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## “Elegant and reflective”

Review The Stage - Jun 2, 2025 [by Natasha Tripney](#), seen in Akademietheater, Vienna



*No Yogurt for the Dead at the Akademietheater, Vienna. Photo: Michiel Devijver*

The latest instalment in [NTGent's Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre](#) series is a deeply personal piece by the Portuguese theatremaker [Tiago Rodrigues](#), inspired by the time his father spent in hospital before his death. Rogério Rodrigues was a renowned journalist, and in his last days, he filled a notebook with what was to be his final article. After he passed away, this notebook turned out to be filled with scribbles – there were no words. This is an attempt to recreate Rodrigues' father's final work.

Instead of a clinical hospital, Sammy Van den Heuvel's set resembles a craggy, snow-covered mountainside. Guitarist Hélder Gonçalves, in a hospital bed, is marooned halfway up this lunar surface, providing live musical accompaniment. The effect is dream-like, the stage a kind of halfway space.

A second hospital bed sits at the foot of the hill, and it is from here that Rodrigues' father – known as Longbeard for the purposes of the performance – rails against the “worst nurse in the world” and the frustration of being forced to rise early because it is more convenient for the hospital staff. In this, and in so many ways, he is losing control;

physically diminished, this once proud man is reliant on others, unable even to cast his final vote.

Fado – a form of melancholy Portuguese music – suffuses the performance, sung with power and beauty by Manuela Azevedo and [Beatriz Brás](#), who, with stick-on facial hair, also play the father and son. The narrative is not linear. Rodrigues talks about the funeral, a bigger affair than his father would have wanted, with friends and fellow journalists gathering to pay their respects. Drinks and handshakes are shared with the front rows of the audience. But it's the intimate exchanges between the dying man and his son that fuel the piece.

In keeping with the director's previous work, there's also a focus on care, on the institutions tasked with looking after the sick and vulnerable and those whose role it is to care for others. Lisah Adeaga as the nurse who looks after his father in his last days copes with the weight of this work by smoking a cigarette every time one of her patients passes away.

It's a typically elegant, reflective piece from Rodrigues, full of gently emotional pay-offs to elements seeded earlier in the show. It is neither raw nor overly sentimental in its approach. For a piece about the death of a parent, it's the antithesis of visceral and resists overt displays of emotion. It focuses instead on the small moments: the yoghurt that his father is obliged to eat in hospital, or his frustration at being brought the wrong colour pen. The work is at once personal – Rodrigues even pokes gentle fun at himself for turning this experience into a play – and eloquent about a process that we will all go through. It strikes a delicate balance: moving, humorous and, above all, tender.