

Australian Theatre in France: Two Translation Exchanges, 1994 and 2021–2022

1. Semaine des auteurs australiens, 1994 with Ron Elisha, Hannie Rayson, Daniel Keene, Hilary Bell, Karin Mainwaring, Elaine Acworth

In 1994, the Sydney Theatre Company, in partnership with the Comédie-Française, the SACD (Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques, founded 1829), Entr'Actes and the Australian Embassy in France, partnered with the Maison Antoine Vitez (MAV, specialists in the translation of plays) to present an Australian theatrical exposition. Six plays were translated and given staged readings at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier during the Australian Playwrights' Week in June 1995. This programme allowed the public to discover, among others, playwrights such as Karin Mainwaring (whose *Les Danseurs de la pluie* premiered at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier¹ in 2001)² and Daniel Keene, whose translator Séverine Mageois became his agent and for many years promoted his work in France.³ Belgian publisher Émile Lansman published the six translated plays both separately and in a presentation box.⁴

¹ The Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier is one of the three theatres in Paris used by the Comédie-Française.

² An interview with Karin Mainwaring will appear in a future issue of *The French Australian Review*.

³ See Florent Viguié 'The Collaboration between Writer Daniel Keene and his Translator Séverine Mageois: A Successful Mediation', *French Australian Review*, no. 61, 19–39.

⁴ Ron Elisha, Hannie Rayson, Daniel Keene, Hilary Bell, Karin Mainwaring, Elaine Acworth, *Six pièces du théâtre contemporain australien*, trans. Isabelle Famchon, Séverine Mageois, Jean-Pierre Richard & Jean-Marie Retby (Belgium : Émile Lansman Éditeur, 1995).

A boxed set of six plays. Each play is also published separately. Still available.

2. Australia Now 2021: ‘One and Free’ Playwright Exchange Australian Embassy in France in collaboration with Maison Antoine Vitez, 1 August 2021–30 June 2022

In 2019, thanks in particular to the presence in France of Australian playwright Lachlan Philpott, the Embassy asked Maison Anton Vitez (MAV) to collaborate with their promotion Australia Now 2021, in order to highlight a new generation of Australian playwrights through the selection of another six plays, each written after 2010.

Dominique Hollier, Gisèle Joly and Séverine Magois read more than seventy plays. After selecting about twenty, they invited five other translators from the English committee to join them to read and discuss the texts, and to select the final six titles. The selection was guided primarily by the intrinsic quality of the texts, but also respected gender equality, diversity and a varied repertoire.

The selection is composed of three pieces written by men and three by women, including a play by an Indigenous author, a play for young adults and a play for children:

Melissa Bubnic, ‘I Do Believe in Monsters’, translated by Catherine Hargeaves and Adélaïde Pralon

Angus Cerini, ‘The Bleeding Tree’, translated by ‘Dominique Hollier

Jub Clerc, ‘The Fever and the Fret’, translated by Aurore Kahan

Kendall Feaver, ‘The Almighty Sometimes’ translated by Sabine Haudepin
Dominique Hollier, Séverine Magois et Adélaïde Pralon

Tom Holloway, ‘Storm-Boy’, translated by Séverine Magois

Lachlan Philpott, ‘Truck Stop’ translated by Gisèle Joly.

The readers commented that ‘in addition to the six plays selected for Australia Now, this extensive reading has allowed Maison Antoine Vitez to discover other authors and will inspire the MAV English committee to continue to explore and translate Australian writing into the years to come’.

The selected plays will be presented in a series of readings from August 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 on dates to be advised. These events will provide an opportunity for the wider French public to discover Australian theatre, including the play by Indigenous Australian Jub Clerc. The readings will be organised by Maison Vitez together with the Comédie-Française and also

La Chartreuse at Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, the Théâtre Joliette at Marseille, the Grenoble Festival, Regards Croisés, and La Mousson d'été, Pont-à-Mousson.

Two events already confirmed are a production of 'L'Affaire Harry Crawford' by Lachlan Philpott to be presented at Châteauvallon (Ollioules) in February 2022 and also at Théâtre Joliette (Marseille) in March 2022.

For further information see:

<https://france.celebrateaustralianow.com/event/playwright-exchange-one-and-free-maison-antoine-vitez/> .