



No Yogurt for the Dead – Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI

Tiago Rodrigues & NTGent

Premiere 31st of January 2025,
NTGent Schouwburg

Press File

Synopsis

TIAGO RODRIGUES OVERCOMES HIS FATHER'S DEATH ON STAGE

Author, actor and director Tiago Rodrigues, star of European theatre, began his career as a member of the Flemish collective STAN. Two decades later, the Festival d'Avignon director's performances tour all major European theatres and festivals. At the request of NTGent, Rodrigues created 'No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI', an intensely poetic performance that wishes to be a small victory over death.

After Miet Warlop, Angélica Liddell, Tim Etchells, Faustin Linyekula and Milo Rau, Tiago Rodrigues is yet another celebrated director that is invited by NTGent to take part in the prestigious [Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre](#) series. Rodrigues began his career with the Belgian collective STAN. More than two decades later, the plays of the director of Festival d'Avignon tour all major European theatres and festivals.

What if theatre could win over death? With his brand new play [No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre VI](#), Rodrigues attempts to imagine his father's last words. Rogério Rodrigues, a respected Portuguese journalist started writing a newspaper article in his final days in the hospital. Every day, his father would write in his notebook to prepare this text about his experiences as a terminal patient. Both Tiago and his father knew this would be his final article.

Upon his father's passing, Tiago Rodrigues opened the notebook of his father. It contained only a few lines and dots, a few scribbles, like the abstract drawings of a toddler. Now, Rodrigues aims to imagine the unwritten pages of his father's last work. Mixing memories,

songs or fragments of his father's writings, **Rodrigues builds a performance that wishes to be a small victory over death.**

Each scene is a playful variation on the theme of farewell. The stage forms a surreal landscape where hospital beds glide across an icy sea, as a metaphor for life's tumult. **With music and poetry as the grammar of a theatre that finds reasons for joy even in the saddest of stories.**

Credits

- text & direction: [Tiago Rodrigues](#)
- cast: [Lisah Adeaga](#), Manuela Azevedo, [Beatriz Brás](#), Hélder Gonçalves
- dramaturgy: Kaatje De Geest
- direction assistant: André Pato
- lighting design: Dennis Diels
- decor design: Sammy Van den Heuvel
- costume design: Ilse Vandenbussche
- sound design: Frederik Vanslembrouck
- music design: Hélder Gonçalves
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Tour dates

- 23 to 31st of January: NTGent Schouwburg (Ghent, BE)
- 19 to 23rd of February: Culturgest (Lisbon, POR)
- 27 & 28th of February: Teatro Circo (Braga, POR)
- 28th of May until 1st of June: Wiener Festwochen (Vienna, AUS)**

** The dates in Vienna cannot be published in the press yet, the festival has yet to announce it's programme.

Extra tour dates during season 25-26 will be announced later.



Interview

“Above all, theatre is about not dying”

‘No Yogurt for the Dead’ is based on the last episode of your father’s life. Why did you decide to base this play on such a personal story?

Tiago Rodrigues: “My father Rogério was a journalist for forty years. When he went to hospital, shortly before his death, he asked me to bring a notebook. He wanted to document his dehumanising experience there, as well as the stories of other patients, of caregivers and visitors. Journalism was his way of dying.”

“He wrote in the notebook for hours and hours. But when I opened it after he died, it only had a title: 'No Yogurt for the Dead'. Everything else was scribbles. Not even badly written words, only lines, *streepjes* as they say in Dutch.”

“What was the article he wanted to write? Was he aware that his hand became a useless tool? Which, for my father must have been a huge defeat. Or maybe he lived in a fantasy world thinking he was actually writing? The questions haunted me for weeks. Until I realised I had to finish what he started. Not as a journalist, but as a theatre maker.”

Is the play a homage to your father?

“We mix facts with fiction, so I don’t consider it a homage. Above all, the play aims to find warmth, humanity and even joy in remembering loved ones. The great Heiner Müller said: *When we do theatre, we dialogue with the dead*. For this piece, I am working together with my father. The same way I have worked before with Chekhov or Tolstoy or Virginia Woolf. .”

How would you describe your father as a person?

(*hesitates*) “He was born in 1947 and grew up in a fascist dictatorship. He fled from persecution by the police and emigrated to France. His brother died in the colonial war in Africa. He grew up poor and in a small village... all these life events gave him a very strong sense of loyalty, honesty and courage. The fact that the rest of the world was not composed of equally honest, almost heroic people could make him bitter. He often was an introvert, severe guy but with a lot of great qualities. For one, he was very knowledgeable and cultivated.”

How was your relationship with him?

“We had a troubled relationship at times. Expressing love was not his strong suit, which made it hard for me growing up. My father very much belonged to a generation for which being able to express your emotions was not a top priority in upbringing or education.”

“Yet our story is also one of reconciliation. I wouldn’t say we were privileged, the overall situation was way too sad, but I do feel blessed that his time in hospital gave us the chance to deal with our past struggles. To realise that what we might have hated about each other, were nothing more than details. We got to ask the tough questions and I’m glad we did. After all, coming to terms with his life, what a dying person has to do, is unimaginable.”

“Everything in life is on the border of reality and fiction, even the truth. If I didn’t believe that, I wouldn’t do theatre”

Have you inherited his disgust for yoghurt?

“No, on the contrary, I have always loved yoghurt. For my father it was something that only children ate. But when he became sick, his taste changed. He was served yoghurt all the time in the hospital and grew to like it.”

“All of a sudden, he had these really strong views, calling it fresh and tasty, preferring the vanilla ones,... We made a lot of jokes about that. Which is probably why he decided to title his final article *No Yogurt for the Dead*.”

This play brings you back to Belgium. A country with an arts scene that left a mark on the beginning of your career.

“Yes, I actually had a flashback a few days ago when I arrived in Ghent. Walking around, I passed the Minard venue, where I performed *Point Blank* in the nineties with the Flemish collective STAN. It was my second performance as a professional actor, I was only 21.”

“On the first night, the play had already started but I was not in the first scene. I ran out twice to search for my girlfriend who traveled from Portugal but ran late. I got here in anyway. It was all very unprofessional yet very romantic.”

“I have worked intensively with STAN in my twenties. It was my real theatre school. I even quit theatre school in Lisbon to work with the collective, like the village child running away with the circus. The only thing they tried to teach us in Lisbon was how to domesticate your body and mind to serve a director. I hated it and I was really bad at it.”

What attracted you so much in STAN?

“The collectiveness of their process. Every single actor working on the piece was allowed not only to express himself but also to make the piece his or her own. STAN also taught me that love of text is a form of freedom, not a prison. You are allowed to use the words of others to express yourself. With STAN, I found *my* theatre. It finally made sense to me. Before, I loved theatre, but I hated doing it. Suddenly, I had fun.”

How do you give your actors enough freedom to contribute and express?

“For one, I write during rehearsals. What I write, is inspired by the actors, by their ideas, struggles and suggestions. Outside of rehearsals, I have no discipline and no pleasure in writing, I don’t even do it. But once I get to connect and experiment with the cast, my head explodes.”

“In directing, I never tell actors what to do exactly. I listen, I suggest, and I come up with ideas if no one else has any. But it’s always a dialogue. Inside a space of freedom and contribution. We work towards a common imagination, not just towards mine.”

“Ever since I was a teenager, I have been doing theatre not to be alone”, you said before. Is it really that simple?

“My ‘why’ to doing theatre, in whatever form, is to not be alone. But not being alone is also a political thing. It’s not only about the loneliness of a Portuguese teenager that starts acting because he is fascinated by theatre lovers. With theatre, we share our time and an imagination. We share invisible stuff that we bring to life together. It’s an extremely powerful thing and one of the great sources of happiness in my life.”

“Theatre is on the side of life. Watching a TV-screen in your house, away from other people, comes close to dying. Theatre goes towards living.”

“After the premiere, my father will have written his final article after all, although he needed my help to do so. Together we can achieve a small victory over death”

The cast of ‘No Yogurt for the Dead’ is formed among others by three Portuguese artists that are composer or singer. How important is music in this performance?

“I like the idea of finding the lightness in things, finding joy in even the saddest stories. Music helps a lot with that. The soundtrack is inspired by an old-school, fado-like tradition. We use the strategy of creating a very precise atmosphere with the simple combination of an electric guitar and a voice.”

“On stage, we have Helder Gonçalves, who is one the great composers of modern music in Portugal, Manuela Azevedo, who is very well known in Portugal as a singer but also an amazing actress, and Beatriz Brás, known as an actress, but also a great singer. The Belgian actress Lisah Adeage completes them perfectly.”

Lisah Adeaga is the narrator in the piece. She also plays the character of the nurse that took care of your father in hospital. He nicknamed her “the worst nurse in the world”.

“My father could be blunt. His nickname at the newspaper was ‘the torpedo’. But it was also his taste in humor. When he went to hospital for the last time, he said to the nurse: ‘I respect you as a human being and perhaps you are a very nice person. But as a nurse, you are the worst.’ She didn’t like him less after that remark, by the way, she liked him more. I have always found it a funny and endearing anecdote.”

Mixing different layers of fact and fiction is an essential part of your work. What do you gain by this?

“Enrique Vila-Matas, a great Spanish writer, stated that everything is between reality and fiction. And he’s right. Even the truth is. So mixing fact and fiction is necessary to make a truthful piece while – at the same time – leave enough space for the audience to imagine, to co-create.”

“I use fiction because telling stories is my way of participating in the world. But I also need reality because I have an ambition, an urge of transforming the world, even if it’s just a little bit. With *No Yogurt for the Dead*, I am trying to write the article my father never finished. Something will change from the premiere onward. The article will be written. It will exist. It’s a very small, but for me, very significant victory over death.”

--- Interview by Jonas Mayeur

The press on the work of Tiago Rodrigues

“As a rule, Rodrigues isn’t a showy director. He is a humanist at heart, preoccupied with empathy and the ways in which today’s world undermines it”

--- New York Times (US)

“Complexity is always the answer in Rodrigues’s work — and it is one of the best ways to the audience’s heart”

--- New York Times (US)

“Tiago Rodrigues brings magic back to theatre”

--- Le Figaro (FR) on ‘Hécube pas Hécube’

“A jewel, a delicacy, at once sculptured and simple”

--- Le Monde (FR) on ‘Choeur des amants’

“A performance that excels in beauty and intelligence, letting theatre breathe life from every pore of its skin - that ancient skin that has kept renewing itself over the past two millennia”

--- Le Monde (FR) on ‘Sopro’

‘A brilliant ode to theatre and those who make it’

- Le Figaro (FR) on ‘Sopro’

‘Painful, sharp and human, Rodrigues’ trademarks’

--- Theaterkrant (NL) on ‘Dans la mesure de l’impossible’

‘Dashing, frightening’

--- Theaterkrant (NL) on ‘Carolina and The Beauty of Killing Fascists’

On 'Histoire(s) du Théâtre'

Histoire(s) du Théâtre is a series of new productions commissioned by NTGent, the city theatre of Ghent. The title refers to the documentary *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* by the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, in which he gave the film audience an overview of the key moments in the history of European cinema. Inspired by his generous example, NTGent invites a director to reflect on theatre as an art form.

The series was launched by **Milo Rau**, artistic director of NTGent, with [La Reprise](#). This show was first performed at the KunstenfestivaldesArts in Brussels in May 2018 and has since toured Europe, including a series in Avignon, France.

The renowned Congolese choreographer **Faustin Linyekula** then created [Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre II](#) (2020), including a re-enactment of a famous dance performance from the 1970s by the Congolese National Ballet, with some of the original performers.

Third in line was the Spanish director **Angélica Liddell**. In [Liebestod - Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre III](#), Liddell herself was on stage exploring her fundamental ideas about theatre, tragedy and so much more. This show premiered in Avignon in July 2021.

The Belgian artist **Miet Warlop** created *Histoire(s) du Théâtre IV*. The production [ONE SONG](#) was one of the absolute revelations of the Festival d'Avignon in July 2022 and is touring the world since.

During the 2023-2024 season, NTGent invites English artist and writer **Tim Etchells** for *Histoire(s) du Théâtre V*. For the title of his contribution, the British theatre legend chose a phrase from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In [How Goes The World](#), four performers engage in an absurd orgy of rising and falling, sound cues and feverish memories.

For the sixth edition, Portuguese director **Tiago Rodrigues** comes to Ghent. In [No Yoghurt for the Dead - Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre VI](#), Rodrigues honours the memory of his father who started writing a book in his last days in hospital. After he died, however, the notebook turned out to contain only a few lines and dots. Therefore, Rodrigues wants to depict the unwritten pages of his father's last work.

Biographies

Tiago Rodrigues (°1977) started out as an actor, 25 years ago. His encounter with tg STAN when he was still a theatre student, made a big impact on him. The freedom he found when he first started working with this Belgian collective would significantly influence his future works.

In 2003, he co-founded with Magda Bizarro the company Mundo Perfeito, with which he created and presented about 30 performances in more than 20 countries, becoming a regular presence in events such as Festival d'Automne, METEOR Festival in Norway, Theaterformen in Germany, Festival TransAmériques in Canada, kunstenfestivalsdesarts in Brussels, among others.

Rodrigues collaborated with a large number of Portuguese and international theatre artists, as well as choreographers and dancers. He also taught theatre in several schools. Parallel to his theatre work, he wrote screenplays for film and television, articles for newspapers, poetry and essays. From 2015 to 2021, he was the artistic Director of the National Theatre Dona Maria II in Lisbon.

Rodrigues gained international recognition and a number of national and international awards. Some of his most notable works are *By Heart*, *The way she dies*, *Sopro*, *Dans la mesure de l'impossible*, *Catarina and the beauty of killing fascists* and most recently *Hécube, pas Hécube*, premiering at the 2024 Festival d'Avignon, a festival he leads as artistic director since September 2022.

Either mixing true stories and fiction, rewriting classics or adapting novels, the theatre of Tiago Rodrigues is deeply rooted in the idea of writing for and with the actors and searching for a poetical transformation of reality through theatrical tools.

Manuela Azevedo (°1970) is a Portuguese musician. She graduated from the University of Coimbra in Law. Simultaneously, she took a music education in piano. In 1992, Azevedo founded the pop-rock band Clã with Helder Gonçalves, among others, where she is still the lead singer. Their debut album in 1996, *LusoQUALQUERcoisa*, marked the beginning of a fruitful musical career: Clã released 9 studio albums and 2 live albums over the years.

No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI is the second collaboration of Azevedo with Tiago Rodrigues: she previously collaborated with Helder Gonçalves on the performance *La Cerisaie*, in which they performed live music on stage.

Beatriz Brás (°1993) is a Portuguese actress born in Lisbon. She completed her Masters in Performing Arts at Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema. She is a founding member of the theatre company auééu where she has been a creator and performer since 2014.

Brás was part of the cast of *Sopro* (Tiago Rodrigues, Festival d'Avignon), and went on a two-year international tour with the show. Besides several short films, in 2018 she collaborated on Tiago Guedes' film *A Herdade / The Domain* (with which she won the New Talent 2020 award from Portuguese Fundação GDA). She worked with theatre directors such as JP Bucchieri and Cristina Carvalhal, and has been on international tour since 2021 with Tiago Rodrigues' production *Dans la mesure de l'impossible*. In 2022, Beatriz participated in Tiago Guedes' TV series *Diálogos Depois do Fim do Mundo / Dialogues after the end of the world*. In 2024, she participated in João Nicolau's film *A Providência e a Guitarra*.

No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI is her third collaboration with Tiago Rodrigues.

Hélder Gonçalves (°1970) is a Portuguese musician, producer and composer. At the age of 10, he started playing electric bass as a self-taught musician. He studied classical guitar and enrolled at the Porto Jazz School, where he began teaching shortly after graduating. In 1992, together with Manuela Azevedo and others, he founded the pop rock band Clã, where he is guitarist and composer. Their debut album, *LusoQUALQUERcoisa* (1996), marked the beginning of a fruitful musical career: Clã released 9 studio albums and 2 live albums over the years.

In January 2025, Hélder will co-star in Tiago Rodrigues' new production, *No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire(s) du Théâtre VI*. He previously collaborated with Rodrigues on the production *La Cerisaie*, for which he composed the original music and which he also performed live on stage with Manuela Azevedo.

Lisah Adeaga (°1994) is a Nigerian-Belgian actress, theatre-maker, director and singer. In 2019, she graduated from the Fine Arts programme at the Antwerp Conservatory of Music, where she is now also a guest lecturer.

Adeaga feels a strong drive to make the artistic landscape accessible and free for all. For instance, she sits on the artistic advisory board at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp and in recent years gave several workshops at De Nieuwe Spelers, a preliminary theatre course that focuses on social and cultural diversity.

Adeaga made her debut on the big stage with the company Bloet/Jan Decorte & Sigrid Vinks with the productions *Hamlet 0.2* (2018) and *Body a.k.a* (2019). She also performed in productions by Comp. Marius, ARSENAAL/LAZARUS and hetpaleis.

Adeaga was part of the cast of [Red - The Sorrows of Belgium III: Holy War](#), the final part of the trilogy directed by Luk Perceval at NTGent. In the 2022-2023 season, Lisah played the local version of [A Play For The Living In A Time Of Extinction](#) directed [by Martha Balthazar](#) and Katie Mitchell. In 2025, Adeaga co-stars in Tiago Rodrigues' production entitled [No Yogurt for the Dead - Histoire\(s\) du Théâtre VI](#).