



COMÉDIE
FRANÇAISE



PATHE LIVE

Theatre in cinema:
**Pathé Live broadcasts
from the Comédie-Française!**
EDUCATIONAL KIT

"There should be a law stating that all shows must be filmed."

Jean-Luc GODARD

■ STANDING THE TEST OF THE MOMENT: FILMING THE PERFORMING ARTS

Filming the performing arts (opera, ballet, concert, theatrical performance) is now a common and increasingly popular practice, in spite of the debates that still surround it. It is a singular endeavour consisting in filming a production on a performance night. If it takes place in the presence of the audience, the film acts as a record the relationship between the performers and the audience that particular evening. The current means of disseminating filmed shows are DVDs, television, the internet and now the cinema.

Contrary to what one might think, filming a production does not follow a pre-defined formula, a set procedure (a wide frontal shot and two side cameras, for instance) that can be repeated indefinitely. Instead, because each production constructs a specific space in a theatre that has a specific architecture, a new shooting plan using specially chosen cameras has to be invented every time, taking into account the genre of the play, the movement of the actors, the lights, etc. The film director attends rehearsals, talks with the director of the staging, establishes a shot list and sets up a specific sound and image recording system in the theatre. He works with a technical and creative crew (a director of photography, a

sound designer, a script supervisor, several cameramen). The shooting method needs to be invented every time, and the film director's choices are the result of a long process of preparatory work. This is the reason why some stage directors work with a specific film director, whose perspective and way of filming they particularly like. Jérôme Deschamps, for instance, tends to work closely with Dominique Thiel (*Un fil à la patte*), the same way Patrice Chéreau used to work with Stéphane Metge (*Phèdre*, *Dans la solitude des champs de coton*).

Live filming adds to the challenge: the film is made as the play is performed and broadcast live on television, and now also in the cinema. The film-making thus takes place over a single time-period, that of the performance, and there is no turning back for the film director. For actors, the development of these technologies further expands the audience: that night, they perform for several thousand people.

The audience watching the recorded performance experiences something very different from what the audience in the theatre experiences. Whether they are at home or in the cinema, what is available to them is what one might call "spectacularised theatre", as



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as Antoine Vitez put it, a director's treatment of another director's work, an image-making process orchestrated by someone with a distinct viewpoint.

But when it is a proper director's work and has been thought through, the recording of a performance turns out to be a process that **reveals theatre**, and reveals it differently, in other places and for different audiences, rather than a coercion of the gaze by framing. In the cinema, the big screen produces different perceptual effects (a face in close-up reaches gigantic proportions), which the director necessarily takes into account.

Recording a performance thus means allowing two forms of art to meet: an art of recording, of "mechanical reproduction" (Walter Benjamin), and an art of the ephemeral, based on the singularity of the moment. Some consider this an impossible union and believe this "canning" (Marcel Pagnol) inevitably destroys the aura that emanates from the presence of the actors, in the *hic et nunc* of the performance. Others, however, consider it a fruitful union, which serves both the memory of theatre (as recordings are archives of the performing arts, many theatres now systematically film their productions, like the Comédie-Française does) and the dissemination of theatre and therefore its vitality. Theatre is now aware that it can be filmed, which may be one of the reasons

why some contemporary productions are increasingly cinematic, as recently illustrated by Ivo van Hove's *The Damned*, in the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des Papes in Avignon, and then in the Salle Richelieu at the Comédie-Française.

The associations between theatre and cinema are polymorphic and infinite. They illustrate the permanent creativity of both arts and their recurring temptation to intertwine. In the vast area where theatre and cinema meet (whether it concerns theatre films, theatrical films, transpositions, or more widely theatricality in film, not to mention the use of video and the influence of the cinema in contemporary theatre productions), filming holds a singular position. Although the expression **theatre film** is now favoured over the word "recording" in order to better acknowledge the increasingly precise work of directors as well as dismiss the negative stereotypes it conveys, it must still be distinguished from other ways of taking stage to screen. It is different from a **recreation** (the play is performed by the theatre actors but in a studio or on the stage when the audience is not present), as well as from the great number of film **adaptations** of plays, either for television (*Dom Juan* by Marcel Bluwal) or for the cinema (*Herr Tartuff* by Murnau after Molière, *Throne of Blood* by Kurosawa after Shakespeare's *Macbeth*).

■ THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE, FILM AND TELEVISION FROM ONE COLLABORATION TO THE NEXT

The Comédie-Française has long made a point to allow theatre to exist both inside and outside its venerable walls and established enduring relationships with cinema and television as soon as they first appeared.

- When cinema was just five years old, film-makers in search of "noble" subjects started filming famous theatre actors for the 1900 Universal Exhibition. Thanks to the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, people could see "animated visions of famous artists": not only former Comédie-Française sociétaires Sarah Bernhardt as *Hamlet*, but also Comédie-Française actors Suzanne Reichenberg, Coquelin Cadet and Maurice de Féraudy.

- In 1908 Paul Laffitte created a company called Le Film d'Art in collaboration with the Comédie-Française and Pathé (already!). This ambitious company produced a series of films featuring the star sociétaires of the Comédie-Française. The most famous film remains *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* by André Calmettes with Albert Lambert and Charles Le Bargy (1908) alongside *Britannicus* and *Andromaque* (1909) with Mounet-Sully. The ambition of the art film was both to make cinema a more noble medium, as it was born in fairs, but also to give it an educational purpose.

In 1901 already, Charles Pathé said: "Cinema will be the theatre, press and school of tomorrow." And the cinema drew its subjects widely from theatre texts (scenarios, dialogues, etc.) The Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres (SCAGL), a production company to adapt literary works, was created at that time.



Poster for the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, 1900 (© Comédie-Française coll.)



"The Académie and the Comédie-Française working together for the cinematograph", 1908 (© Comédie-Française coll.)

- In 1935, Léonce Perret, who had already made a film on the life of Molière (*Molière*, 1910), set up her cameras in the theatre on a performance night. *An evening at the Comédie-Française* is the first recording of a performance produced by the film industry in the Salle Richelieu. On this occasion, Perret filmed a few scenes from *Les Précieuses ridicules* by Molière and *Les Deux Couverts* by Sacha Guitry, intercut with shots of the audience.



An evening at the Comédie-Française, Léonce Perret, 1935 (© Comédie-Française coll.)

- The Comédiens Français' first experiences in television in the 1950s were mostly for live broadcasts from the Cognacq-Jay or Buttes Chaumont studios.

- In the 1960s, the ORTF (French Office for Radio and Television) launched a programme dedicated to broadcasting theatre on television. The famous programme *Au théâtre ce soir* (created by Pierre Sabbagh and Georges Folgoas) was born. It broadcast light comedies but also Comédie-Française productions. By then, mobile production control rooms allowed shooting in the theatre. In this context, plays performed by Comédie-Française actors at the Marigny or Odeon theatres were filmed (*Un fil à la patte* by Feydeau, directed by Jacques Charon, 1970; *Les Fausses Confidences* by Marivaux, directed by Jean Piat, 1971), either in front of an audience or not.



© Claude Angelini, Coll. Comédie-Française

- In the 1980s, a Video Department was founded at the Comédie-Française. Its administrator, Jean-Pierre Miquel, encouraged the recording of the Molière plays performed at the theatre, like the BBC had done with Shakespeare: Between 1997 and 2003, 17 films were produced and assembled in a DVD box set. In conjunction with the THR company, it was already experimenting with the dissemination/video transmission (by satellite) of the Molière collection to small and medium-sized towns in France.

- In 1977, the first live broadcast from the Comédie-Française took place on the channel Antenne 2. It was a production of Musset's *Lorenzaccio* directed by Franco Zeffirelli (video director: Jean-Paul Carrère). This was the first of a series of live broadcasts.

- In parallel to these recordings for Pathé Live, the Comédie-Française is also developing a collection of original films, inviting a filmmaker every season to create a work whose subject/text is based on a play in its programme. The filmmaker is given complete freedom to reinterpret the play (production design, costumes, time, setting), however must stick to the original text and keep the cast from the theatrical production. These films are shot in cinematographic conditions in a limited time frame (10 to 15 days). Claude Mouriéras (*Partage de midi*, 2008), Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau (*Juste la fin du monde*, 2009), Mathieu Amalric (*L'illusion comique*, 2010), Valérie Donzelli (*Que d'amour !* after *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*, 2013), Arnaud Desplechin (*La Forêt*, 2013), Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi (*Les Trois Sœurs*, 2014, winner of the best feature award from the Syndicat de la critique de cinema in 2015), Vincent Macaigne (*Dom Juan et Sganarelle*, 2015) and Guillaume Gallienne (*Oblomov*, 2015) have all taken on the challenge, proposing their visions of the theatre through a filmmaking approach.

In this way, the Comédie-Française places itself where theatre and cinema meet: with Pathé Live, cinema is reproducing the theatrical performance, while through original films, filmmakers are speaking about theatre using cinematic means.

- The Pathé Live/Comédie-Française partnership is yet another step in this long history of affinities, offering the public the opportunity to see plays broadcast live or pre-recorded, in a network of 300 cinemas. The 2016-2017 season featured *Roméo et Juliette* directed by Éric Ruf, *Le Misanthrope* directed by Clément Hervieu-Léger, and *Cyrano de Bergerac* directed by Denis Podalydès, and the 2017-2018 season, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* directed by Denis Podalydès, *Le Petit Maître corrigé* directed by Clément Hervieu-Léger, and *Britannicus* directed by Stéphane Braunschweig.



Romeo and Juliet, directed by Éric Ruf,
2015 ©Vincent Pontet, Comédie-Française Coll.

THEATRE LIVE IN THE CINEMA! FROM THE PREPARATION OF THE SHOOT TO THE LIVE BROADCAST

1. The preparatory work:

Page 4	CAMERA 1	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
291 298	La Table au + serré -----	
304	La Table +	
308	Phil P Taille à cour	
321 325	Clit P Poitrine(vert) -----	
338	Alceste PA se lève sec, va au centre	
341 343	Alceste P Taille -----	
352	Alceste P Poitrine	
359	Table Eliante / Célimène / Alceste	

Page 3	CAMERA 2	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
283	Phil p pied entre escalier cour vient devant	
288	Célimène p taille suis, récupère Clit GC elle croise prio elle, suis vers cour récupère Acaste vont à jar, prio lui Acaste + Célimène p taille	
294		
312	Alceste p taille monte grand escalier -----	
315	----- s'assoit	
317	-----	
319	----- se lève	
322		
335	Alceste + Phil p taille	

Page 4	CAMERA 3	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
284	Célimène + Alceste P Taille Prio Alceste vient devant	
292	Célimène P Poitrine -----	
297		
299		
302	Célimène + Alceste (de dos) P Taille Prio Elle	
305	Célimène + Phil P Taille Prio elle, il sort DC Clit entre GC	
311	Célimène + Phil P Taille Prio Célimène va à Jar	
324	Célimène P Poitrine -----	
326		
328		
332	VITE La Table -----	
334	----- ça rentre	
337		
[338]	Alceste s'écarte Centre ne le perd pas ! Table à Alceste -----	
339		
344		
348	La Table ça rentre	

Page 4	CAMERA 4	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
280	Alceste PA- Ad Lib	
282	VITE La Table ça rentre	
290	Table + Piano ça rentre	
300	Célimène + Clit PA (Alceste de dos) + Ad Lib	
[302]	Clit P Poitrine	
[304]		
309	Piano à Clit assis à Cour	
316	Célimène P Pie suis cour	
327	1/3 Scène Cour Alceste (escalier) à Clit devant -----	
329		
333	VITE Alceste P Poitrine	
340	Acaste + Célimène + Clit P Taille	

Page 4	CAMERA 5	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
280	VITE Piano à Bord Décor Cour + Ad Lib	
286	Alceste + Clit PA Célimène entre GC suis Célimène et Clit à jar Prio Clit, il continu	
296	Acaste P Poitrine	
301	Eliante P Poitrine	
307	Eliante à Piano ++ ça sort	
330	Phil P Poitrine	
336	Alceste + Phil P Pied suis à jar	
342	Célimène P Poitrine -----suis à jar, s'assoit à la table	
347		
355	Clit + Eliante P Taille Elle se lève, suis-la à cour	

Page 4	CAMERA 6	1 ^{ère} Partie
N°PLAN	DESCRIPTION	
281	Célimène P Taille Top Pano Cour sur Alceste il recule, Eliante entre Bas DC pars avec elle à Jar récupère Célimène	
287	Alceste + Basque P Taille prio Alceste	
289	Alceste P Taille	
295	Table sans air	
306	Eliante P Taille	
310	Alceste P Taille, suis avance	
331	Célimène P Taille	
345	Clit à Alceste au + serré suis-les avant cour Bordel Bagarre	
365	Basque P Taille	

Excerpt from Don Kent's shot list for the portrait scene in Clément Hervieu-Léger's staging of *Le Misanthrope*. Working document from 31 January 2017

To prepare the live shoot, the film director attends the rehearsals of the play several times and talks with director of the staging. He also usually has a wide-shot recording of the play to watch and take notes on. Working with the script supervisor, he creates a shot list that will then be distributed to the cameramen. The shot list indicates the order of the shots and, for each shot, the camera number, the size of the shot, and the dialogues.

The director of photography adjusts the lights based on camera positions. The sound designer chooses the microphones (border microphones or wireless microphones).

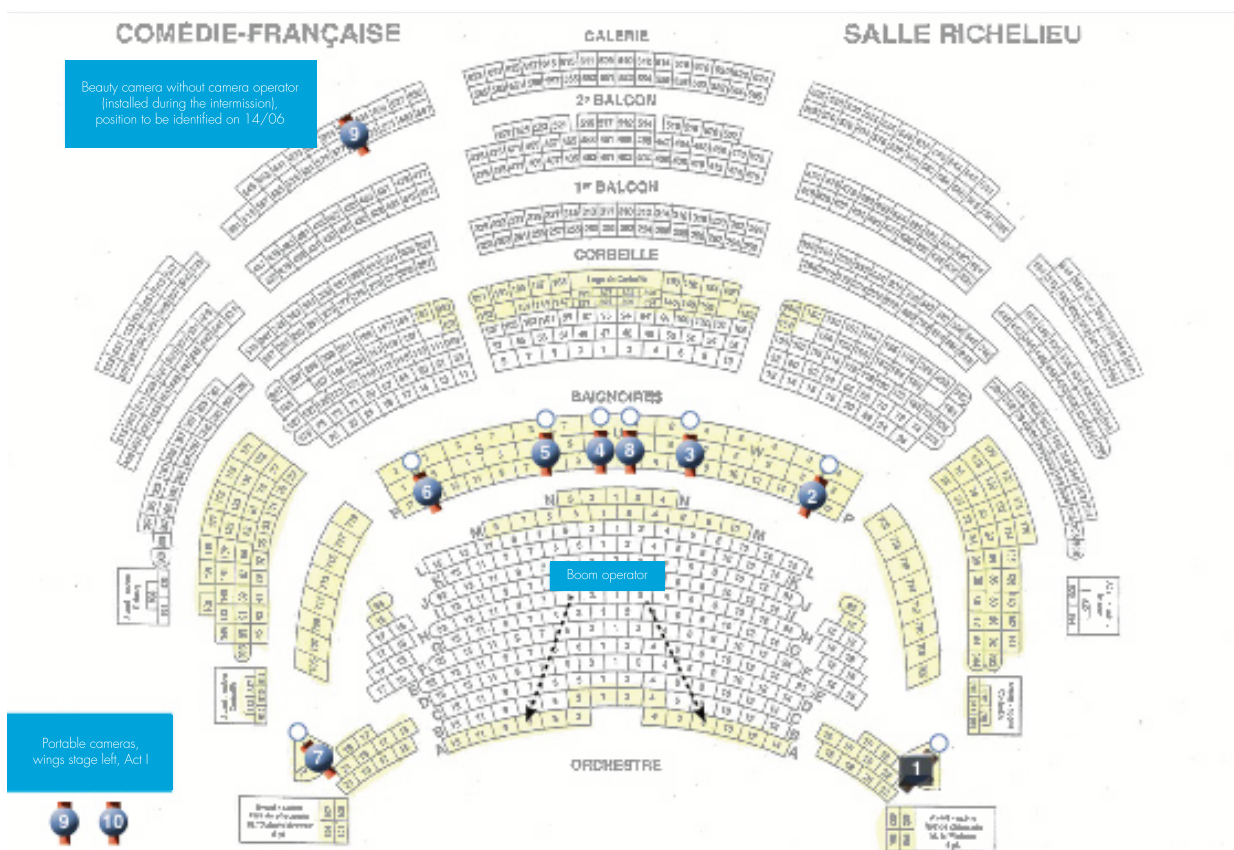
2. A test run:

Two days before filming, a first test shoot is done during a public performance: this acts as a dress rehearsal for the live broadcast. It's an essential step, leaving room for some final adjustments taking into account the actors' movements, eyes, voices, etc.

Caméra 1 : objectif x 22 (courte focale)
Caméra 2 : objectif x 86 (longue focale)
Caméra 3 : objectif x 86
Caméra 4 : objectif x 86
Caméra 5 : objectif x 86
Caméra 6 : objectif x 86
Caméra 7 : objectif x 22
Caméra 8 : objectif x 22 - plan large sans cadreur

The focal lengths used to film *Roméo et Juliette*: 8 HD camera arranged in an arc around the stage in the stalls

3. The night of the performance:



Camera plan for the filming of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Dominique Thiel

The night of the live broadcast, a team of 30 people work on the making of the film. All the cameras are interconnected and all the images are sent to the screen of the control room where the live editing is done. The script supervisor, next to Don Kent in the production truck, follows the shot list and editing. She gives the cameramen instructions through their earphones. By her side a production assistant follows the text and reminds everyone of the sentences that imperatively have to appear on screen. The assistant director works in between the control room and the theatre, passing information from the stage to the production truck.

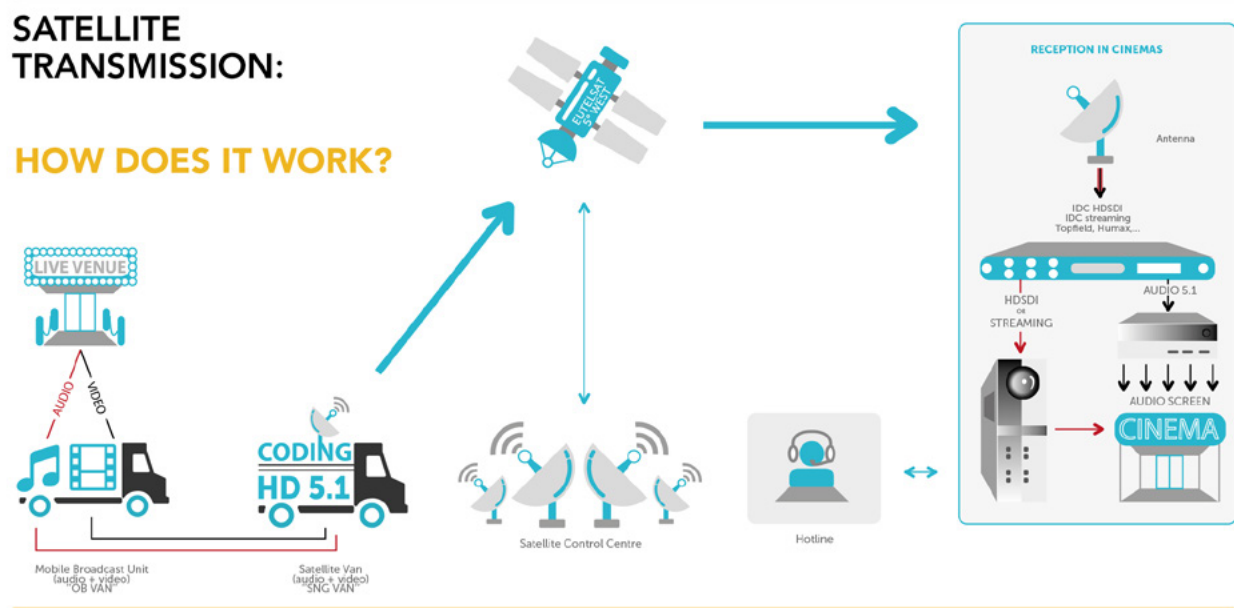
The post-production is done live in the production truck: engineers calibrate the images to harmonize the light and colours, a synthesiser operator inserts the credits.

The play, performed on the stage of the Comédie-Française's Salle Richelieu in Paris is broadcast live to 300 cinemas all over France.

*cf. lexique

4. From the Comédie-Française to 300 cinemas: the live broadcast.

The film is edited live in the production truck and broadcast to 300 cinemas in the Pathé network.



■ GLOSSARY:



HD camera: A camera that records high-definition video images.

Wide-angle lens/long-focus lens: Wide-angle lenses allow to capture a wide angle of view. They are preferred for long shots and offer a great depth of field. With a long-focus lens, the angle of view is limited, and distant objects appear larger in the image. The zoom is a variable lens.

Shot list: A document established during the preparation of the shoot and given to the technical crew. It's a table indicating the order of the shots, the camera angles, the size of the shots, and the dialogues. For a feature film, it may include indications on the lighting, the sets, and/or the music.

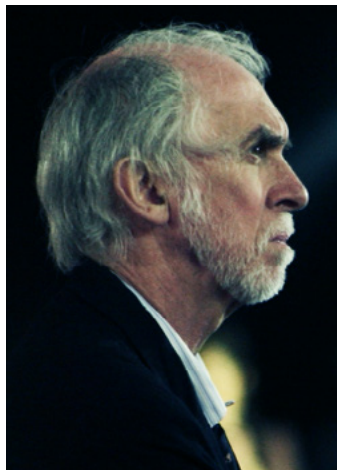
Shot size: It is relative to the size of the actors and objects in the image. From the widest frame to the tightest, there are very long shots, long shots (showing the whole set), medium long shots (subjects framed from head to toe), American shots (subjects framed above the knee), medium shots (subjects framed up to the waist or chest), close-ups/inserts for objects, extreme close-ups.

On-screen/off-screen: A sound is said to be on-screen when its source is visible in the image, off-screen when it is located beyond the edges of the frame. Sounds coming from a space other than the field are called off-screen sounds. When it's a voice, it's called a voice over.

HF microphone: A microphone connected to a transmitter whose high-frequency signal is transmitted to a base. It is therefore wireless and allows actors to move freely.

Camera movements: A distinction can be made between panning (camera turning on its vertical or horizontal axis) and tracking shots (camera as a whole moving).

■ From the film directors' point of view:



Don Kent: "There are several ways for a film director to work with a theatre director. The work of a film director on a live performance is a bit like what a translator does. Theatre and television or film are two very different means of expression. Theatre exists in space. When you're in a theatre audience, you create the sequence of shots yourself, you look at the play and then your eye may pick up a detail, go left or right, while television exists in time: one moment follows another moment, which follows another moment. The language of television, like the language of cinema, is a temporal one. I have to make choices. I can't keep a wide shot for two and a half hours on television. There must be a perspective, the director's perspective, the way he uses audiovisual language (shot size, camera movements). There is necessarily a degree of subjectivity in these choices. However, the film director works with a raw material that is the staging. In order to interpret and translate, you first need to know the work, and above all know the theatre director's intentions. So I attended rehearsals in order to understand these intentions, through what the director tells the actors. And as nothing is set in stone in the performing arts, changes are made at each rehearsal."

(interview conducted on 27 September 2016)



Dominique Thiel: "I worked with Denis Podalydès for the first time on *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It was a very complicated play to film, especially in the first thirty minutes, because it is an ensemble performance, with many people on stage and a profusion of details, as well as the difficulty of there being a screen on stage. For *Scapin*, it was a little simpler. There's a long preparation phase I work on by myself first, then with my team. I draw up a shot plan, with every shot numbered and planned in advance, which doesn't rule out making changes in the evening when we are live. I do a first shoot then I have a day to work on it with my script supervisors and my cameramen, and to discuss it with Denis Podalydès. Whenever I film a live show, I have a collaborative relationship with the director. My job is to come up with proposals while respecting the work and remaining faithful to the staging. [...] My idea is to always get as close as possible to the actors, to feel those little things that Denis Podalydès has distilled into their performances in the way he has directed them, and in which the truth of his work lies in fact. And he sees all his work in the approach that I have to filming. In filming, I can give the viewer that extra dimension of closeness."

(interview conducted on 26 October 2017)

■ The directors' experience of the filming process:



© Stéphane Lavoué, Coll. Comédie-Française

Clément Hervieu-Léger: "I think it's important that theatre can live somewhere else. Experiments of this kind have been done for dance and opera. Maybe we were more afraid of taking the leap in theatre. It is important to put theatre on the same level as opera and dance, because it is not a lesser art. And above all that we do it with this repertoire because it is our common heritage, not only because it is Molière and it was written in the seventeenth century and *The Misanthrope* is one of the most frequently performed plays in the world, it's not just that... It's simply that it is a play that tells us about ourselves, that helps us grow, and the more people who see it, the better."

(interview conducted on 20 January 2017)



© Brigitte Enguerand, Coll. Comédie-Française

Éric Ruf: "There are many things at stake when it comes to these films at the Comédie-Française. First we will reach an audience we can't reach physically. We can't do as many tours as we'd like to due to technical constraints, so we don't go everywhere."

I remember seeing the Max Ophüls film *Lola Montès* as a child in the gym hall of my school, and then seeing *Tartuffe* by Jacques Lassalle with Gérard Depardieu with my class in a cinema in Belfort. I don't remember whether I liked them or not, but I do remember them. Watching a play in the cinema is very intriguing because you don't have the same relationship to time. The simplicity of the means that characterise theatre are just as fascinating as the extremely sophisticated techniques used in blockbusters. Theatre actors are superheroes of sorts in the eyes of the audience attending the live performance. That's why they ask us for autographs and think we are taller than we really are. What fascinates them is that we dare go onstage. We have no other superpower than having managed to speak in public and feel emotions without faking it. If the camera conveys that, it's great because it fascinates everyone, it's universal. [...] The educational

component is very important for this project. For instance, the video of Patrice Chéreau's *Phèdre*, a production in which I had the pleasure of playing the role of Hippolytus, is shown in almost all high school classes! Chéreau was very good at putting words in bodies. It's especially wonderful for adolescents to come across this, as it is an eternal problem for them. In this sense, the art of acting is nothing but a permanent adolescence. The dissemination of our repertoire is actually listed in the missions of our theatre in Article 2: "The Comédie-Française's essential mission is to perform the plays in its repertoire and ensure their national and international dissemination." The size of the audience that cinema gives us compared to the theatre is amazing. For us, a television broadcast reaching 800,000 viewers (which is considered a failure in the television world) would represent a gigantic expansion compared to the capacity of our theatres (the equivalent of 1,000 performances in the Salle Richelieu)! The memory of plays is a beautiful thing. Many viewers will claim they were there although they only saw the video, thus swelling the ranks of those who were present. Antonin Artaud's talk at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier was seen by many more people than the room could hold! Photos and videos may produce partial memories, but they're still memories. Recordings will never replace the here and now, but through them, the memory of the production is expanded."

(interview conducted on 7 October 2016)

■ Debates surrounding filmed theatre:

SACHA GUITRY: AGAINST THE CINEMA

"The actor that you see on the screen is not acting: he has acted. . . . The beauty of theatre lies in the fact that no performance can be compared to that of the day before. Once the three knocks sound, there is always uncertainty."

Sacha Guitry

"Pour le théâtre et contre le cinéma" (1933), in A. Bernard and C. Gauteur, Sacha Guitry. Le Cinéma et Moi, Paris: Ramsay, 1977

WALTER BENJAMIN: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE AURA

"'The screen actor,' Pirandello writes, 'feels as if exiled. Exiled not only from the stage but from his own person. With dim disquiet he senses the inexplicable emptiness that results from his body becoming a withdrawal symptom, from its dissipating and being robbed of its reality, its life, its voice, and the sounds it makes by moving around, reduced to a mute image that flickers on the screen for an instant, then disappears into thin air. . . . The little projector will play with his shadow before the audience; and he himself must be content to act in front of the camera.' That same state of affairs may be described as follows: for the first time (and it is film that has done this) a person is placed in the position, while operating with his whole being, of having to dispense with the aura that goes with it. For that aura is bound to his here and now, it has no replica. The aura surrounding Macbeth onstage cannot, for the live audience, be detached from the aura that surrounds the actor playing him. But what is peculiar about filming in the studio is that in the latter situation the audience is replaced by a piece of equipment. The aura surrounding the player must thus be lost and with it, at the same time, the aura around the character played."

Walter Benjamin

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, 1936, trans. by J.A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008

ANDRÉ BAZIN: THE IMPRINT OF DURATION

"The leitmotiv of those who despise filmed theater, their final and apparently insuperable argument, continues to be the unparalleled pleasure that accompanies the presence of the actor. . . . If it is here that the essence of theater lies then undoubtedly the cinema can in no way pretend to any parallel with it. If the writing, the style, and the dramatic structure are, as they should be, rigorously conceived as the receptacle for the soul and being of the flesh-and-blood actor, any attempt to substitute the shadow and reflection of a man on the screen for the man himself is a completely vain enterprise. There is no answer to this argument. . . .

At this point certain comments seem called for concerning the concept of 'presence,' since it would appear that it is this concept, as understood prior to the appearance of photography, that the cinema challenges.

Can the photographic image, especially the cinematographic image, be likened to other images and in common with them be regarded as having an existence distinct from the object? Presence, naturally, is defined in terms of time and space. 'To be in the presence of someone' is to recognize him as existing contemporaneously with us and to note that he comes within the actual range of our senses – in the case of cinema of our sight and in radio of our hearing. Before the arrival of photography and later of cinema, the plastic arts (especially portraiture) were the only intermediaries between actual physical presence and absence. Their justification was their resemblance which stirs the imagination and helps the memory. But photography is something else again. In no sense is it the image of an object or person, more correctly it is its tracing. Its automatic genesis distinguishes it radically from the other techniques of reproduction. The photograph proceeds by means of the lens to the taking of a veritable luminous impression in light – to a mold. As such it carries with it more than mere resemblance, namely a kind of identity. . . . But photography is a feeble technique in the sense that its instantaneity compels it to capture time only piecemeal. The cinema does something strangely paradoxical. It makes a molding of the object as it exists in time and, furthermore, makes an imprint of the duration of the object."

André Bazin

"Theater and cinema", 1951, in What Is Cinema?, trans. by Hugh Gray, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005

ANTOINE VITEZ: "CINEMA OF THEATRE"

"A filmed memory of theatre, cinema of theatre, archive, or translation: there are plenty of definitions describing the operation which consists in capturing the space-at-will of theatre in order to fit it into the chosen space of the cinema. This is indeed what we are talking about: space. . . . And this is where the work of Hugo Santiago on *Electra* was original and new – I had actually never seen anything like it. It is not enough to say that Santiago got inside the theatrical image, because this is what the camera does (almost) every day. In all the attempts that I know of to unite theatre and cinema, the camera rummages the stage, which is a shallow place (it isn't said enough that the theatre stage, however big the theatre is, is a narrow place, and above all that its horizon is by no means far away: the back wall is there, always), and, in doing so, it destroys it, makes it incomprehensible. What becomes of a blown-up face, caught as if up close by the eye of the zoom, if I don't simultaneously know where this face is, what other face it faces, and why this sullen or cheerful look? Simultaneity is what makes theatre.

As he tackled this squaring of the circle, Hugo Santiago chose to follow the lines of theatrical staging; the camera doesn't watch the play, it accompanies it. It took a long preliminary work, as if to examine the trace of each character's steps on the floor, the axes of the gazes, the orientation of the noses and hands. This composed a meagre series of very long shots, making movement unfurl like the children books you unfold by opening them. So the film remains discreet next to the theatre. It doesn't substitute itself to it, doesn't violate the intimacy of the actors. And that's how it finds its truth. It is the cinema version of that event: a theatre spectacle; by telling it, it tells the very story that our production told, and the old poem. Through all these filters (a poem, in an ancient language, translated into contemporary French, transposed in today's Greece, on a stage, in Paris, and finally onto film): the great mythological news item appears, the beaming face of *Electra* survives – the face of the woman who resisted beyond hope – and you can hear the text of the tragedy."

Antoine VitezPress kit on *Electra* filmed by Hugo Santiago, 1987, Antoine Vitez Archives, IMEC

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