

# L'ŒIL D'OLIVIER

chroniques culturelles et rencontres artistiques



<b>Neandertal</b>	TEXTE ET MISE EN SCÈNE <b>David Geselson</b>	 Centre dramatique national de Saint-Denis DIRECTION JULIE DELLOUET	
<b>28 fév. → 11 mars 2024</b>	<a href="http://www.theatregerardphilipe.com">www.theatregerardphilipe.com</a>		

REPORTAGES



## première (s) in Nice with a spellbin ding *Guru*



Opera and Théâtre national  
de Nice

join forces for the French premiere of Laurent Petitgirard's latest opera. Muriel Mayette-Holtz brilliantly directs her first opera.

February 22, 2024



**L**he carnival is in full swing. The King and Queen's floats are waiting in their enclosure for the parade to start. The city is celebrating. Yet, taking the tramway you soon realize that others are taking the opposite route along the Promenade des Anglais, to get to the other end of town. One part of the public only talks about the *Australian Pink Floyd show*, the other about opera and theater. You can't get much more culturally diverse than that!



Some works are long overdue. In 2009, at the request of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, **Laurent Petitgirard** composed *Guru*. The following year, the album was recorded and the show was to be staged, but the creation fell through. Finally, after its premiere in Poland in 2018, it arrives in the capital of the Alpes Maritimes in a new production. This French premiere does not take place in the prestigious Opéra de Paris.



Dominique Jaussein

but at La Cuisine. This former ephemeral theater in Carouge now serves as the main auditorium for the Théâtre national de Nice. A modern departure from classical goods is just the thing for a contemporary work.



**Laurent Petitgirard** is a prestigious composer and conductor. He is best known to the general public for his film and television scores. Connoisseurs know that the artist is much more than that, and that his work, comprising symphonic music, ballets and chamber music, is immense. His first opera, *Joseph Merrick aka Elephant man*, premiered in 2002 at the Prague State Opera, directed by **Daniel Mesguich**. *Guru* is his second. A third, *Houdini*, is in preparation with his son, stage director **Tristan Petitgirard**. The association of a father as composer and a son as librettist is a first in the history of music.

### ***At the heart of the drama***

**Muriel Mayette-Holtz**, who will be directing the TNN from 2019 onwards, knows the venue well, and all the possibilities it has to offer. There's no orchestra pit here, but a stage designed for theater. It was this challenge that attracted her and won us over. The orchestra is located at the back of the stage, and all the action takes place upstage. Above, a giant screen optically creates a third dimension. The set design allows us to step out of the frame and focus on the characters. For her first foray into opera staging, the director has produced a remarkable work.



Inspired by the Jonestown tragedy, in which, in 1978, nine hundred people followed their guru to his death, but also by those caused by the Order of the Solar Temple, this opera revolves around the sect. On an island, a man called Guru reigns supreme over poor lost souls ready to believe anything, especially the improbable, and to feed only on sea water to be saved. A newcomer, Marie, will try to reason with his followers.



comrades. But it's no use: without realizing it, she completely disrupts the order and sends the guru into a state of madness.

### *An ensemble in tune*



ue Jaussein

Although **Xavier Maurel's** text is not entirely convincing, it does have some very fine passages. We'll especially remember this heart-rending cry

of Iris, the mother mourning her dead child. The high-pitched soprano **Anaïs Constans** is a real shocker. Nevertheless, the libretto has the quality of dramatic progression and the thickness it offers the characters. The score, conducted by the maestro and performed by the **Orchestre philharmonique de Nice**, is demanding. But as soon as you understand its mechanism, that of being in "*perfect harmony with the action*" and the guru's insanity, you're taken in by its power.

Argentine baritone **Armando Noguera** is an exceptional Guru. The quality of his stage performance underlines the strength of this Machiavellian being who knows how to turn any situation to his advantage and manipulate people. **Frédéric Diquero** and **Nika Guliashvili** are perfect henchmen. As Marthe, Guru's mother, **Marie-Ange Todorovitch** is as frightening as she is touching. The six young artists of the **CALM** (Centre Lyrique de la Méditerranée) and the **Opéra de Nice choir** represent the torments of these followers in search of hope. There remains Marie, the one who dares to defy. This role is not sung, but declaimed according to a particular rhythm, where the spoken text and the music seem to become one. Actress **Sonia**

Petrovna's magnificent performance left us speechless!

*Marie-Céline Nivière - Special correspondent in Nice*

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**Guru, opera by Laurent Petitgirard**

*Théâtre National de Nice* in coproduction with *Opéra de Nice*

*Salle de La Cuisine*

*155 bd du*

*Mercantour 06200*

*Nice.*

*Tuesday 20, Thursday 22, Saturday 24*

*February 2024. Duration: 2 hours.*

*Musical direction Laurent Petitgirard.*

*Directed by Muriel Mayette-Holtz*

*Libretto by Xavier Maurel*

*Nice Opera Choir Nice*

*Philharmonic Orchestra.*

*With Armando Noguera, Sonia Petrovna, Anaïs Constans, Frédéric*

*Diquero, Nika Guliashvili, Marie-Ange Todorovitch and the participation*

*of artists from CALM (Centre Art Lyrique de la Méditerranée): Rachel*

*Duckett, Noelia Ibañez, Aviva Manenti, Raphael Jardin, Eduard Ferenczi*

*Gurban, Trystan Daguerre.*

*Set and costumes by Rudy Sabounghi.*

*Video by Julien Soulier.*



**LAURENT PETITGIRARD MURIEL MAYETTE-HOLTZ**

**OPÉRA DE NICE THÉÂTRE NATIONAL DE NICE**

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**Marie-Céline Nivière**

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DE MARNE-LA-VALLÉE



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