



MILO RAU

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1. MILO RAU

SHORT BIOGRAPHY / LIST OF WORKS

Milo Rau, born in 1977 in Berne, Switzerland, is a director and author. He has been the artistic director at NTGent in Belgium since the 2018/19 season. Rau studied sociology as well as German and Romance language and literature in Paris, Berlin and Zurich under scholars including Pierre Bourdieu and Tzvetan Todorov. Critics have called him, among other things, the 'most influential' (Die Zeit), 'most distinguished' (Le Soir), 'most interesting' (De Standaard), 'most controversial' (La Repubblica), 'most scandalous' (New York Times) and 'most ambitious' (The Guardian) artist of our time. His output since 2002 encompasses over fifty plays, films, books and initiatives. His theatre productions have been staged at all major international festivals, including the Berliner Theatertreffen, the Festival d'Avignon, the Biennale di Venezia, the Wiener Festwochen and the Brussels Kunstenfestivaldesarts, and have toured to over thirty countries worldwide. Rau has been honoured with many awards, such as the 2017 3sat-Preis, the 2017 Saarbrücker Poetik-Dozentur für Dramatik and, as the youngest artist since Frank Castorf and Pina Bausch, the prestigious Welttheatertag's ITI-Preis in 2016. In 2017 Milo Rau was chosen 'theatre director of the year' in the survey conducted by Die Deutsche Bühne, in 2018 he received the Europe Theatre Prize for his lifetime achievement and in 2019 he was named, as the very first artist, Associated Artist of EASTAP, the



»Milo Rau is currently the most influential director on the continent.«
Die Zeit

»Milo Rau is currently the most interesting artist in Europe.«
De Standaard

»Scandal lover«
La Vanguardia

»Theatre innovator«
Der Spiegel

»Milo Rau is one of the most ruthless and intelligent critics of our time: a visionary.«
Jean Ziegler

»Where understanding ends, Milo Raus' work begins.«
Neue Zürcher Zeitung

European Association for the Study of Theatre and Performance. He was awarded honorary doctorates from Lund University (Malmö) in 2019 and Ghent University in 2020. In 2020 he received the renowned Münsteraner Poetikdozentur for his oeuvre, and his plays have been selected among the 'best of the year' in critics' polls in over ten countries. The film version of 'Orestes in Mosul' – followed by a speech by Milo Rau – will open the Dutch Theatre Festival in September 2020, parallel with the publication of the book 'Why Theatre?', in which Rau asks one hundred leading intellectuals and artists from all over the world to answer this question.

Rau's films (such as *The Last Days of the Ceausescus*, *Hate Radio*, *The Moscow Trials*, *The Congo Tribunal* and *The New Gospel*) have received many honours (including a special award at the Festival des Deutschen Films, the Zürcher Filmpreis and the Amnesty International Prize, among others). His most recent film, *The Congo Tribunal*, was nominated for such distinctions as the Deutscher Filmpreis and the Schweizer Filmpreis. 'Milo Rau ennobles cinema,' said the Zürcher Filmpreis jury. Alongside his activity as a director, Rau is also a television critic, lecturer and an exceedingly productive author. His fifteen publications to date have been translated into, among other languages, English, French, Italian, Dutch, Mandarin and Norwegian. Rau's writings have earned him a number of the most prestigious German literary awards, including the Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden (2014) – the 'Oscars of audio drama' – and the two most eminent German literary prizes for socially engaged literature: the Peter-Weiss-Preis (2017) and the Gerty-Spies-Literaturpreis (2020). As early as 2014, the Tages-Anzeiger newspaper wrote, 'Milo Rau is the gold standard of postdramatics.' Rau's work is a fixture in the education of theatre and literature scholars at many universities.

List of works

- Why Theatre (Book 2020)
- The Art of Resistance (Book 2020)
- Das Neue Evangelium & Die Revolte der Würde / *The New Gospel & The Revolt of the Dignity* (Campaign, Spectacle, Film 2019)
- Das geschichtliche Gefühl. Wege zu einem globalen Realismus. Saarbrücker Poetikdozentur für Dramatik / *The historical feeling. Ways to a global realism. Saarbrücken Poetics Lectureship for Drama* (Book 2019)
- Orest in Mossul / *Orestes in Mosul* (Performance, Book 2019)
- Der Genter Altar / *Ghent Altarpiece* (Performance, Book 2018)
- Globaler Realismus / *Global Realism* (Book, 2018)
- Die Wiederholung. Histoire(s) du théâtre (I) / *The Repetition. Histoire(s) du théâtre (I)* (Performance, 2018)
- Das Kongo Tribunal / *The Congo Tribunal* (Film, Book, 2017)
- Weltparlament / *General Assembly* (Performance, Book, 2017)
- Wiederholung und Ekstase / *Repetition and Ecstasy* (Book, 2017)
- Lenin (Performance, Book, 2017)
- Die 120 Tage von Sodom / *120 Days of Sodom* (Performance, Book, 2017)
- Empire (Performance, Video Installation, Book, 2016)
- Five Easy Pieces (Performance, 2016)

- Mitleid. Die Geschichte des Maschinengewehrs / *Compassion. The History of the Machine Gun* (Performance, Radio Play, 2016)
- Leitfaden für britische Soldaten in Deutschland / *Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany 1944* (Performance, Radio Play, 2015)
- Althusser's Hände / *The Hands of Althusser* (Book, 2015)
- Das Kongo Tribunal / *The Congo Tribunal* (Performance, 2015)
- The Dark Ages (Performance, Radio Play, Video Installation, Book, 2015)
- The Civil Wars (Performance, Video Installation, Book, 2014)
- Die Berliner Gespräche / *The Berlin Dialogues* (Talkshow, 2013/14)
- Was tun? Kritik der postmodernen Vernunft / *What is to be done? Critique of postmodern reason* (Book, 2013)
- Die Enthüllung des Realen / *The Revelation of the Real* (Exhibition, Book, 2013)
- Die Zürcher Prozesse / *The Zurich Trials* (Performance, TV Film, Book, 2013)
- Die Moskauer Prozesse / *The Moscow Trials* (Performance, Feature Film, Book, 2013)
- Breivik's Statement (Performance, 2012)
- Hate Radio (Performance, TV Film, Book, Radio Play, 2011/14)
- City of Change (Performance, TV Film, 2010/11)
- Die letzten Tage der Ceausescus / *The Last Days of the*

Ceausescus (Performance, Feature Film, Book, 2009/10)

- Montana (Performance, 2007)
- Pornografia (Performance, 2006)
- Das höchste Glück / *The Greatest Happiness* (Performance, 2006)
- Bei Anruf Avantgarde / *Dial "A" for Avant-garde* (Performance, 2005)
- Amnesie / *Amnesia* (Performance, 2005)
- Dämonen / *Demons* (Performance, 2005)
- Die Rainer Werner Fassbinder Show / *The Rainer Werner Fassbinder Show* (Performance, 2003)
- Paranoia Express (Feature Film, 2002)
- Kunst, Theater, Wirklichkeit: Kleists 'Penthesilea' im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Ästhetiktheorien / *Art, Theatre, Reality: Kleist's 'Penthesilea' as Reflected in Contemporary Aesthetic Theories* (2002)

2.

IIPM - INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL MURDER

PRODUCTION COMPANY FOR THEATRE, FILM AND SOCIAL
SCULPTURE

The IIPM – International Institute of Political Murder was founded by director and author **Milo Rau in 2007 for the creation and international utilisation of his theatre productions, actions and films**. It is based in Switzerland and Germany.

IIPM's productions to date have met with a great international response and represent a new form of political art that is highly condensed in documentary and aesthetic terms – "Real-Theater" , in the words of Alexander Kluge. Since 2007, IIPM has realised over 50 theatre productions, films, books, exhibitions and actions. Its works have toured more than 30 countries and IIPM has been invited to show them at all of the major international festivals. The production company has repeatedly collaborated with, among others, the Berlin theatre Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers in Paris, the *Theaterspektakel Zürich*, the *Kunstenfestival* in Brussels, the Goethe Institut, *Prohelvetia*, the broadcaster ARTE, Swiss and German public television, the Berlin Senate and the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

IIPM's **project publications and volumes of essays** have been printed in multiple editions ("The Last Days of the Ceausescus", 2010), reprinted by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education for use in schools ("Hate Radio", 2014) and named "book of the year" by *taz – die tageszeitung* ("What Is to Be Done? A Critique of Postmodern Reason", 2013). Scheduled for publica-

tion in 2017 are a book on aesthetic theory, "*Wiederholung und Ekstase*" (Repetition and Ecstasy; Diaphanes Verlag, concluding volume of a research project on realism in the arts, carried out by IIPM at Zurich University of the Arts); the two project volumes on "The Congo Tribunal" and "1917" (both from Verbrecher Verlag); and the manifesto "*Die Rückeroberung der Zukunft*" (Reconquest of the Future, from Rowohlt Verlag).

Since its founding, **IIPM has focused on the multimedia treatment of historical and sociopolitical conflicts**. The production company has hauled onto the stage such topics as the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu ("**The Last Days of the Ceausescus**"), the genocide in Rwanda ("**Hate Radio**"), and the Norwegian terrorist Anders B. Breivik ("**Breivik's Statement**"). Another performance project enacted a battle with a Swiss town parliament over the right of foreigners to vote ("**City of Change**"). In spring 2013, IIPM brought a completely new theatre format to life with two multi-day judicial spectacles ("**The Moscow Trials**" and "**The Zurich Trials**"). And, with "**The Civil Wars**" (2014), it launched the large-scale project "**The Europe Trilogy**", which it continued with "**The Dark Ages**" in 2015 and concluded in September 2016 with "**Empire**". In "**Five Easy Pieces**" (2016) and "**The 120 Days of Sodom**" (2017), Rau and the IIPM put the theatre's range of instruments of empathy and portrayal to the test – with child actors in the one case and actors with disabilities in the other.

Accompanied by debates extending far beyond the art world, **IIPM-produced films, video installations, performances, and stagings have been honoured with innumerable awards** worldwide. The "profoundly touching" (*La Libre Belgique*) presentation of "**The Civil Wars**", for example, euphorically celebrated by audiences and critics alike, received the **Jury Award of the theatre triennial *Politik im Freien Theater*** (Politics in Free Theatre) and was selected by Swiss Television's expert jury as one of the "**five best plays of 2014**". "The Civil Wars" was additionally named one of the "**best plays in the Netherlands and Flanders in 2014/15**". The production of "Five Easy Pieces" (2016) garnered the top award in the Belgian *Prix de la Critique Théâtre et Danse*. Further honours include invitations to the Berlin *Theatertreffen* and the *Festival d'Avignon*, as well as the *Swiss*

»With his documentary theatre, Rau strikes the tone of the times in Moscow.«
Die Zeit on "*The Moscow Trials*"

»The Civil Wars' is brilliant. One leaves the performance deeply affected by the stories of the actors. Everything sounds exactly right. And what is so extraordinary is that these stories explain the motivation of the young Europeans who go to Syria much better than a head-on approach ever could. This is, after all, about the constitution of us all. And that is truly magnificent.«
La Libre Belgique on "*The Civil Wars*"

Theatre Award, the **Preis des Internationalen Theaterinstituts** (International Theatre Institute Prize), the **3sat Price** and **Peter-Weiss-Price**.

"Theatre can hardly make a greater impact," wrote the Swiss newspaper *Basler Zeitung* in its review of the lecture-performance "**Breivik's Statement**", which after numerous engagements was staged at the European Parliament in Brussels in 2014. The production "**The Moscow Trials**" led to an international debate on the freedom of art and censorship. The piece also gave rise to film and book versions in cooperation with, respectively, Fruitmarket Arts & Media GmbH and the Berlin publisher Verbrecher Verlag. The film has enjoyed international cinema and festival screenings, and was chosen for a "**Special Award**" at the **2014 Festival des deutschen Films** (Festival of German Film).

Like the productions "**The Last Days of the Ceausescus**" and "**Hate Radio**", "**The Zurich Trials**" spawned a feature-length film version that was broadcast on **3sat** and **Swiss Television** and ran in selected cinemas. The audio drama version of "**Hate Radio**" received the renowned **Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden 2014** (War Blinded Audio Play Prize).

During the 2013/14 theatre season, a **retrospective of the work of IIPM** was held at the Sophiensaele in Berlin under the title "**Die Enthüllung des Realen**" (The Revelation of the Real). The exhibition was accompanied by an eponymous **monograph** from the publisher Theater der Zeit, **with contributions by**, among others, **Elisabeth Bronfen, Heinz Bude, Alexander Kluge, Sandra Umathum, Michail Ryklin and Christine Wahl** that illuminate the work of IIPM from wide-ranging perspectives. On the heels of solo exhibitions in Austria (Kunsthau Bregenz 2011, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 2013) and Switzerland (MigrosMuseum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, 2011, Konzert Theater Bern, 2013), this first retrospective of the work of Milo Rau and IIPM in Germany sparked heated debate in the press.

Monographic shows followed in Geneva (**Festival La Batie**) and Paris (**Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers**) during the 2014/15 season, and in Ghent (**CAMPO**) in 2015/16. The live talk-show series "Die Berliner Gespräche" (The Berlin Dialogues; in coopera-

»'Empire' is the theatre of Euripides reconceived for the present.«
Neue Zürcher Zeitung

»The most impressive, most moving performance in the last ten or fifteen years. The entire audience emerged from it with a smile on their faces and a knot in their stomachs. It was simply unbelievable.«
RTBF on "Five Easy Pieces"

tion with the Sophiensaele and the Swiss Embassy, Berlin) in 2013/14 was the starting point for the production phase of Rau's staging of "The Civil Wars" (2014), the first part of his "Europe Trilogy". This monumental trilogy continued in 2015 with "The Dark Ages" and concluded in 2016 with "Empire", in which thirteen actors from eleven countries subject the continent to a "political psychoanalysis" (*Libération*). Audiences and the press responded euphorically. The Austrian broadcasting service ORF, for example, described "Empire" as combining "the intimacy of a chamber play and the force of a Greek tragedy."

"The Congo Tribunal", conducted by Milo Rau and his team in Bukavu and Berlin in summer 2015, met with a worldwide media response. The production took the form of a people's tribunal on the involvement of international mining companies, the Congolese government, and the UN, EU and World Bank in the eastern Congo's civil war, which in twenty years has claimed over five million lives. Both the audience and the press followed the "immensely gripping" (*taz*) interrogations breathlessly. *The Guardian* called the piece a "landmark" and **"the most ambitious political theatre project ever staged."** "A mad project," wrote the German weekly *DIE ZEIT*, adding that "where politics fails, art must step in." The Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, too, had high praise: "Impeccable. Milo Rau is one of the freest and most controversial spirits of our time." And *taz* got right to the heart of the matter, stating that "for the first time in history, the question of responsibility for crimes is being posed." Over one hundred journalists from around the world took part in the tribunals in East Africa and Europe in order to report on the **"most megalomaniacal art project of our time"** (*Radio France Internationale - RFI*). The **documentary film** of the same name by Milo Rau was produced by Arne Birkenstock (Fruitmarket Kultur und Medien) and Olivier Zobrist (Langfilm) and launched in November 2017 in the cinemas. On 6 August 2017, the film celebrated its world premiere at the *Semaine de la critique* at the **Locarno Festival** and was awarded a special mention at the DOKLeipzig in October 2017. The "trailblazing" (TAZ) documentary film "The Congo Tribunal" is nominated for the **German and Swiss Film Award 2018** and won the renowned **Zurich Film Award 2017**.

»What is arising here is a kind of theatre of a second order: the birth of a meta-theatre out of the spirit of cynicism. The evening is horrible and harrowing, and, with all the before and after, an astonishing play of reflection.«

Berliner Zeitung on "Compassion. The History of the Machine Gun".

»The filmmaker ennobles cinema and does what reality cannot do «

From the jury's statement on its awarding of the Zurich Film Award for "The Congo Tribunal" 2017

»Milo Rau is among the most internationally influential political theatre-makers of the present. In his works, he unrelentingly probes the "global interior of capital, his nightmares and hopes, his netherworlds and alternative worlds." In the framework of his concept of a "global realism", he is one of Europe's most incisive critics.«

From the jury's statement on its awarding of the Saarbrücker Poetikdozentur für Dramatik for 2017

Audiences and critics alike have celebrated Milo Rau's "**Compassion. The History of the Machine Gun**", which has been described as "breathtaking" (*NZZ*) and "**a masterpiece, burning with current relevance**" (*24 heures*). Since its premiere in January 2016 at the **Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz** in Berlin, the piece has toured the world. Among other distinctions, it was nominated for the *Friedrich-Luft-Preis* as Berlin's best play of the season and took second place for "Best Actress" (Ursina Lardi) in the critics' poll by the magazine *Theater Heute*.

"**Five Easy Pieces**", developed in spring 2016 in collaboration with **CAMPO** in Ghent, is the **first IIPM project involving children and youth**. The Belgian television broadcaster RTBF called the piece, which has already toured through much of Europe and as far as Singapore, "truly great theatre – human, sensitive, intelligent, and political," and "a play to which none of the known standards applies." With "**The 120 Days of Sodom**" (*Züricher Schauspielhaus* 2017), he continued the investigation begun with "Five Easy Pieces" according to the limits of what can be produced and depicted on stage and will conclude his **trilogy of representability** with the "**History of Theatre**" in 2018.

In November 2017, in keeping with his approach in "The Congo Tribunal" – to give a voice to those who don't have a lobby – Milo Rau and IIPM brought together in "**General Assembly**" (Schaubühne Berlin) 60 activists and people from all over the world who are impacted by, yet have no say or representatives in German policy. The piece was called "a megalomaniacal but encouraging experiment" by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, while the *Berliner Zeitung* wrote: "That is what a stage, that is what theatre, is there for." This "**first world parliament in human history**" culminated in the performance "**Storming of the Reichstag**" on 7 November 2017, in which 500 participants – including members of the Bundestag – joined together to create a peaceful image for international solidarity. In the week following the "World Parliament", a "**Charter for the 21st Century**" was drafted which was presented at the start of 2018.

When Rau's play "**The Repetition**" premiered at the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels in spring 2018, La Libre Belgique spoke

»At once breathtaking, analytically clear, and harrowing. The performance is the rare case of an evening at the theatre that hurts in the appropriate way and, in so doing, achieves something that once was called catharsis.«

Süddeutsche Zeitung about „Five Easy Pieces“

»Would one now wish that this utopian performance would influence world politics from the theatre stage? Actually, yes..«

nachtkritik.de on „General Assembly“

of a "masterpiece (...) that will shape theatre history" and Le Soir saw it as a "homage to all the possibilities of theatre". After being nominated in two categories (**'Best play' and 'Best young actor'**) for the **Belgian Critics' Prize** ('Prix de la Critique'), the play was also received enthusiastically by the international press at the Festival d'Avignon: "the production that dominated the debates in Avignon" (New York Times) was "without doubt the greatest moment of the festival" (Le Figaro). For the Guardian it was "an extraordinarily mature, crystalline, captivating and irresistible play" and the French daily Libération cheered: **"This gripping tragedy is a masterful demonstration of what theatre can achieve"**.

»This gripping tragedy is a masterful demonstration of what theatre can achieve.«
Libération on "The Repetition"

"The Repetition" is the first part of the series "Histoire(s) du théâtre" curated by Rau. The play is based on a crime that took place one night in April 2012 in Liège, Belgium, and shook the whole city. The 32-year-old Ihsane Jarfi came into conversation with a group of young men on a street corner in front of a homosexual club. Two weeks later he was found dead on the edge of a forest. He had been tortured for hours.

As in "The Last Days of the Ceausescus", "Five Easy Pieces" or "The 120 Days of Sodom", the play takes up the alienation of Rau with the **presentability of violence on stage** and is thus also a reflection "on the means of theatre", Rau said in an interview.

"The Repetition" is Milo Rau's first play based entirely on the 10 rules of the **"Ghent Manifesto"**, which was published on 18 May 2018 at NTGent. Similar to the "Dogma 95" in film more than 20 years ago, it is a very concrete, almost technical set of rules and the attempt to rethink the "system *Stadttheater*" towards the **"Stadttheater of the future"**.

"It's about releasing something new through rules: what I call **'global realism'**. I want a light theater that doesn't have huge stage sets and can tour, that travels the whole world. I also want a **democratic theatre** to which everyone has access: as a player, as an author, as a critic. In short, I want to break up the hermetic space of theatre pro-grammatically, also with regard to the question of today's classics, today's myths and spellings." (Milo Rau)

3. APPENDIX

- „Theater should be a transformative experience: Milo Rau’s cheerful and non-cynical brand of political drama“, *culture-bot.org* (October 17, 2014)

<http://www.culturebot.org>

Theater should be a transformative experience: Milo Rau's cheerful and non-cynical brand of political drama

[Joost Ramaer](#) | October 17, 2014 | [Interviews](#), [Theater](#) | [No Comments](#)



Milo Rau

An interview by Joost Ramaer

[Milo Rau](#)'s political theater projects are almost always multistage rockets. Only, with him, the stages are not just fuel canisters, to be discarded when empty. In a Rau production, each stage launches its own astronaut or satellite, creating havoc in orbit. *The Moscow Trials*, a documentary film now touring Europe, began in March 2013 as a three day 're-enactment' – a Rau speciality – of three criminal trials that had targeted 'subversive' art in Russia: the one against the band Pussy Riot and two against the visual art exhibitions *Caution! Religion* (2006) and *Forbidden Art* (2003).

The exhibitions had taken place in Moscow's Sakharov Center, a memorial to Andrei Sakharov, the legendary dissident against the Soviets and Nobel Peace Prize winner. The Center also continues Sakharov's campaign for democracy and civil liberties in Russia. *Caution! Religion* and *Forbidden Art* were smashed up by members from Russia's violent ultranationalist movement, who considered the art on show there 'blasphemous' and an insult to the Russian Orthodox church.

Their crimes went unpunished. Instead, the shows' curators were prosecuted and, in the end, fined. The Pussy Riot girls, as we all know, were sentenced to two years in prison for 'hooliganism motivated by religious hatred'. The three cases were copies of Stalin's show trials in the 1930's. Travesties of justice with a pre-ordained outcome.

And then, Milo Rau came to Moscow, this self-professed political left-winger from Switzerland. The Swiss are not well known for their sense of humour, but Rau (37) is a fun guy to be with. While telling you about his clever theatrical ruses, he will regularly burst into infectious laughter.

Rau staged his re-enactment also in the Sakharov Center, and scrupulously followed the rules governing Russian court proceedings. (Such rules do exist, the Putin regime just chooses to ignore them.) He used real judges and lawyers – two of them had defended the art show curators – and a jury of seven members who actually were a representative cross-section of Muscovite society.

The leading prosecutor, and arguably the star of the show, was Maxim Shevchenko. It was a remarkable coup. Shevchenko is the host of a popular TV-show that actively promotes Russian nationalism and Orthodox religion. Think Rush Limbaughski. Why on earth would a guy like him want to work with a 'Jewish fascist', a favourite invective of the nationalists? (Rau has Jewish forebears, but technically he is not a Jew himself.) 'It took me about a year to convince him,' Rau told me during an interview in the Dutch port city of Rotterdam. Our talk preceded a double bill of his work at festival De Keuze (The Choice) on September 28: *The Moscow Trials* and *Breivik's Statement*, about the Norwegian right-wing extremist Anders Breivik, who bombed and shot 77 people to death in 2011.

Eventually, Shevchenko agreed to take part. Rau wasn't surprised at all. 'Shevchenko had three reasons to work with me. First, he knew personally one of the people I was working with on this project. Second, he and I developed a mutual respect. Although we draw very different conclusions from it, we are both anti-globalisation. Third, he must have realised, I think, that participating in my play was simply a unique opportunity to promote his cause in front of an international audience. The mainstream media never take somebody like him seriously. They are very anti-Russian, especially in Germany.'

Rau had not actively advertised his mock trial in the Sakharov Center. He knew word-of-mouth among Muscovites would ensure him a full house anyway, and he didn't want to encourage the usual hooligans. Still, the re-enactment was disrupted twice, in typical Putin fashion. First, by the immigration police, allegedly to 'check' on the papers of Rau and the other non-Russian crew members. And later by a bunch of angry men in Cossack outfits, eager to defend the church by swinging their bats and fists again. The film shows us who came rushing to Rau's defense: Maxim Shevchenko. You see him arguing with the intruders. 'Please go away, your actions will give the Russian state a bad name,' he tells the police. 'There is nothing untoward happening here,' he says to the Cossacks. 'I give you my personal word.' Sure enough, they retreat to their expensive SUV's and leave the scene.

The environment created by Rau, and the mix of people he introduced there, turned a virulent Russian nationalist into a staunch defender of civil liberties – welcome to the successful launch of this rocket's first stage. During the next half year, the second stage went off: a camera registration of the full three days' proceedings toured European festivals – among them De Keuze in Rotterdam – as a video installation. And now, there is the 90 minutes long documentary film, weaning a much wider worldwide audience away from the simplistic anti-Russian rhetoric prevailing everywhere in the West.

Because, watching Maxim Shevchenko at work, we also develop respect for him. He appears to be a serious and intelligent man, who states his case against the suspects eloquently, and even with an occasional bout of wry humour. To our relief, he does not win: Rau's fictional court, being far more worthy of the name than the real ones he had re-enacted, acquitted all three suspects, albeit with a narrow majority among the jury members. One of them, a staunch nationalist, resigns in protest. But here, the clash of convictions leads to debate instead of violence. The nationalists stick to the rules, and as a result, we start to listen to their argument. Rau's projects may create a lot of disturbance in our universe, but it is of a deeply positive and uncynical nature.



"CITY OF CHANGE," 2010/11

Leaving Valhalla in disgrace

Milo Rau was born in Bern in 1977. He studied sociology, German and classics in Zürich, Berlin and Paris, where Pierre Bourdieu was one of his mentors. At one point, he wrote an essay about Roland Barthes which was published in the prestigious *Feuilleton*-section of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the daily bible of the Swiss establishment. 'The editor of the *Feuilleton* at the time was one of my former professors,' says Rau. He then fell in love with a girl from Berlin, so he moved to the German capital. The paper made him its Berlin correspondent. Only 23 at the time, he became the youngest foreign correspondent in the history of the NZZ. Simultaneously, he started working as a theater director and writer.

The two careers, peppered by Rau's cheerful brand of left-wing politics, soon clashed. 'My first theater projects were often demolished by NZZ-critics,' he says. 'Turning the page, the reader hit upon one of my own articles, which the paper's editors did not find objective enough. It became an increasingly absurd, untenable situation.' So, after six years, Rau left the NZZ. 'My mother had been so proud of me, and now I had to leave this Valhalla in disgrace. Imagine the shock to her!' He erupts in laughter.

A year later, in 2007, he founded his own production house. Based in Zürich and Cologne, it goes by the magnificent name of [International Institute of Political Murder](#) (IIPM). 'Of', not 'for', obviously. Hahaha! In its first seven years, the IIPM has realised ten projects. The subjects range from *The Last Days of the Ceausescus* (2009), via resettling 500,000 Palestinians in the Oder-Neisse region between Poland and Germany (*Land of Hope*, 2010), to the genocide in Rwanda (*Hate Radio*, 2011). They are all ambitious, multimedia and multipartner undertakings, based on exhaustive research, often staged in historically and politically charged places, and the actors always bring personal ties to the subject matter.

Would film not have been a better medium for this type of work? 'Germany does not have a film industry to speak of anymore. What it does have, is a strong and well-financed theater scene, which is basically open to any good idea. And you can use theater money much more freely than film funds, where you have all these very strict rules.' Rau developed his format by trial and error. One of the first examples was a re-enactment of a 1999 incident in St. Gallen. That year, a Kosovo-Albanian inhabitant of this modest Swiss town shot and killed one of his daughters' teachers in the local *Realschule*. It was a private drama, revolving around honour and sexual abuse. But it shocked the Swiss into efforts to improve relations with their immigrants.

Rau jumped onto this bandwagon with a project called, at first, *The St. Gallen's Teacher Murder*. At the time, the wounds were still too fresh. Rau and his family received death threats, and the parliament of the St. Gallen *Kanton* (province) forbade the show. Reluctantly, the Theater St. Gallen decided to cancel it. 'And then I made a very clever move,' Rau says with twinkling eyes. 'I renamed it *City of Change*, a positive, optimistic title. Suddenly, everybody embraced it. And I hadn't made a single change to the content!'

His re-enactments are not simple repetitions, but reconstructions 'of past events in today's density of meaning'. Rau blends all these ingredients from different sources, and then cooks them into a strongly flavoured stew. His theatrical missiles are not

restricted to their stages. Their trajectories are strewn with accompanying lectures, debates, exhibitions, installations and publications. To try out ideas, and to help build awareness of the end product. 'You have journalists who go to press conferences and pass on what they hear there. And you have journalists who try to find a deeper truth. It is the same with theater. I love Chekhov and Shakespeare, I love directing their plays. I just don't want to restrict myself to texts written by others.' Neither to documentary. 'Theater has to be a transformative experience. During my lectures at theater schools and universities I always tell my students: your assignment is not to make a play. Theater can also be presented in the form of a film or a book.'



"HATE RADIO," 2011

***Hate Radio*: a typical Rau transformation**

A striking example of such a Rau transformation is *Hate Radio* (2011), his play about the genocide of Tutsi's and moderate Hutu's in Rwanda in 1994. The stage is occupied by a glass box. Inside we see the crew of a radio station at work, mixing racist rants with popular music. The station is styled after the infamous Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), one of the main instigators of racial hatred and violence before and during the slaughter. 'Before 1989, Rwanda was just as closed off from the outside world as the Soviet Union,' Rau explains. 'Then it opened up, and "democracy" became the new buzzword there. RTLM came about because the UN urged the Rwandan government to have independent media! That is why I call the Rwandan disaster a democratic genocide.'

His actors, many of them Tutsi survivors, do not stick to the original RTLM-script. 'Much of their text comes from other, often unexpected sources,' Rau says. 'For instance, I made extensive use of what was said during a press conference where the UN presented a report about the tragedy.' The crew in *Hate Radio* plays music from Nirvana. 'I don't know if the real RTLM ever aired their songs. I use them because for me, Nirvana's music is synonymous with the after-1990, where-are-we-now generation.' Rau grew up in an ideological vacuum. 'Nobody talked about Marx anymore, nobody had a clue what The Left stood for. And this was reinforced by the electoral success of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder. When you go back to their speeches and writings, it is astonishing that anybody even thought of them as left-wing politicians. They were so conservative.'

Young Rwandans were even more confused. 'The people working at RTLM called their racism "black power". They smoked grass and hated Hitler. Their hero was Nelson Mandela. It really was that weird. That is why one of the girls in *Hate Radio* wears a Mandela T-shirt.' During the creation of the play Rau discovered that his actors had listened to the same music as he had at the time. 'Nirvana. MC Hammer, the American rapper. Me, the little rich kid in Switzerland, and them, in the middle of a genocide. *Hate Radio* is also about international youth culture.'

Rau's plays often have unexpected effects, even for him. In Belgium, for instance, a country still fraught by a complex mix of guilt, self-justification and denial about its colonial rule over Congo, one of the roots of the evil in 1994 and long after. A Belgian journalist wrote that *Hate Radio* was 'only telling half the story', Rau remembers. 'Her article went like: "The slaughter was just a reaction to the earlier attacks by Tutsi's from Uganda. It was a result of the Rwandan civil war, not a genocide." ' At first, Rau considered the journalist 'a *Genozidleugnerin*', a genocide denier. 'But she was actually a very nice person.' Then it dawned on him that she probably thought like many of her fellow countrypeople. 'They try to reason everything as far away as possible: "There is this other side to the story, you know, there were victims on both sides ..." In this way, they hope the genocide will end up somewhere else.'

When the same journalist later moderated a talk with Rau after a performance of his play in Brussels, he pulled a little trick on her. 'We inserted some core sentences from her article in the script for that night. Afterwards, she asked me with this quizzical look on her face whether that had been an accident or intentional.' The umpteenth burst of laughter. 'I found that really funny!' Actually, he often adapts his shows to new developments, or new places. 'At the festival in Avignon we included a recording of *Vive la France* by Mireille Mathieu. The Rwandan *génocidaires* sang this song when the French army intervened with Operation Turquoise, a bid to stop the killings which actually made things worse.'

THE MOSCOW TRIALS W MOSKAUER PROZESSE МОСКОВСКИЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ

“THE MOSCOW TRIALS,” 2012/13

Cynical humanism

Disastrous interventions by the West in the rest of the world will remain one of Rau’s main sources of inspiration for years to come. *Hate Radio* and *The Moscow Trials* are still touring, and his new play *The Civil Wars* will continue touring on November 15 during the NEXTfestival in the Belgian town of Kortrijk. It is the first part of a trilogy about Europe. ‘*The Civil Wars* started with a question in my head: “Why are young Europeans going to Syria to fight?”’ It ended up as Rau’s most personal political piece so far. Four seasoned actors speak about their youths, how they dislodged themselves from dominant fathers. From there, they go on to reflect on madness, faith and political convictions, or what’s left of them. How do these confusing times work out on their private lives?

The second part, *Fuck you Europe*, will open in April 2015 in Munich’s Residenztheater. ‘It is about the NATO-bombing of Belgrade in 1999.’ The third and final part will open in the Berliner Schaubühne in October 2015. It offers yet another perspective on Europe’s violent history, given away by the title: *The History of the Machine Gun*. More or less simultaneously, Rau hopes to bring out *The Congo Tribunal*, his first film which actually started out as such. ‘For this project I really wanted an international release, and that is only possible with film money.’ *The Congo Tribunal* will revisit the Rwandan genocide, or rather its terrible aftermath: the civil war in Congo, which is still raging after twenty years and three million deaths.

The West prefers to ignore it, and keeps it going at the same time. Behind the scenes, our politicians, diplomats, weapons traffickers, mining companies and non-profits all have big stakes in this huge conflict.

‘I’m moving away from human behaviour, into robber capitalism,’ Rau says. In his eyes, the civil war in Congo is the biggest story of our times. ‘East Congo is dominated by Western Non-Governmental Organisations which are anything but. They are all funded by the USA and the European Union, and this completely dictates their actions.’ He gives an example. ‘There are 1,400 mines in East Congo, and they are the world’s main source of minerals for smartphones and other modern electronic devices. In 2010 the American Dodd-Frank Act declared the whole industry illegal, except for the mines certified as “conflict-free”. The certification process is run

by the Enough Project, an ngo funded by the US Congress, and executed on the ground by a German company owned by Enough and funded by the EU.'

A totally absurd situation, according to Rau. 'What these ngo's consider illegal, comes from China, or from the poor Congolese themselves. In an area without a functioning government, they make the law. I call it cynical humanism. We are humanists, but only in our own backyards.' He read and admires *Congo – The Epic History of a People*, by the Belgian historian and writer David Van Reybrouck. 'What I find really interesting about David's book is his view that Congo does not resemble Europe as it used to be, in the Middle Ages, but as it will be. Congo shows us the future of our own political system: no state power.'

Joost Ramaer (1958) is a freelance journalist based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. For fifteen years he worked at *de Volkskrant*, a leading Dutch daily newspaper, as a staff reporter, first on Economics (1993-2003) and then on the Arts (2003-2008). He left the paper to research and write a book. *De Geldpers* (The Money Press) tells the sad story of how the publishing company of *de Volkskrant* and other serious newspapers sold itself to the British private equity investor Apax, and was nearly wrecked in the process. *De Geldpers* was published in December 2009 by Prometheus in Amsterdam to universal critical acclaim and sold 4,800 copies. Theater is one of Joost's lifelong passions. During the last two years, he has also made it into a new theater of work.