

## PRESS KIT

# BEFORE WE GO

A film by Jorge León

### **Sélection FIDMarseille 2014**

Groupement National des Cinémas de Recherche prize,  
FIDMarseille 2014  
Renaud Victore prize, FIDMarseille 2014

### **> Bruxelles (B)**

19/09 à 20:00 > BOZAR Bruxelles  
24/09 à 20:00 > Cinéma GALERIES Bruxelles

With **Simone Aughterlony, Walter Hus, Benoît Lachambre, Noël Minéo, Lidia Schoue, Meg Stuart, George Van Dam, Michel Vassart, Alex Verster, Thomas Wodianka.**

DIRECTOR **Jorge León** CINEMATOGRAPHY **Rémon Fromont, Jorge León, Thomas Schira** MUSIC **Liesbeth Devos, Walter Hus, George van Dam, Alexander Verster** DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT **Célia Dessardo** SOUND **Quentin Jacques** SCENOGRAPHY AND COSTUMES **Ann Weckx, Natacha Belova, Silvia Hasenclever** EDITING **Marie-Hélène Mora** SOUND MIXING **Benoît Biral** PRODUCTION **DERIVES - Julie Freres** LINE PRODUCERS **Véronique Marit, Sabine Raskin** With the support of Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles et de VOO COPRODUCTION Present Perfect, CBA – Centre de l'audiovisuel à Bruxelles, RTBF – Unité de Programmes Documentaires, Les Films du Fleuve, Pillarbox a division of New Impact, with the support of Tax Shelter of the Federal Government of Belgium, Cinéfinance Tax Shelter, with the support of De Munt – La Monnaie, TOPAZ, NV Lloyd, La Ville de Bruxelles - 2014 – [www.derives.be/before-we-go](http://www.derives.be/before-we-go)

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## **SYNOPSIS**

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Brussels, La Monnaie Opera House. Three people near the end of their lives meet with choreographers, actors and musicians. They take part in a unique experience which involves music, dance and silence. Their journey becomes a tribute to the fragility of the human condition, between reality and representation, tragedy of the body and freedom of the spirit. Together they question their own relationship with death.

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## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

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This film is the result of decisive encounters with the residents of a palliative care centre in Brussels that welcomes terminal patients, avoiding the use of intensive medication. For some years now, the centre's directors have been inviting me to host creative workshops. When I suggested exploring the theme of death to the residents, their strong support and commitment gave me the idea of making a film. I suggested leaving the therapeutic space for the Opera, an emblematic setting for tragic representation. Choreographer, actor and musician friends joined us and together we attempted to give shape to the questions, hopes and fears that the end of life gives rise to... Before We Go is an intense journey into the heart of that experience.

# Death and grace

*Interview by* **Jacqueline Aubenas**

**How did you come to treat a subject as serious as the end of life?**

I had already been involved for quite some time in the TOPAZ Care Centre, directed by Dr Wim Distelmans, which brings together men and women affected by various diseases who have been informed that medication can no longer help them. It's a day care centre. I assisted Mary Jiménez who made her film *La position du lion couché* ("The position of the lying lion") there and I kept in touch with this institution. Upon their request, I carried out portraits, video letters for those whose families lived a long way away. Through this work, I was present and wanted. I was intrigued and touched by these encounters and I had the feeling that these people possessed a certain kind of knowledge, not intellectual but one of sensitivity. I, of course, know that I am mortal but I haven't been given an expiry date. Disappearing in one year, one month? This radicalism of the calendar, I wasn't aware of. I wanted to get closer to this enigma.

I started by posing them a question. "And if you could start a new life, what would you do?"; that's to say, questioning life us-

ing fiction. I asked them, by means of a photograph, to stage this dream of the other self. It was then I discovered they had a certain kind of pleasure reinventing themselves. And in that mode, I made rather playful, liberating portraits. The imaginary is a resurrection.

**Evolving from a private, personal point of view to the public exposure that a film implies must have been a big step?**

There was no real reluctance; just that some did not feel ready to get into the project. On the other hand, those who did participate entered into it fully. Saying "yes" to the project meant taking responsibility, accepting and giving. This commitment created a very strong link to the daily order to their lives. I organized workshops with those who wished to take part. Personally I did not solicit nor exclude anybody. We worked on the reality of death through the use of costumes, the possibilities of representation. This work was not without consequences. There were very strong reactions, unsuspected zones of resonance. From my side, the fear of doing it incorrectly, of being wide off the mark, was very quickly discarded, just like the

moral question “Am I doing good, am I doing wrong?”; there is a difference between morals and ethics. I felt, from the participants, a great relief to be able to express themselves and a desire to do it not on the level of a confession but from an inventive and creative point of view: to grapple with death, that which scares us and of which nobody knows anything about since we never cross over it. I can only represent it, question it and share it at the same time, with the compelling concept of leaving a trace. A gesture of an artist. For people outside the world of theatre and cinema, it was a revelation.

#### **And the choice of the La Monnaie Opera House, a prestigious cultural venue?**

I wanted to go beyond the therapeutic context. Although the TOPAZ centre is not a hospital, the people there are considered as patients. I saw them as migrants and I proposed a journey to them, not geographical but a symbolic journey. La Monnaie Opera House is for me an exemplary place for the representation of tragedy and I wanted to offer them this ideal example. The doors were open to me. The project not only was accepted but also welcomed.

It was essential to use the calm deserted spaces of the workshops during the holidays. The annual closure of La Monnaie - two weeks - is very short. Such a short time for a shooting was nerve-racking especially as I had to take into account the availability of the participants who had health constraints. I had also asked some artist friends to participate: Meg Stuart,

choreographer; Benoit La-chambre, performer and choreographer; Simone Aughterlony, also a choreographer; the composer-interpreters Walter Hus and George Vandam; and Thomas Wodianka, actor. All of them made a point of being available during this limited period.

#### **You had the place, the actors and your common desire but separate mises-en-scène, yours and these people becoming characters.**

It was set up in a way that was very planned and very intuitive at the same time. Because of their personalities, some tended towards construction and precision. Noël, for example, who was an ascetic and elegant man, always in costume in the film as in daily life, was very careful about form and detail. Together, we searched and found the costume of death that he finally wore in the film. Others, such as Lidia who wanted to dance, were into the emotion, the instinctual impulse. We filmed her first meeting with Meg Stuart, without rehearsals or real preparation. Together, immediately, they generated what one sees on the screen. It went well beyond what I had imagined.

I never found myself in a position of casting for the set-up of the meetings and the ‘couples’; I did not determine who would work with whom. That was naturally organized and when, for script reasons, it was necessary to make a plan of the sequences to be filmed, everything was already there. While I was filming a scene, another ‘couple’ would be working elsewhere and then we would readjust

details together. It was simultaneously about strict control and total release.

Michel, the creator of colour, the man in the wheel chair, I had already filmed in 2006. At that time, he was homeless, living in the street. He often spoke to me about his faded perception of the world due to drug use: we conceived of these multicoloured filters which he glues onto the windowpanes and which transform reality in a very straightforward way. Benoit, the man with the pigeon, his partner is an artist who has already made his own splendid work. They did not know each other and discovered touching and disconcerting affinities during the shooting.

**You had to choose the right spaces in the very diverse expanse of La Monnaie so that the set design makes sense with the sequences.**

I chose places at the periphery of the main stage, spaces that the public usually doesn't see. It mattered to me to show backstage, where the work takes place. I explored and chose the sewing workshop and the casting workshop, full of body moulds. I did not want to yield to the fascination of certain magic places. I limited myself to two guiding principles: work and the body.

**Did you shoot many scenes that are not in the film?**

In term of rushes, there is a sequence that is not in the final edit, however it is emblematic. The experience of the film generated strong and very sharp reactions from everyone. Some people expressed a desire to speak, to ask questions. I brought together all the participants, the members

of the team and the artists and we staged a reception, the type of reception that is organized following a funeral where the family and friends have the opportunity to exchange and share memories, etc. We filmed a whole afternoon, with songs, speech, dances and freedom of emotions. That was very useful for the group but for the film it was too explicit, too much was shown. It was a necessary outlet that did not find its place in the film and yet some moments were beautiful and touching. With Marie-Hélène Mora, the film editor, we really tried to integrate it but no, it was impossible.

**How did the technical team experience this shooting?**

In this film, by its subject alone, we had to manage many uncertainties, but all the members of the team told me they really wanted to do it. There was an energy, a unique concentration. The fact of being confronted with this urgency of life placed us in front of the essence of life. There was a quality of silence with respect and kindness for each other that deeply touched me. The technicians moved the wheelchairs, worried about the actors being fatigued. As soon as the main characters entered the opera house, they felt that this film was meant for them. I retain the memory of a very intense shooting but joyful as well.

It was a large team. Sometimes we were thirty, thirty-five. For a film with a small budget, that is a lot of people. I also had an additional assistant, Rémon Fromont, who was responsible for the lighting

whereas in my previous films, I had done both the lighting and the camera work. We also used a camera with extremely precise fixed lenses. This gives a beautiful quality of image but it is necessary to constantly take care of the focus, so there was the need of an assistant who had to be very alert because many sequences were shot in a documentary manner. And then, we needed assistants to take care of the patients, to help them move around.

**And what about the reaction of Lidia, Noël, Michel and the others? And before that the reaction of the potential funders of the film?**

Noël knew he wouldn't see the end of the film (he died during the editing period). Lydia wanted to see it during the editing and she gave the most beautiful compliment that one can offer to a filmmaker. "I find myself very beautiful", she told me. As for the artists, they made themselves totally available for the film and the meetings with Lidia, Noël and Michel deeply touched them. The impact of these meetings is at the heart of the film. I can't wait to show the film to them. To return to the beginning, this film was made with a small budget because it was sometimes rejected at the assessment stage by certain film commissions that I had approached. They raised an ethical issue, "Can one film people at the end of their life, even if they are completely conscious of being filmed?" For me, the question did not arise anymore at this stage, considering the preparation period we had gone through.

In life, the question of death is still problematic, it is often perceived as something scandalous. What is scandalous are certain collective or individual circumstances which lead to it: violence, the madness of all sorts of conflicts. But as such, I consider it more as a '*figure imposée*'.

**Given the subject and the place, was it necessary to avoid having too much music?**

The trap was there; opera and all the assumptions that go with it. I made the choice of Purcell's *Dido's Lament*, a classic but filmed in rehearsal and played on unusual instruments... and then Nick Cave's song, *The Mercy Seat*, a title that evokes the mercy seat and the electric chair at the same time. It enables one to remember the extreme loneliness of facing death and the fact that death is sometimes imposed by others. These musical interventions allow for multiple readings. They also permit a certain lyricism.

The editing was conceived as a musical composition. There were various colours, various tones both on the level of the characters and of the images. At stake was how to weave a web that gathers them without crushing them, flatly unifying them. Intuition is important but also all the advanced work that settles and emerges again at the moment of filming. Things that are well thought through before shooting, awake and appear. That means trusting the subconscious in these moments. Sometimes, the meaning comes after. I like it when meaning emerges from the material itself. I am wary of too much writing where one places preconceptions

onto a real situation. Even for the editing, I was wary about everything that seemed to me to be immediately obvious. I prefer sometimes to find myself in front of incomplete rushes because they force me to find a different form in order to articulate them.

**Were you ever afraid of too many images?**

For the first part of the film where we film the protagonists in their most private moments, I asked each one of them, before shooting, to write a letter and describe their daily routine. What each one accepted to describe in these letters could be found in the film. Nothing of what they would not describe, would be there. This meant I had a work plan, a roadmap that I kept to. In her letter, Lidia evoked the pain she faces every morning when wak-ing up. I knew then that I had to go there early in the morning, that it would not be a comfortable situation and that it was out of the question to rehearse the scene. Once there, in her apartment, the ques-tion wasn't anymore, "Can I film this?" but, "How does she cope with that every morning?" Later, she told me, "I shared my loneliness". It was neither a question of in-decency nor obscenity.

*Brussels, May 16th, 2014.*

# Biographies

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## Jorge León

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Jorge León studied film in Brussels (INSAS). His interests led him into the documentary field as director and director of photography. He's been working as photographer and videomaker, with a.o. Éric Pauwels, Wim Vandekeybus, Thierry De Mey, Xavier Lukomski, Olga de Soto, Ana Torfs, Meg Stuart, ... His photographic works have been exhibited in Belgium and abroad and were published in different newspapers and magazines. At the kunstfestivaldesarts 2010 in Brussels he created his first theatre production, *Deserve*, in collaboration with Simone Aughterlony. His productions as documentary director include *De Sable et de Ciment* (2003), *Vous êtes Ici* (2006), *Between Two Chairs* (2007). His latest films *10 Min.* (2009) and *Vous êtes Servis* (2010) have been widely presented in film festivals worldwide and were awarded on several occasions. His new film, *Before we go* (2014), is selected for the International Competition of FIDMarseille 2014.

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## Simone Aughterlony

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Simone Aughterlony graduated from the New Zealand School of Dance in 1995. She joined Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods in 2000 and worked on the productions of Highway 101 and Alibi among others. She has choreographed for theatre productions in Schauspielhaus Zürich, Volksbühne Berlin and Burg Theatre Wien under the direction of Falk Richter, Stephan Pucher and Niklaus Helbling. Simone first began the production of her own performance work in 2003 with the presentation of her solo, *Public Property*. Her subsequent works, *Performers on Trial* and the group work *Bare Back Lying* toured extensively in Europe. Simone likes to collaborate with artists on specific projects; in 2006 she created *Between Amateurs* together with Video artist, Meika Dresenkamp and with filmmaker, Jorge Leon Upon invitation from SPIELART München, Simone created the duet *TONIC* which was presented in the frame of *What's Next ?* on recommendation from Tim Etchells.

In 2012, Simone has been working in smaller formats with her return to solo performance in *We need to talk* and the series of duos she is planning. Show and Tell the first of the duo series premiered in January 2013 and was a collaboration with performer, Phil Hayes.



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**Walter Hus**

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Walter Hus, besides being a composer, is chiefly a pianist and an improviser. From the age of ten he has performed as a concert pianist both in his native Belgium and abroad, appearing as a pianist-improviser from 1979. Hus was a member of the Belgian Piano Quartet and was connected with *Maximalist!*, a musical grouping set up in 1984, which attempted to tread a middle way between pop, rock, classical music and the avant-garde. The musician-composers who came together in this group (including Vermeersch, Sleichim, De Mey and Hus) had met a year previously in the context of the first choreography made by Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker (Rosas danst Rosas). The music would seem best to be situated in the context of the New Simplicity, a movement that grew out of minimal music. For the rest, it was chiefly the functional and discipline-crossing aspect that characterised *Maximalist!*: a strikingly large percentage of the music written by this collective is conceptually linked with other arts such as dance, theatre and film. This applies also to the music written by Hus after *Maximalist!*. Besides music for fashion shows, (*Five to Five for Yamamoto* (1984)), choreographies (e.g., *Murwerk [Wallwork]* (1985), and *Hic et Nunc* for Roxane Huilmand (1991), and *Devouring Muscles* for Irène Stamou (1997)) and films (*The Pillow Book* by Peter Greenaway, and *Suite 16* by Dominique Deruddere), various of his compositions have been the result of collaborations with contemporary poets or playwrights

(such as Stefan Hertmans [*Francesco's Paradox*], Peter Verhelst [*One Day They Appeared*], Jan Decorte [*Meneer, de zot en tkint*] and Jan Lauwers of Needcompany [*Orfeo*]).

Walter Hus has worked for Limelight in Kortrijk since 1996, at which time the refreshing new festival and CD label, Happy New Ears, was founded. At present he is working on a cycle of 24 preludes and fugues for various instrumentations.

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**Benoît Lachambre**

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Constantly developing himself in the field of dance since the 1970s, Benoît Lachambre discovers the release technique for himself in 1985. Hence, the kinaesthetic approach to movement and improvisation leaves its marks on his choreographic work. He devotes himself to an exploratory approach of movement and its sources, with the aim to seek the authenticity of the gesture. His approach is based fundamentally on his work sharpened with the senses where the artistic and the somatic become a necessity. In his creations, he equally aims at modifying the performer's empathic experience with the audience. In 1996, Benoît Lachambre created his own company Par B.L.eux in Montréal: "B.L." for Benoît Lachambre, and "eux" for "them," creative artists he collaborates with and which are becoming more and more influential in his career.

He thus multiplies these artistic encounters

and dynamic exchanges and collaborates with numerous international choreographers and artists coming from different disciplines: Boris Charmatz, Sasha Waltz, Marie Chouinard, Louise Lecavalier or again Meg Stuart and the musician Hahn Rowe; with latter he created one of his masterpieces *Forgeries, Love and other Matters* in 2003 for which he received the prestigious Bessie Award in 2006. Benoît Lachambre is one of the major artists/choreographers of his generation, he created 15 works since the foundation of Par B.L.eux, participated in more than 20 others productions and was the choreographer of 25 commissioned works, for example *I is memory* (solo for Louise Lecavalier in 2006) and *JJ's Voice* that he created for Cullberg Ballet in Stockholm in 2009. In March 2013, he creates *High heels too*, a new choreography commissioned by the Cullberg Ballet.

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**Noël Minéo**

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Noël Minéo was born in 1945 in Tunis. He left school very young, not finishing high school, and started working as an apprentice with an optician in Tunis, "Lumbroso". This man gave him his chance and fully trained him. Noël got married and in 1974 emigrated to Belgium with his wife and three year old daughter. A second child, a son, was born in 1986.

He started working with the renowned optician Bodart who had confidence in him and Noel spent his working life there. His

know-how, hard-working character and rigor enabled him to be promoted and he finished his career as a sales manager. Cancer of the tongue was diagnosed in 2000 and part of his tongue was surgically removed. Radiotherapy treatment cured the cancer but not without repercussions. He was dismissed from his job and the couple separated. In addition, for the next fourteen years, Noël suffered from the treatment's side effects, in particular a progressive rigidity of the throat muscles. This meant that it was necessary, in the final years, to be fed via a feeding tube.

His illness led him to discover the TOPAZ Care Centre where he established a group of wonderful friends, recovered his love for life and the motivation to fight.

His passions were cooking - especially for his friends, children and grandchildren – as well as fishing, sculpture, tap dance and piano. It was mainly through music that he could escape. In one of the workshops organized at TOPAZ, Jorge León created a portrait of him representing his dream, to become a composer. Before the beginning of the project he wrote to Jorge: "You allow me to have the strength to prove to myself that I can take challenges, and that helps me a lot. But we know that there are some realities against which we cannot fight."

Noël died in Brussels, in February 2014. He never saw *Before We Go*.

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**Lidia Schoue**

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Lidia was born in 1942 in the Duchy of Luxembourg. She has lived in Belgium since 1962.

Divorced and without children, she worked for 37 years with the same employer, a prominent travel agency. Thanks to her job, she developed a passion for long-distance travel, which satisfied her independent character. Perfectly trilingual, ambitious and perfectionist by nature, her responsibilities increased over the years in the field of business travel to the great satisfaction of her customers, large national and international companies.

In 1985 her health problems began. Lidia had an operation for a burst slipped disc complicated with cauda equina syndrome, which made sitting very difficult. An accident in 1998 increased her physical problems. At the same time, following various mergers, the travel agency changed management, but Lidia kept her responsibilities and the satisfaction of her customers. During 1995, following a nervous breakdown, a forewarning of Parkinson's disease, Lidia was asked to leave, without consideration for all her achievements. The disappointment was difficult to cope with.

In 2000 the diagnosis was confirmed, Lidia undoubtedly suffers from atypical/idiopathic Parkinson's disease, doubtless linked to disillusionment and professional burn-out.

In the following year, the disease progressed: difficulties with movement, incapacitating stiffness, cramps and pain. Added to that, a few years later, would come a partial sight and hearing loss, taste and smell reduction, diges-

tive and swallowing problems and obviously a loss of independence. In 2010, to try to ease the pain and unbearable cramps, she had a pump attached to diffuse the drug DUO DOPA directly into her bloodstream.

Supported by professional assistants and invaluable friends, and taking comfort in reading, scrabble and painting, she tries to accept the disease, to like her body that the disease has deformed.

She states, "Accepting to live in the present is my goal. I know that death is waiting for me at the end of the road. Either it will come to seek me, or I will go to it with the required assistance of the medical community."

Since 2007 she spends three afternoons a week in the TOPAZ Care Centre near Brussels. It is there that she met Jorge León in 2012, who suggested to her to participate in the documentary. She recounts: "The film was an exceptional experience for me, a dream of reality, a reality in my dreams. The first meeting with Meg Stuart was so full of emotions. Progressively I did not feel any barriers between Meg Stuart, a professional dancer, and myself, with my unpredictable gestures, due to the disease. The impossible became possible."

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**Meg Stuart**

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Meg Stuart is a choreographer and dancer living and working in Brussels and Berlin. She received her BFA in dance at New York University and continued her training following classes in Release technique and Contact Improvisation at the dance laboratory Move-

ment Research (New York). In the 1980s Stuart worked as a dancer with Nina Martin, Lisa Kraus, Federico Restrepo and Marcus Stern, and from 1986 to 1992 she was a member of the Randy Warshaw Dance Company, where she was also assistant to the choreographer.

On the invitation of the Klapstuk festival in Leuven, she created her first evening-length piece *Disfigure Study*, which launched her choreographic career in Europe. Stuart founded her own company *Damaged Goods* in 1994 and made Brussels her artistic home. She collaborated with many artists, including Pierre Coulibeuf, Philipp Gehmacher, Ann Hamilton, Gary Hill, Benoît Lachambre, Jorge León and Hahn Rowe.

With *Damaged Goods*, Stuart has created over twenty productions, ranging from solos to large-scale choreographies and including site-specific creations and installations. Over the years she has initiated and taken part in several improvisation projects. Her work has travelled a wide international theatre circuit and has also been presented at Documenta X (1997) in Kassel and at Manifesta7 (2008) in Bolzano. Stuart also teaches workshops in a variety of contexts. In 2008 her body of work was honored with a Bessie Award and a Flemish Culture Prize. In 2012 she is awarded the German Konrad-Wolf-Preis.

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### **George Van Dam**

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The Namibian-born violinist George Alexander van Dam has been a committed performer of contemporary music since the early stages of his career. He has worked with leading composers of today - Adès, Aperghis, Benjamin, Chin, Eötvös, Francesconi, Goeyvaerts, Harvey, Hosokawa, Kagel, Kurtàg, Ligeti, Mamiya, Reich, Saariaho, Stockhausen, Joji Yuasa, amongst others - as a soloist or within the context of contemporary-music ensembles such as Ensemble Modern Frankfurt, MusikFabrik, or Ictus, of which he is a founding member. Through close collaboration with the younger generation of composers - Cassol, De Mey, Harada, Hus, Vermeersch, and others - several new works have been written specially for him, e.g. *Homeobox* by Mochizuki, premiered with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie.

In 2012 he resumed studying the harpsichord - with Robert Kohnen - rekindling his childhood fascination for early keyboard music.

His own work as a composer includes chamber music, the song cycles *Engel-Lieder* for James Bowman, *Lorca Songs*, *Melanchotopia Songs* (written together with Claron McFadden) for Witte de With, Rotterdam 2011, a violin concerto with timbila orchestra for Drumming Grupo Percussão Porto, music for (silent) film, for theatre and dance performances - Ballet de Marseille, Needcompany, *Ultima Vez i.a.* - and works with visual artists such as Manon de Boer, Angela Bulloch, Trudo Engels, and Jorge León. Recent projects

include new music for a production of Escorial by Michel de Ghelderode/Josse De Pauw for Collegium Vocale Gent/Transparent and a new film, sequenza - on Sequenza VIII by Luciano Berio - in collaboration with Manon de Boer in May 2014.

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**Michel Vassart**

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Michel Vassart was born in Charleroi in 1954. His father, a respected master glassmaker died when Michel was only eight years old. His mother was a housewife. He had a happy childhood in Charleroi, surrounded by his three brothers and two sisters. This beautiful period brutally ended when he was twelve years old. The mother's new partner attacked his older sister. After the court convictions of his mother and her companion, the children separated: Michel spent happy years with his brothers under the supervision of a nanny, while aunts looked after his sisters.

When he turned eighteen, a high school diploma in his pocket, Michel moved to Brussels where he opened a bar-restaurant in Samaritaine Street. With his father's inheritance, he renovated a barge and lived there with a woman whom he later described as the only great love of his life. He had a wild lifestyle with many friends and plenty of drugs and alcohol. When his partner became pregnant, thinking that the restaurant was too demanding, he started work as an insurance broker. Some years after the birth of his daughter, he abandoned everything – partner, daugh-

ter and job – to go to Istanbul, then a hippie meeting point. He gave the house, the car and money to his partner and told her: "Redo your life, I won't come back." After Turkey, he followed his friends to New Delhi and from there, to Nepal. For a decade, he lived in a hippie community in a remote valley in Katmandu, a life that he describes as marvelous. At that time, Michel was completely into drugs, always in search of the 'high'.

Eventually he desired to see Europe again and after a long journey, he ended up in Lille. It is there that "The Accident" happened: he was run over by a car, suffering leg fractures, loss of an eye and an extreme memory loss. Even today there are some blanks in Michel's memory. Informed by the Consulate, his first partner and their daughter came to visit him. He did not recognize them immediately.

Incapacitated by the accident and not entitled to a disability pension in France, he again moved to Brussels, where he first lived in a small apartment, always full of friends and hapless companions. Tired of all this, he left his apartment and deliberately went to live on the street, at Place Fontainas. It is there that he met Jorge León, who filmed him at length for his documentary *Vous êtes ici* (2006). After a few months stay at the Pachéco Institute, he returned to his life on Place Fontainas where he eventually contracted gangrene. In spite of his opposition, the surgeon of Saint Pierre Hospital convinced him of the inevitable, the amputation of his right leg. His street life ended and being unhappy in a convalescent home in the Marolles, he returned, after a period of mandatory detoxification therapy, to the Pachéco Institute. He has been

there for eight years now, happy with the professional care, the team's kindness, and his friend Didier.

"I am not really afraid of death" he says, "I feel peaceful and I do not regret anything." His dream is to have his own apartment and, strengthened by his experiences and with a generous ability to listen, to be able to help other unfortunates.

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**Alexander Verster**

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Alexander Verster is a South African born musician and composer, currently based in Auckland, New Zealand. After several years in shows, hotels and cruise ships as a jazz bassist his travels eventually led him to Belgium, where fortunate circumstances allowed him to collaborate with artists from a very diverse range of fields. This resulted in his timely decision to take up the classical double bass and has since then focused exclusively on orchestral playing. Alexander now hopes to attend a European conservatoire and become a member of a Baroque ensemble.

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**Thomas Wodianka**

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Thomas Wodianka was born in Schrobenshausen in 1974 and gathered his first performing experiences as a street artist. After quitting his studies in medicine, he applied to the

Academy of Music and Theatre Hamburg to study drama. In 2000 he joined the ensemble of the Zurich Theatre, collaborating with directors like Falk Richter, Christoph Marthaler and Stefan Pucher. Since 2004 he has worked as a freelance performance artist and was seen in several productions, such as *Glaube Liebe Hoffnung* directed by Christoph Marthaler in 2012 or in *Letzte Tage – Ein Vorabend*, shown in the fringe of the Wiener Festwochen in 2013. Furthermore, Thomas Wodianka has performed in several dance pieces by Meg Stuart and Simone Aughterlony. Since the season 2013/2014 Thomas Wodianka is a company member of the Gorki Theatre in Berlin.

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**DÉRIVES**

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Founded by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne in 1977, Dérives is a production company benefiting from the backing of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, entirely devoted to documentary film and based in Wallonia where our activity has become a reference and, we hope, a key player in the development of original audio-visual works. In an age when documentary films increasingly follow a prescribed format, we favour works that observe the world, near and far, in close-up, with attention and perseverance. The specificity of our company, if there must be one, no doubt lies in our promotion and support of the filmmakers from our Community who can give the world food for thought without being constrained by the criteria of economic

profitability. Thanks to numerous selections of our films in festivals, co-productions, sales and broadcasts on Belgian and foreign TV channels, our company has now acquired an international reputation.

[www.derives.be](http://www.derives.be)