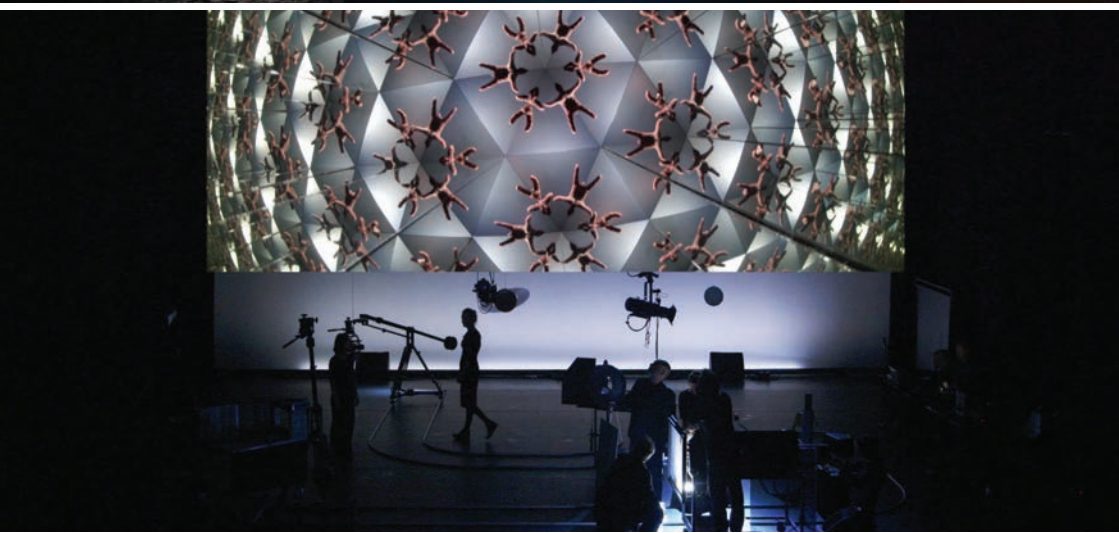


Michèle Anne De Mey  
Jaco Van Dormael  
Kiss & Cry Collective  
Thomas Gunzig

March  
11-29 2020  
AUCKLAND  
ARTS FESTIVAL

# COLD BLOOD

11-14 March • ASB Waterfront Theatre



## Creative Team

### A show by

Michèle Anne De Mey  
Jaco Van Dormael  
*and the collectif Kiss & Cry*

### Texts

Thomas Gunzig

### A collective creation by

Grégory Grosjean  
Thomas Gunzig  
Julien Lambert  
Sylvie Olivé  
Nicolas Olivier

*with the participation of*

Thomas Beni  
Gladys Brookfield-Hampson  
Boris Cekevda  
Gabriella Iacono  
Aurélien Leporcq  
Bruno Olivier  
Stefano Serra

### Mise en scène

Jaco Van Dormael  
Michèle Anne De Mey

### Scenario

Thomas Gunzig  
Jaco Van Dormael  
Michèle Anne De Mey

### Cinematography

Jaco Van Dormael  
Julien Lambert

### Director

Jaco Van Dormael  
*alternately with*  
Harry Cleven  
Nicolas Olivier

### Dancers

Michèle Anne De Mey  
Grégory Grosjean  
Gabriella Iacono  
*alternately with*  
Nora Alberdi  
Frauke Marën  
Manuela Rastaldi  
Denis Robert

### Camera

Julien Lambert  
*assisted by*  
Aurélien Leporcq

*alternately with*

Juliette Van Dormael  
Tristan Galand  
Pierre de Wurstemberger  
Charlotte Marchal

### Set

Sylvie Olivé

*assisted by*

François Roux  
Juliette Fassin  
Théodore Brisset  
Brigitte Baudet

### Constructions

Jean-François Pierlot  
Walter Gonzales

### Costumes

Béa Pendesini  
Sarah Duvert

### Light

Nicolas Olivier  
*assisted by*  
Bruno Olivier

### Sound

Boris Cekevda

### Performers

#### & Set Manipulations

Michèle Anne De Mey  
Grégory Grosjean  
Gabriella Iacono  
Ivan Fox  
Bruno Olivier  
Stefano Serra  
Jaco Van Dormael  
Julien Lambert  
Aurélien Leporcq

### Narrator

Toby Regbo

### Translations

Gladys Brookfield

### Pictures

Julien Lambert

### Technical Direction

Thomas Dobruszkès

### Production

Hélène Dubois / Astragales

### Public Relations

Marie Tirtiaux / Astragales

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1hr 15mins no interval

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IMAGES: JULIEN LAMBERT

SUPPORTED BY

**Metro**

## On Tour

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**Interpreters** Julien Lambert  
Harry Cleven Pierre de Wurstemberger  
Manuela Rastaldi Ivan Fox  
Grégory Grosjean Stefano Serra  
Gabriella Iacono Yann Hoogstoel

**Sound**  
Boris Cekevda

**Production**  
Hélène Dubois

**Technical Direction**  
Thomas Dobruszkès

**Public Relations / Tour Management**  
Marie Tirtiaux

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**Associated Producer**  
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Théâtre de Namur (BE)

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la Fondation Mons 2015 KVS (BE)  
Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (LUX)  
le Printemps des comédiens (FR)  
Torino Danza (IT)  
Canadian Stage (CA)  
Théâtre de Carouge-Atelier de Genève (CH)  
Théâtre des Célestins (FR)

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## *Cold Blood, A Poetic Journey*

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Lights, camera, action!

Fingers cavort in a delightful miniature setting.

Cameras hover in time to the music.

A voice narrates...

Filmmaker Jaco Van Dormael and choreographer Michèle Anne De Mey are filming right in front of your eyes. Like *Kiss & Cry*, which has been staged more than 300 times in nine languages in some 20 countries and to a total of over 180,000 people since 2011, the creative team's long-awaited *Cold Blood* is a beautiful, highly-intuitive journey packed with mind-blowing visual effects. Made at the end of the 2015 Le Mons, it was an immediate hit with the press and the public alike before setting off on a new world tour.

\* \* \*

A plane journey, a forest in the fog, seven unexpected deaths...

Punctuated by the sudden realisations of a waking dream, *Cold Blood* unveils a series of different lives in a hypnotic story laced with offbeat humour. With a certain lightness, life celebrates its final moments of happiness and memories file past, at times languid, at times more vibrant.

Existence stands still for a dance.

When death arrives, it is absurd, often trivial and sometimes comical.

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Thomas Gunzig's script tells us that "there are mechanical deaths, organic deaths, fragrant deaths, deaths in the dead of night, deaths experienced first-hand, silent deaths. And then there are erotic deaths". This may be a world of death, but the dance is far from macabre. Oh no, it is a celebration of life, the senses, love, the final moments of light and the preceding memories.

"Is there life before death?" seems to be the question *Cold Blood* is asking us.

And the answer lies in these hands which are dancing before us, in these virtuoso fingers which are clinging to life and the beam of the spotlights.

The show explores the miniscule, surveys little worlds where life is viewed through a kaleidoscope. In this Lilliputian décor, hands intertwine then relax, touch each other and leave the scene, then come back before disappearing for good.

\* \* \*

Under the direction of Michèle-Anne de Mey and Jaco Van Dormael, the *Kiss & Cry* group returns with its latest creation set in a studio where technicians film animated miniature worlds in full view of the audience.

"We challenged ourselves to make a feature-length film on a kitchen table with a cast of dancing hands", Jaco and Michèle Anne explain. "But unlike a regular film, the script was written at the end, once we had experimented with improvisation and suggestions from all members of the group. When the script was in place, we pulled together all the visuals. Yes, it is cinema but it is also much more. There is dance, but there is also more than dance. It is like a pop-up film in which the camera films things which are too small to be seen by the naked eye and the eye sees what the camera does not capture".

*Cold Blood* takes us to the other side of the mirror, where moments are suspended in time, in a state of weightlessness. Behind the scenes we find a fantasy world, an optical illusion that reminds us of the wonder of childhood.

"It is a show which appeals to all five senses. When people take their last breath, they expect to see their lives flash before them but this is not what happens. There is only one final image which takes them by surprise... the softness of skin on an afternoon which smells of vanilla, the noise of the sheep you are sheering, the smell of freshly-cut grass in the height of summer..."

These unexpected memories are a reminder that we only die once because "when the end comes, we do not know that it is the end".



### **Can you tell us where the idea for this hybrid form [nano-dance, full-length film and theatre] came from?**

It was during a kind of workshop in Les Halles in 2003, in which Michèle Anne and I linked up with the Transquinguennal theatre company. Out of that mix of dance, theatre and cinema, there emerged what would later become the opening dance for two hands from *Kiss & Cry*. When Daniel Cordova of Le Manège Mons asked me later to direct something there, I showed him that little bit of film and told him I thought it had potential. I had just put the difficult process of filming *Mr. Nobody* behind me and I wanted to do something lighter. Michèle Anne and I then took up the challenge: she, of dancing with her hands and I, of making a full-length film on the kitchen table. It also gave us an opportunity to work together for once instead of each of us being on tour or on location.

### **Just when did the two of you realise that you were really onto something?**

We had no idea. Even after the premiere, we still didn't know what to make of it. It's only after that that it started to take off. But when something works, you usually don't know why straight away. In any case, we really enjoy doing the shows, even though it's anything but easy.

Spending an hour and twenty minutes each time looking for the right framing and focus is no laughing matter. Usually, nobody sees the work of the cameraman and his assistants, so when you're

suddenly there in front of 800 people at a premiere, your hands do start trembling. The cameraman and the people who do the sets and the lighting are really dancers too and part of the choreography.

### **Is it the combination of traditional craftsmanship and virtuosity that wows the audience so much?**

Yes. There is an affinity with *arte povera*. Paradoxically, it is often more magical when you actually show the tricks you are using. One way or another, the audience is prepared to believe in it more when it gets to see everything that's going on behind the scenes than when something is presented to it as "real". I remembered that from when I was shooting *The Brand New Testament*. For shots that were going to be too expensive – like those at the camp site in Spain – the set designer and I went looking for alternatives. For example, we just suggested that camp site with some little Matchbox cars and a caption. So that costs €50.

### **What was the greatest challenge in making *Cold Blood*?**

Not to do the same thing as in *Kiss & Cry*. But that wasn't such a problem, as we actually had lots of ideas. During our long tour, we kept on coming up with things that we hadn't tried out yet.

One difference with *Kiss & Cry* is that, in that work, you could clearly see that we had cobbled everything together with Playmobil and cardboard. Now, we create more of an illusion of reality. We clearly



film the forest in an aquarium, with semi-transparent mirrors that reflect a single image an infinite number of times, but the result is actually a successful illusion of a forest with a vast surface area. The aeroplane is a scale model, the sun is a spotlight, but the way the camera captures it brings everything close to reality. The cameras are a bit more sensitive too and the sets are lit with LED lighting.

In *Kiss & Cry*, moreover, the stage was more of a bazaar filled with all sorts of bits and pieces. This time, the sets are brought on and off. We play in a less head-on way and more with perspectives and movement. The sets join in the dance.

### **It's not a sequel or a prequel?**

No. We did write the screenplay with Thomas Gunzig again – someone we always have a lot of fun with. We always spend a lot of time laughing, and even when that doesn't lead straight away to a concrete result, it produces something in the long term. We wanted to do something that you can only do on a theatre stage. The whole thing is conceived as a collective hypnosis. The audience is hypnotised and then, without any danger, dies eight times in succession. Each time, it returns from the dead and what it remembers then is not the award of a doctorate or a football championship, but apparently unimportant things like the scent of a woman's neck.

*This interview was excerpted from an article by Michaël Bellon, originally published in the September–December 2016 issue of BRUZZ Magazine.*



Born in Brussels in 1959, **Michèle Anne De Mey** studied at Mudra, Maurice Béjart's dance school from 1976-1979. Her early works include *Passé Simple* (1981), *Ballatum duets* (1984), and *Face à Face* (1986). She collaborated with Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker in the famous *Fase* (1982), *Rosas danst Rosas* (1983), and *Elena's Aria* (1986). In 1989, she founded the company Astragale, to be able to create, produce, and distribute choreographic works around the world. In 1990, she created *Sinfonia Eroica*, a major piece in her career, which received numerous awards and international success. Thanks to that piece, Astragale became a production center where residencies, workshops, and creations happen. More than 30 original works have been generated by Astragale, where several young artists have had the opportunity to think, share, and work.

Over 15 years, De Mey has developed a polymorphic dance universe taking its roots in the special space between the dancer and the audience. Intimacy, storytelling, emotion, and deconstruction are at the basis of her choreographic research. The strong and unbreakable link between music and body pushed her to collaborate with music composers Thierry De Mey, Robert Wyatt, and Jonathan Harvey, and eventually cinema directors, painters, actors, and circus artists to stretch beyond the lines of genres and disciplines.

As a teacher, she has developed workshops and taught courses in Brussels, Angers, and Amsterdam that have shaped her students as much as her personal journey as an artist. She was pronounced Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Mons in Belgium in 2014 and Officier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French minister of culture in 2016.

In 2005, she became the artistic co-director of Charleroi Danses, the choreographic center of the French-speaking part of Belgium. To celebrate this new chapter, she recreated her central piece, *Sinfonia Eroica*, for nine young dancers, and toured it around the world for several years. In 2011, with her life partner and filmmaker Jaco Van Dormael, she began working on a collective piece entitled *Kiss & Cry*, a huge success that has since toured on all continents in nine different languages. The story of *Kiss & Cry* and its collective of creators continued in 2015 where a second opus was born: *Cold Blood*. With the same science of balance between genre and disciplines, De Mey and her collaborators tell a new story that touches audiences profoundly. In 2017, Jaco Van Dormael and De Mey will present a new original collaboration, *Amor*, a solo piece where cinema and dance meet lovingly in dreamy and metaphysical ways.

After his studies in Paris and Brussels, **Jaco Van Dormael** began his career in the early 1980s with short films and documentaries. Among them, *E Pericoloso Sporgersi* was well-received and won the Grand Prix at the film Festival of Clermont Ferrand.

Van Dormael's first full-length film, *Toto le Héros*, displays his dreamlike style between humor and innocence. The film won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the award of "Best Foreign Film" at the French César Awards. Six years later, Van Dormael presented his new piece in Cannes entitled *The Eighth Day*. The film is a touching story of friendship between two men, one living with Down syndrome. The two leading roles won "Best Actors" in Cannes and the film was a huge success in Europe.

*Mr. Nobody* followed, a co-production between Canada, the U.S., Belgium, and France, and included Van Dormael's favorite themes: childhood, innocence, destiny and science fiction. The film starred Jared Leto and Diane Kruger and was released in 2010 after being presented at the Venice Film Festival in 2009.

Soon after, Van Dormael returned to the stage, his first love. In 2011, with his life partner and dancer Michèle Anne De Mey, he developed *Kiss & Cry*: a collective adventure with 10 creators that straddles dance, theater and cinema. In 2012, the Royal Opera of Wallonia asked him to direct César Franck's *Stradella* for its reopening. In 2016, he directed Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

In 2015, Van Dormael returned to the screen with *The Brand New Testament*. He directed the famous Belgian actor Benoit Poelvoorde and the French icon Catherine Deneuve. The film was presented in Cannes during the Quinzaine des réalisateurs, and won four Magrittes (Belgian Academy Awards) including awards for "Best Movie" and "Best Director".

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