxwell
New York City Players

théâtre

DOSSIER DE PRESSE

08 → 11 novembre

ma 08 20 : 00

me 09 20 : 00

je 10 20 : 00

ve 11 20 : 30

durée 1h / en anglais surtitré

tarifs de 9€ à 24 €

réservations 05 62 48 54 77

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The Evening

Richard Maxwell & The New York City Players (USA)

RICHARD MAXWELL EST L'UN DES ARTISTES LES PLUS NOVATEURS ET LES PLUS INCONTOURNABLES APPARUS EN AMÉRIQUE DURANT LA DERNIÈRE DÉCENNIE.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mise en scène **Richard Maxwell**

Lumières et décor **Sascha van Riel**

Costumes **Kaye Voyce**

Directeur technique **Bill Kennedy**

Technicien plateau **Dirk Stevens**

Production **Regina Vorria**

Théâtre Garonne

**producteur délégué de la tournée française -
automne 2016**

**avec le soutien du Conseil Départemental
de la Haute-Garonne**



Ces trois-là, vous n'êtes pas près de les oublier : Asi, lutteur déconfit, Cosmo, son manager crapuleux, et Béa, la barmaid mi-ange désabusé, mi-pute autoproclamée de ce bar anonyme d'un bled planqué au fin fond de l'Amérique. Le genre de losers magnifiques qu'affectionne particulièrement Richard Maxwell.

The Evening commence comme une élegie (Maxwell était en train de perdre son père quand il a écrit la pièce), se poursuit sur fond de pop mélancolique jouée en live dans un coin du bar, comme une chronique cocainée, caustique et amère de l'*American dream*, et s'achève sur un coup de théâtre lumineux.

Et si les deux bonhommes occupent l'essentiel de la parole, et de l'espace (ils parlent fort, se battent facilement, fantasment beaucoup sur des rêves de grandeur qu'ils noient aussitôt dans des pintes de bière), c'est bien la fille qu'il ne faut pas lâcher des yeux : car dans cette galerie de gueules (littéralement) cassées, Béa, petite sœur dans l'enfer de la Béatrice de Dante, est la véritable héroïne d'une histoire dont l'héroïsme consiste essentiellement à réussir à sauver sa peau chaque jour que Dieu fait.

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Le théâtre Garonne est subventionné par

Le Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication / Direction
Régionale des Affaires Culturelles
Midi-Pyrénées, La Ville de Toulouse,
Le Conseil Départemental de la Haute-Garonne,
Le Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées.

Le théâtre Garonne bénéficie du concours de l'ONDA

(Office National de Diffusion Artistique) pour la diffusion
de certains spectacles et reçoit le soutien de La Caisse
d'Épargne Midi-Pyrénées, Tisséo, la Librairie Ombres
Blanches, Anne&Valentin, Cofely Inéo, Reprint

Une autre divine comédie...

The Evening est la première partie d'un triptyque inspiré de *La Divine Comédie*, qui dessine les contours d'un voyage dans des tableaux, jusqu'à la rédemption. Ce travail musical et élégiaque porte sur trois archétypes : un boxeur, son manager corrompu et la serveuse à mesure de leurs relations dans un bar paumé.

« J'aime bien cet endroit. Je ne vais pas mentir. Je ne peux pas vraiment penser à un meilleur endroit où être. Où peux-tu aller quand tu veux t'échapper ? La ville ne laisse aucun endroit où fuir, alors vas où tu as besoin d'être quand tu veux juste traîner un peu... »

Parallèlement, il arrive qu'avec un groupe en résidence travaillant des chansons, une invitation à la liberté se développe :

*« Laisse moi partager quelque chose avec toi
L'été a été sombre
À mesure que tu construis, cela s'effondre
Prie pour une pause dans ses nuages... »*

La mort du père de Mr. Maxwell, qui a eu lieu durant l'écriture de l'œuvre et les répétitions, a eu un impact sur la tournure de la pièce.

« J'ai essayé de continuer d'écrire pendant que mon père était en train de mourir. Au fur et à mesure que j'écrivais, je me sentais de plus en plus comme si j'étais celui qui était écrit. Non, en fait, la sensation était celle de ne pas être écrit, et d'être sans forme. »



*J'ai lu qu'à un stade antérieur du projet, la pièce s'appelait *Custodian of a Man* (littéralement « la gardienne d'un homme »), et qu'elle racontait l'histoire d'un boxeur blessé et de sa jeune infirmière. Qu'est-ce qui a changé entre cette première version et *The Evening* ?*

Richard Maxwell : Au départ, j'avais cette histoire d'un pratiquant d'arts martiaux mixtes d'un certain âge et de sa relation ambiguë avec sa jeune garde-malade. J'avais aussi d'autres personnages, comme une sorte de promoteur. J'ai commencé les répétitions avec cinq ou six acteurs. Puis certains ont démissionné ou ont été renvoyés, et je me suis retrouvé avec une distribution à laquelle je ne m'attendais pas. Je cherchais la bonne combinaison entre les personnages et les acteurs pour raconter cette histoire, qui faisait librement référence à Dante. Du coup, je ne sais pas. La fille est devenue plus âgée, elle s'est transformée en serveuse et en prostituée. Un nouvel acteur a interprété le boxeur, mais le rôle est resté à peu près le même. Et quand Jim Fletcher a rejoint l'équipe, il a incarné un mélange de ce promoteur et de l'agent. Depuis le début, j'avais un groupe de rock, parce que j'écrivais de la musique. Ils interprétaient des personnages à différents moments, mais en fin de compte c'est simplement devenu un groupe qui joue dans un bar.

Par curiosité, pourquoi avoir choisi le MMA (sport de combat complet réputé pour sa violence), parmi d'autres types de combat ?

Richard Maxwell : Je cherchais quelque chose qui paraisse contemporain, et qui dépasse le sport. J'aime l'idée du combat ultime car cela va au-delà de la compétition, il y a une dimension guerrière. J'ai aussi été frappé par l'image d'un homme que j'ai vu dans la rue à Toulouse, à la fenêtre du deuxième étage d'un immeuble, le bras dans une écharpe. Comme je sais que ce type de combat est populaire à Toulouse, j'ai eu ce fantasme d'un homme, d'origine arabe, qui serait un pratiquant de MMA en convalescence. Un personnage en est sorti.

extrait d'une entretien de **Richard Maxwell** avec **Barbara Turki**,
pour le Festival d'Automne à Paris, mars 2016

Time Out / Theater revue

IN NEARLY 20 YEARS OF RIGOROUS, DISTILLED PLAY-MAKING THAT STRIPS AWAY THE PRETENSIONS OF TEXT, DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE, RICHARD MAXWELL HAS ALWAYS MADE ACTORS DISAPPEAR.

Not behind a smoke screen of character or conflict; people in his worlds are perfectly visible, often facing front and speaking in clear, uninflected tones. It's acting itself he tries to make vanish, replaced by the pure phenomenon of a body in space. In *The Evening* (copresented by The Kitchen and P.S. 122) Maxwell pushes this erasure tactic to its logical conclusion: He subsumes an actor in a devastating wasteland of white.

That's as spoilery as I'll get, since the night begins in one place and ends in a different (almost Romeo Castellucci-like) one. The first portion of this roughly three-part show has the blond, dead-eyed young Beatrice (Cammisa Buerhaus) sitting at a table, reciting what seem to be journal entries Maxwell wrote during his dying father's final days. Buerhaus reads in the usual Maxwell-deadpan style. Soon the gangsterish Cosmo (Jim Fletcher) enters with pizza, dressed in the saddest tan-and-purple tracksuit you'll ever see. Next comes Asi (Brian Mendes), a steroid-addled cage fighter with a busted face.

Beatrice serves them beer from the bar, checking her cell phone and blankly registering Cosmo and Asi's blustery banter. A three-piece band arrives (James Moore, Andie Springer, David Zuckerman) to play melancholy pop tunes underneath the dialogue. Beatrice wants to go to

Istanbul; Asi wants her to stay; Cosmo asks for a bag of coke. Beatrice, who describes herself as a "prostitute slash bartender" is sexually entangled with both men.

In some ways, *The Evening* feels like a throwback to Maxwell's earlier plays (*House*, *Cavemen*): territorial struggles in closed spaces between broken losers on the edges of society. But then he pushes the story into a surreal, self-conscious zone, a critique of his own postdramatic tendencies, the enervated Midwestern Gothic. "We live in this garbage void, of all the old tropes of standing still and forgotten dreams," rages Asi. "It's a...masculine world coming from the container, with triangles and tired heroes." Indeed, the middle section is fueled by humor and energy that comes from the interplay of Fletcher's sleazy, hedonistic manager and Mendes's rageful warrior, but Buerhaus remains the mysterious fulcrum between them. Keep your eye on her.

Like most of Maxwell's recent work (<http://www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/neutral-hero>) (which has become at once increasingly fragmented and lushly lyrical), *The Evening* resists interpretation beyond the big, obvious themes (death, connection, escape). Its most conventional feature is the recurring battle over a woman by two men (also the focus in last year's *Isolde* (<http://www.timeout.com/newyork/theater/isolde>)).

Press notes say that this is the first part of a trilogy inspired by Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Maybe the connection will become clearer in future segments. Still, no one goes to Maxwell's plays expecting tidiness— emotional or literary. He buries

the bodies, then pats down the shovel marks.—

David Cote

Time Out - New York

17 mars 2015

EN PRESQUE 20 ANS DE MISE EN SCÈNE RIGOREUSE QUI SE DÉBARASSE DES PRÉTENSIONS DU TEXTE, DU DESIGN ET DE LA PERFORMANCE, RICHARD MAXWELL A TOUJOURS FAIT DISPARAÎTRE LES ACTEURS. MAIS PAS DERRIÈRE UN ÉCRAN DE FUMÉE DE PERSONNAGES OU DE CONFLITS ; LES GENS DANS SON MONDE SONT PARFAITEMENT VISIBLES, SOUVENT FAISANT FACE AUX SPECTATEURS, PARLANT CLAIREMENT ET SIMPLEMENT. C'EST LE JEU LUI-MÊME QU'IL VEUT ANÉANTIR, ET QU'IL ESSAIE DE REMPLACER PAR LA SIMPLE PRÉSENCE DU CORPS DANS L'ESPACE.

Death becomes Her

THERE MAY BE NO EXPERIENCE MORE EXCRUCIATING, OR MORE ESSENTIALLY HUMAN, THAN THAT OF RISING TO THE OCCASION OF A LOVED ONE'S DEATH. WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE IS NOTHING TO DO? HOW TO TELL A STORY AS FORM IS FALLING AWAY?

Playwright / director Richard Maxwell wrote his most recent play, *The Evening*, as his father was dying. It is his first work in a forthcoming trilogy inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Rather than adapt or remake, Maxwell has so far loosed threads from the classic, weaving them through a story set not in hell, purgatory, or heaven precisely, but in an unremarkable bar in an unnamed American town. From Dante, Maxwell takes a hallowed name: Beatrice. Here she isn't a muse from on high, but a self-described "prostitute slash bartender in one lonely corner of the universe" (played by sculptor/composer Cammisa Buerhaus). Drawing her into a love triangle that includes a Mixed Martial Arts Fighter named Asi (Brian Mendes) and his manager Cosmo (Jim Fletcher), Maxwell, a theater artist of staggering achievement, has produced a tender and arresting story of love and leaving.

The Evening is a performance in three movements: a prologue, a play, and its dissolve. At the top of the show, with the lights at half, Buerhaus sits at a table, looks out into the audience, and reads lines from Maxwell's journal of his father's last days. She, as Maxwell's stand-in, recounts sleepless nights, an illfitting bed, water drunk from a sippy cup, and the aching poignancy of their final exchanges. She speaks Maxwell's memory of a Native American man who once entered the family house uninvited, and how his father helped sober him up and drove him

home. It was a kindness, of course, as well as a moment of confusion that his father calmly made sense of. The crossing from life into death, even at this late stage of his father's illness, is unfathomable to Maxwell. "I won't let him go," he writes, "I can't." But he must, and he does, at which point his elegy ends. Buerhaus stands, takes her place behind the bar as Beatrice, and the play begins.

The subsequent plot is straightforward enough, slip-sliding along the lines of cliché. Asi and Cosmo care for Beatrice, but she seems not to care for either of them, or at least not more for one than the other. She wants to go to Istanbul and needs money to do so. Grief is, in part, her propeller. "Look," she explains, "a lot of people have died on me, lately, and. Yeah. I mean fuck. What are you supposed to do when you miss people?" Asi, her ex, wants her to stay, demands that she stay, tells her he loves her and then, finally, asks to go with her: "I can't let you go. You're in everything. You're in the walls. You're everywhere. I really need you. You know that, right?" Cosmo encourages Beatrice to go, but believes she should return: "I want you to be... alone... not for me... I want. Love but. I want love, but..." Each in their own way, Beatrice, Asi, and Cosmo articulate a particular response to the world such as it is: seek, fight, surrender. Over the course of *The Evening*, the knots that bind them tighten. They drink, dance, and fight. Blood is spilled. A band plays. A fog rolls in.

In Maxwell's work, character is always a complex concoction. In both the writing and the direction, he allows the seams to peek out between the performers and the fictions moving through them.

His actors deliver their lines from point-blank range; they're straight shooters, with little-to-no theatrical flourish. Maxwell has long been a master of halting speech, marking the spaces between thought and word, and around the entwined conditions of love and grief, he has written dialogue that is by turns declarative and faltering. Out of the mouths of Asi and Cosmo, the word "love" can sound as raw-hearted as it does trite, in no small part due to the deft achievements of both Mendes and Fletcher, two of his long-time collaborators who, while on constant boil, still hit the play's many registers with precision. Both Mendes and Fletcher find a singular note that sounds like macho bluster and romantic overture all at once. "In my life. If I see something I like, I grab it," Asi calls out to Beatrice in a deadpan staccato, "That's just how it is. Do you see that?" He continues through her silence to deliver some of most simultaneously absurd and heartbreaking lines of the play: "And. If I say I love you, it means I love you. [pause] I'm not saying I love you. But if I did. [pause] But I think I do love you. [pause] I really do think that sometimes."

Buerhaus's Beatrice by contrast speaks and moves as though she's always looking for herself, a disoriented quicksilver counterpoint to the men's more forceful gravities. Maxwell has long counted on the virtues of the untrained actor, a certain affectless presence, to give his theater nuanced, contradictory textures. Flatness has great surface value in his work, creating tension around what's traditionally perceived in the theater as depth. In *The Evening*'s "girl with a gun" sequence, Beatrice shoots both men and then rips open one of their shirts

to uncover the special effects contraption oozing fake blood beneath. Why? Why not? Real death happens as part of life offstage; here, the actors remain standing. The fact of the fake gunshots, loud and clear, tells a far more revealing and resonant story here.

In *A Very Easy Death*, Simone de Beauvoir's elegant, clear-eyed memoir of her mother's dying, the writer / philosopher recalls her mother saying, "Death itself does not frighten me; it is the jump I am afraid of." The jump, the leap into the unknown: This is the action in question that hovers over both those who will stay with those who will go. The day Maxwell's father was able to stand on his own was his last day alive: "He took off, like out of sprinter blocks." As Beatrice explains to Asi and Cosmo: "I walk up to the lines that have been drawn and I shy away every time. Every time... It's like, I am caught between two worlds and the dreams keep me from getting out and into either one." Maxwell's set is shallow and claustrophobic, pushing the actors and the three band members to the front of the stage, limiting their movements to such a degree that one wishes them some kind of release or liberation almost from the start. At one point in the action, Beatrice tries to get away from the men, running to a patch of carpet two shoes wide between the band's mic stand and the edge of the playing space. It's then we recognize she has nowhere to go.

Maxwell has written before of people who find themselves in a kind of limbo, who for whatever reason are neither fully here nor there. In *Isolde* (2014), his last, an actress begins to lose her memory, finding herself untethering from herself, her life, her husband. The binding force, the connective tissue, for the condition in which they are living, is love. Like Dante's epic, *The Evening* is also fueled by love. Though

not a quixotic pursuit, it is of course an illfated one. All of us leave or are left, someday, one way or another. Grief is what we feel in their absence, the agonizing proof of having loved as best we could. Jump is what we might do when the world we know breaks apart, is taken away, and we're left staring into the haze. As Maxwell writes near to his father's death, "amazing how much beginning there is in the end." Near to the end of *The Evening*, we watch Beatrice cross a foggy new space a few deliberate steps at a time, dissolving into the light. Where she finds herself next is anybody's guess.

Jennifer Krasinski

ARTFORUM

25 mars 2015

**AS MAXWELL WRITES
NEAR TO HIS FATHER'S
DEATH, "AMAZING HOW
MUCH BEGINNING THERE IS
IN THE END."**



RICHARD MAXWELL NEW YORK CITY PLAYERS

au théâtre Garonne :

2007

Good Samaritans

2011

Ads

Neutral Hero

2014

Vision Disturbance

Richard Maxwell est né en 1967 ; il est à la fois auteur, metteur en scène et compositeur. Il débute à Chicago, en 1990, en obtenant une bourse pour travailler avec la Steppenwolf Theatre Company. Il cofonde le Cook County Theater Department. Il poursuit ensuite sa carrière à New – York.

Quelques pièces : *Cowboys & Indians* coécrit avec Jim Strahs, *Ute Mnos V. Crazy Liquors*, *Burger King*, *Flight Courier Service*, *Billings*, *Showcase*, *Ads*, *The Evening*, *Isolde* et *Neutral Hero*

Il dirige les New York City Players, compagnie qui s'est produite dans de nombreux pays et qui a remporté de nombreux prix. Ses textes sont traduits en six langues. Il compose la musique de tous ses spectacles et a enregistré deux CD : *Showtunes* et *I'm Feeling so Emotional*. Il a également réalisé un court-métrage, *The Darkness of this Reading*.

Richard Maxwell obtient différentes bourses dont la Bourse Guggenheim en 2010, et celles de la Foundation for Contemporary Arts et de la Doris Duke Foundation en 2012. Il a par ailleurs remporté différents prix : deux OBIE Awards et le Spalding Gray Award en 2014 (décernée par un jury composé du Performance Space 122, l'Andy Warhol Museum, On the Boards, et le Walker Art Center).

En 2012, il est artiste invité de la Whitney Biennial à New York.

En 2015, il publie chez Theatre Communications Group, *Theater for Beginners*



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