

## ***No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI***

### **Tiago Rodrigues / NTGent**

With the poetic *No Yogurt for the Dead*, director Tiago Rodrigues provides the sixth episode in NTGent's series *Histoire(s) du Théâtre*. The popular Portuguese theatre maker, who is also the director of the Festival d'Avignon, has based the play on a personal story. His father Rogério, a respected journalist and activist during the Carnation Revolution, died a few years ago. On his deathbed, he wanted to make one last report, a condemnation of the flawed healthcare system. But his notebook remained empty, apart from some scribbles and one sentence: 'The dead don't eat yoghurt'.

Tiago Rodrigues had the brilliant idea of bringing that unwritten report to life here, like a blank canvas on which he could combine reality and fiction. We do indeed hear criticism of the lack of humanity in hospital policy, although the play is mainly a sensitive exploration of the bond between father and son. Here in the theatre, after all, thoughts can be voiced that could not always be spoken aloud in real life. Because ultimately it all comes down to this question: have we given each other enough love?

The fact that the characters of the father ('Longbeard') and son ('Shortbeard') are played by the excellent actresses Manuela Azevedo and Beatriz Brás, who regularly switch roles, offers fresh perspectives. Lisah Adeaga plays a strong double role as the nurse and omniscient narrator, while Helder Gonçalves drapes melancholy sounds over this wistful tale from atop an impressively tilting sea.

Above all, Rodrigues is an excellent playwright, who exposes underlying feelings in magnificent lines. His theatre is clear and accessible, but unusually subtle, clever and many-layered – even the lighting plan has a sophisticated structure. As the play progresses, more and more dream sequences slip into the story, bringing Rodrigues senior's (imaginary?) love for a singer back to life. At this point, the play almost becomes a musical, allowing humour in spite of the sombre undertone.

All this makes *No Yogurt for the Dead* an especially rich and warm-blooded production about deeply human issues that had a lasting effect on the jury, both emotionally and rationally. Can theatre conquer death after all?