

PHAEDRA & MADISON

THE LIFE WE CHOOSE

A theatrical diptych - desire, fantasy, responsibility, irreversibility



PHAEDRA - Ann-Sophie Archer - photograph © Mathieu Zazzo

ACADIA PRODUCTIONS • COMPAGNIE AURÉLIEN RECOING



THE PROJECT

Two women at the edge of a choice

From Greek myth to 1965 America, two inner rooms where long-withheld words become action.

Phaedra and Francesca belong to different eras, stories and outcomes. Yet each stands at an absolute fork in the road: yield to desire or preserve the order of the world; finally speak the truth or continue to live with it. One turns confession into catastrophe. The other turns renunciation into memory.

The diptych gives voice to two women who refuse to be reduced to the role assigned to them by family, home or society. Their fantasy is not a decorative escape: it reveals the life that might have been lived. Theatre makes that parallel life concrete - sand and veil for Phaedra, table and sheets for Madison.

MANIFESTO One evening, two productions, one question: what remains of us when the choice that defines us can no longer be undone?

FORM A modular diptych: two productions in alternation, over two evenings, or brought together as part of a festival program.

LANGUAGES Phaedra in French; Madison developed in English, with a French version intended for Quebec and France.

AUDIENCES Producing theatres, multidisciplinary venues, festivals, heritage spaces and transatlantic networks.

HORIZON A revival of Phaedra and the English-language creation of Madison, announced by Carousel Music Theater for its 2027 season.

THE DIPTYCH

Why bring them together?

An intimate diptych in which desire measures the price of a life.

The choice

Phaedra acts from beyond the point of no return; Francesca chooses to stay. In both works, deciding resolves nothing: the decision creates the time that follows.

Fantasy

The beloved opens the door to a possible existence. Hippolytus and Robert are not only men: they become thresholds to another identity.

The house

For Phaedra, the house is a paradise contaminated by conspiracy. For Francesca, the kitchen is at once refuge, gentle prison and place of revelation.

Speech

Two extended addresses reconstruct the event. Confession does not describe the action: it is the action. The spectator is placed at the distance of a confidant.

Time

Ritsos allows antiquity, 1970s Greece and the present to interpenetrate. Madison overlays 1965, the 1987 letter and the children's memory. The stage contains several lives at once.

FIRST PANEL

PHAEDRA - Passion as a final work

A dramatic poem by Yannis Ritsos (1974-1975), in the French text by Gérard Pierrat, Éditions Gallimard.

In Ritsos's true-and-false soliloquy, Phaedra speaks to Hippolytus while summoning herself to account. Myth returns to the scale of a private incident: a lover, a young man, an absent husband, a calm house beneath which murder and revenge are already moving. Speech walks a wire between lucidity and hallucination until the actress's whole body becomes the site of thought.

This Phaedra extends the memory of Racine, Ritsos and Antoine Vitez without treating them as museum references. The staging seeks a theatre of sand: a domestic and mental space where everything is erased and begins again. Butoh informs the movement of the bodies - an almost imperceptible dance of death, the motion of bone inside flesh. The costumes dream the 1970s; light, image, sound and music make the poem's air visible, vibrating and almost breathable.

PHAEDRA "The final justice of death and the injustice of life."

INDICATIVE RUNNING TIME 80 minutes.

RECENT PRESENTATION Librairie 7L, Paris, April 29, 2025.

PERFORMERS Ann-Sophie Archer (Phaedra), Louka Meliava (Hippolytus on screen), Marlowe Recoing (Hippolytus on stage), Aurélien Recoing (Theseus).

DIRECTION Ann-Sophie Archer and Aurélien Recoing.

SCENOGRAPHY AND IMAGE

A fragment of a fresco

Ancient Greece, the 1970s and our present settle into the same space.



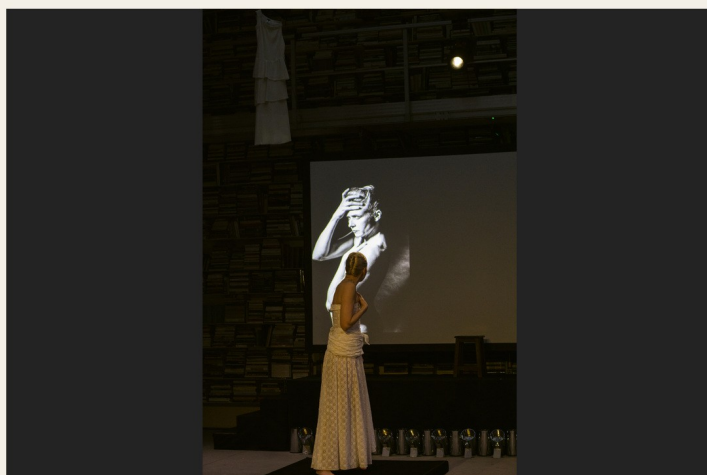
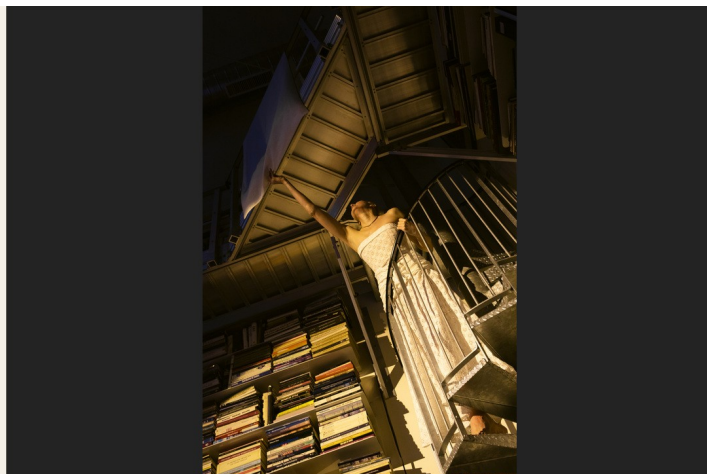
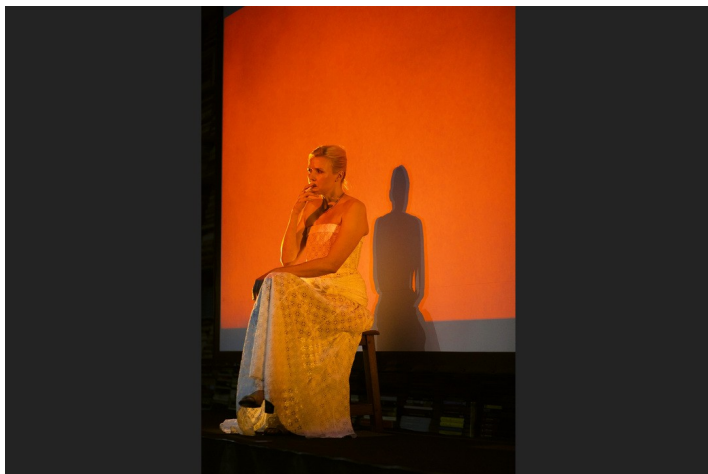
Scenographic visualization based on a production photograph © [Mathieu Zazzo](#); photograph projected on screen © [Philippe Matsas](#).

Muriel Trembleau's scenography imagines a stage both mineral and domestic: rocks, transparencies, metallic materials and veils form a house that never fully belongs to Phaedra. [Philippe Matsas](#)'s projected images cross the space like mental apparitions. Georges Lavaudant's lighting casts a veil over the night; Marie-Jeanne Serero's music connects ancient sonorities to a more electric memory; Léonard Françon's sound design tears open the air around the gestures.

PRODUCTION IMAGES

Phaedra - space, bodies, projections

Complete selection of distinct visuals from the 2026 portfolio - plate 1/2.

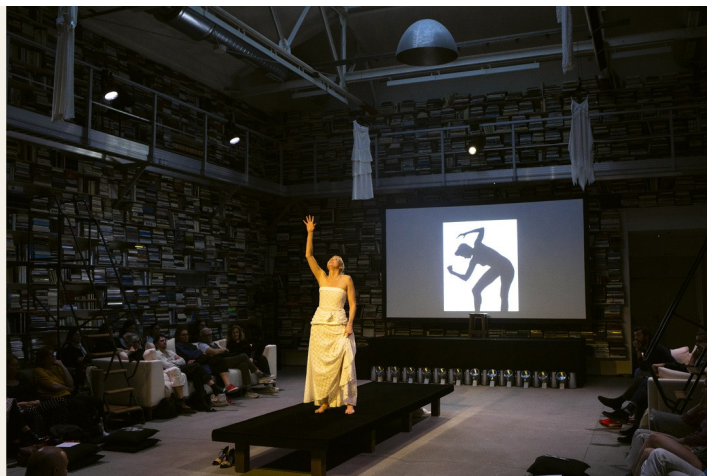


Performance photographs: [Mathieu Zazzo](#). Projected images visible in selected photographs: [Philippe Matsas](#).

PRODUCTION IMAGES

Phaedra - space, bodies, projections

Complete selection of distinct visuals from the 2026 portfolio - plate 2/2.



Performance photographs: [Mathieu Zazzo](#). Projected images visible in selected photographs: [Philippe Matsas](#).

SECOND PANEL

MADISON - Four days, an entire life

A stage adaptation inspired by Robert James Waller's novel The Bridges of Madison County.

Iowa, August 1965. Francesca Johnson is alone at the farm when Robert Kincaid, a traveling photographer, stops to ask the way to Roseman Bridge. In four days, a life governed by habit opens onto another possibility. Years later, Francesca entrusts her children with the secret of that love and the decision that shaped everything that followed.

Our adaptation concentrates the story around Francesca and Robert. It does not pursue nostalgia for a famous romance, but the precision of a choice: what does it mean to remain after glimpsing the life one desired? Francesca renounces neither from weakness nor conformity. She measures the consequences of her departure for Richard, her children and the woman she would become if she betrayed her own sense of responsibility.

FRANCESCA "We are made of the choices we have made."

CREATION First English-language stage creation, announced by Carousel Music Theater for its 2027 season.

VENUE Carousel Music Theater, Boothbay Harbor, Maine, United States.

PROPOSED CAST Ann-Sophie Archer (Francesca) and Aurélien Recoing (Robert).

DOCUMENTARY A documentary about the Madison rehearsals is in development.

MADISON - DRAMATURGY

A play of apparitions

The present tense of the letter does not reconstruct 1965: it allows what has never ceased to act to appear.

TIME IN TWO LAYERS The action begins after Francesca's death. In the present of her children, the letter opens a room into which 1965 returns. The woman who knows and the woman who is discovering Robert coexist: every moment is lived for the first time and already viewed from the vantage point of its irreversibility.

FRANCESCA Robert does not create her. His gaze makes perceptible what was always active but had no language: desire, culture, humor and the capacity to choose.

ROBERT He appears both as a concrete presence and as the agent of a displacement. Because he is destined to leave, each of his appearances already contains his disappearance.

THE ABSENT Richard, Michael and Carolyn need not occupy the stage in order to act upon it. Schedules, objects and domestic gestures sustain their moral presence in the empty house; they give the choice its real weight.

THE CHOICE The play does not separate good from evil, but two incompatible truths. Staying, writing and passing the story on form a single tragic gesture: accepting loss without consenting to erasure.

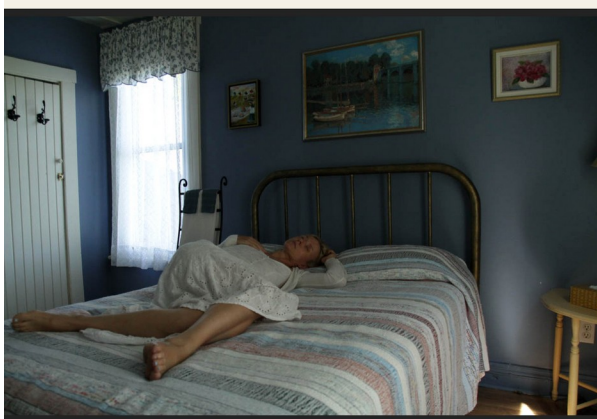


Visualization - frontal view, the memory of the house mirrored.

FRANCESCA - PORTRAIT

An inner life

Unease surfaces inside the house: waiting, listening, decision.



Ann-Sophie Archer / Francesca - photographs © Aurélien Recoing, 2024.

The telephone, the bedroom and the horizon compose three states of the same expectancy: listening, surrendering, then turning toward the possible life.

FRANCESCA - TERRITORY

The house and the landscape

Domestic life crossed by the call of the road.



Ann-Sophie Archer / Francesca - photographs © Aurélien Recoing, 2024.

The farm, the road and the edge of the landscape open the frame: Francesca is no longer a motionless figure in an interior, but a body crossed by the call of the world outside.

SCENOGRAPHY AND IMAGE

A house crossed by the road

Table, sheets, images: a theatre-sized darkroom, in frontal, bi-frontal or tri-frontal configuration.



Visualization - stage-left view, from the balcony.

The central table is at once kitchen, bed of memory, shared territory and line of separation. Depending on the venue, the audience sits facing the stage or on either side of the playing space. Upstage, hanging sheets become, in turn, domestic laundry, veil, skin, projection screen and surface of memory. Bridges, roads and rain enter the house through their folds. The projected image remains incisive even through its transparency: a sharply defined apparition, modulated by the folds of the fabric.

MADISON - ARCHITECTURE OF THE STORY

Five movements toward the trace

The stage does not change sets: it changes states. Table, bridge and projections measure Francesca's inner movement.

I. THE ENVELOPE The isolated table is desk, altar and place of address. Upstage remains dark; the bridge exists only in words.

II. THE ARRIVAL Robert crosses the upstage axis toward the house. The table retains its domestic function while roads, dust and the first lines of the bridge open the depth of the space.

III. THE AWAKENING Preparing, drinking, speaking, looking: the table becomes a shared workshop. Landscapes fragment across the sheets, as though the photographic gaze were permeating the space.

IV. LOVE The table ceases to separate and becomes a horizontal bridge between the bodies. The projections leave the landscape for matter: wood, skin, water, light.

V. THE CHOICE AND THE TRACE The table becomes a boundary again, then a writing surface. In the rain, the bridge fixes itself as an impossible crossing before fading. What was not crossed becomes letter, photograph, ashes and inheritance.

PERFORMANCE To hold back, so as to burn more deeply: the conversation is already an erotic scene, and the decision must become visible before it is spoken.



Visualization - stage-right view, from above.

DRAMATURGY

Two works in the mirror

Not two love stories, but two architectures of decision.

AXIS	PHAEDRA	MADISON
DESIRE	A forbidden passion that consumes the family order.	An encounter that reveals a life long held dormant.
DECISION	To speak, accuse and precipitate catastrophe.	To remain, protect one's family and carry the absence.
FANTASY	Hippolytus becomes a figure of inaccessible purity and youth.	Robert embodies the road, movement and freedom still possible.
SPACE	Open house, rocks, sand, veils: paradise becomes a trap.	Kitchen, table, sheets: the home becomes a darkroom.
TIME	Antiquity, the 1970s and the present interpenetrate.	1965, 1987 and the children's aftermath overlap.
TRACE	Revenge as a final signature.	The letter, photographs and ashes as a legacy.

PRINCIPLE The diptych does not seek to make the two works alike. It organizes their friction: the confession that destroys set against the renunciation that preserves.



Study in correspondence - Madison / Phaedra, the bridge as a hinge.

STAGING

A shared stage grammar

Two autonomous worlds connected by the same attention to body, image and duration.

Body

Butoh nourishes Phaedra: slowness, fragility, the density of bone. Madison works through domestic gesture - cutting, serving, washing, writing - until it becomes an intimate dance.

Image

In Phaedra, projection reveals essences and mental faces. In Madison, landscapes settle on the sheets like imperfect memories.

Light

A veiled metaphysical night for Phaedra; four days and four nights, from the heat of August to the gray of departure, for Madison.

Sound

Ritsos calls for matter both harsh and aerial. Madison combines blues, jazz, Italian opera, rain, engine, water, telephone, breath and silence.

Audience presence

The production can be performed in a proscenium, bi-frontal or tri-frontal configuration. In each, the spectator is less a witness to a plot than the recipient of a confession; direct address makes the speech intensely personal.



Atmosphere study - Madison, a bi-frontal configuration adaptable to a tri-frontal setting.

TOURING

A modular project for theatres

The diptych can inhabit very different contexts without losing its unity.

DOUBLE BILL Two concentrated works brought together in a single evening, with an interval and a visible transformation of the space.

TWO EVENINGS Phaedra followed by Madison on consecutive dates, accompanied by a conversation on desire and life choices.

ALTERNATING REPERTOIRE The two productions presented in alternation within the repertoire of the same venue.

TRANSATLANTIC JOURNEY French versions in France and Quebec; English-language creation in the United States; artist exchanges, residencies and co-production.

DOCUMENTARY A documentary about the Madison rehearsals is in development and accompanies the creative process.

STRENGTH A strong editorial identity, two touring languages and an adaptable stage economy.



Visualization - Madison, a polyptych of the house and garden.

THE ARTISTS

Artistic team

A creation shaped by a French-Quebec and transatlantic dialogue.



Ann-Sophie Archer / Phaedra - © [Mathieu Zazzo](#).

AURÉLIEN RECOING - direction, performance, artistic leadership

An actor and director trained at the CNSAD with Jean-Pierre Miquel and Antoine Vitez. His career spans major dramatic texts and international auteur cinema. Phaedra extends a long investigation into Ritsos, Vitez's legacy and the actor's body.

ANN-SOPHIE ARCHER - direction, performance, artistic leadership

A Quebec actress and director, also trained in translation and film studies. She performs Phaedra and develops Francesca as two figures of female speech confronting what a life permits or forbids.

CREDITS

Cast and creative team

Phaedra and Madison: artists, collaborators and partners.

PHAEDRA

TEXT Yannis Ritsos; French text by Gérard Pierrat - © Éditions Gallimard, 1978.

DIRECTION Aurélien Recoing and Ann-Sophie Archer.

PERFORMERS Ann-Sophie Archer (Phaedra), Louka Meliava (Hippolytus on screen), Marlowe Recoing (Hippolytus on stage), Aurélien Recoing (Theseus).

SCENOGRAPHY Muriel Trembleau.

LIGHTING Georges Lavaudant.

ORIGINAL MUSIC Marie-Jeanne Serero.

SOUND DESIGN Léonard Françon.

COSTUMES CHANEL.

PROJECTED IMAGES Philippe Matsas.

IMAGE EDITING Muriel Langlois.

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY Mathieu Zazzo.

PROJECT AND PRESS COORDINATION Nathalie Gasser and Anne Pourbaix.

CO-PRODUCTIONS Librairie 7L, Compagnie Aurélien Recoing, 5600 K Productions, Acadia Productions.

MADISON - COLLABORATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT Ann-Sophie Archer and Aurélien Recoing.

PROPOSED CAST Ann-Sophie Archer (Francesca) and Aurélien Recoing (Robert).

SCENOGRAPHY, LIGHTING AND TECHNICAL COORDINATION Kelli Connors / Carousel Music Theater.

MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN Guy Scott.

IMAGES, ANIMATION AND AUDIOVISUAL DESIGN Muriel Langlois / 5600K Productions.

PHOTOGRAPHY Aurélien Recoing, 2024.

ANNOUNCED CREATION Carousel Music Theater, Boothbay Harbor, Maine - 2027 season.

DIPTYCH PRODUCTION Acadia Productions / Compagnie Aurélien Recoing.

PARTNERSHIPS

Production and development

A diptych ready to enter into dialogue with partners for creation, revival and touring.

2025 Presentation of Phaedra in Paris; consolidation of the team and visual materials.

2026 Dramaturgical, scenographic, sound and audiovisual development of Madison; technical adaptation to frontal, bi-frontal and tri-frontal configurations.

2027 English-language creation of Madison included in the Carousel Music Theater season; dates and production structure to be finalized.

NEXT STAGE Residencies, co-producing partners, Phaedra revival, French-language version of Madison, France-Quebec-United States touring strategy.

We are seeking

- One or more co-producers for the Phaedra revival and the creation and touring of the diptych.
- Residency venues to adapt both scenographies to a touring economy.
- Partners for translation, rights, recording and international development.
- Pre-buys and presentations in France, Quebec, the United States and at French- and English-language festivals.



Phaedra - Ann-Sophie Archer - production photograph © [Mathieu Zazzo](#).

INFORMATION

Credits, rights and contacts

Performance, translation, adaptation and recording rights must be secured separately for each territory and medium. Any public distribution of photographs and visual material remains subject to the agreement of the relevant rights holders.

PHAEDRA - TEXT Yannis Ritsos; French translation by Gérard Pierrat, © Éditions Gallimard, 1978.

PHAEDRA - PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY © [Mathieu Zazzo](#).

PHAEDRA - PROJECTED IMAGES © Philippe Matsas.

PHAEDRA - SCENOGRAPHY Muriel Trembleau.

MADISON - PHOTOGRAPHY Ann-Sophie Archer in Francesca's world - © Aurélien Recoing, 2024.

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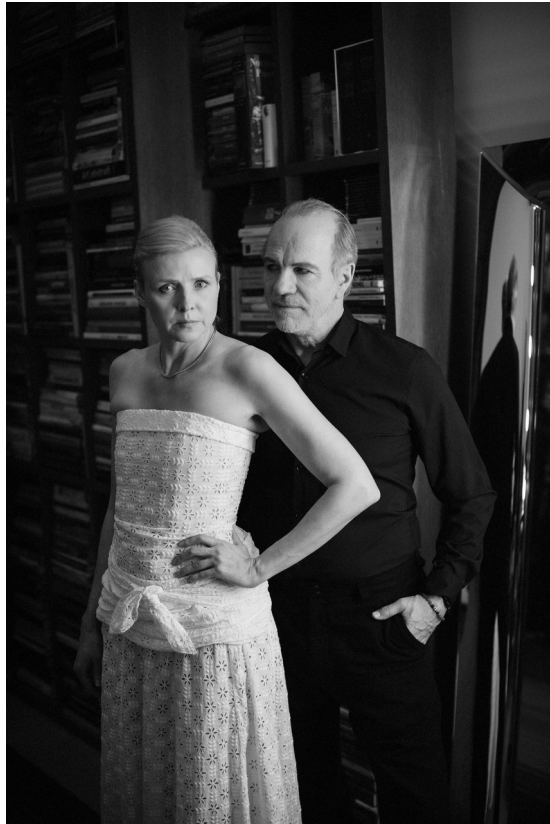
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PROFESSIONAL MEDIA — ACCESS ON REQUEST

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Biographies: [Ann-Sophie Archer](#) • [Professional dossier — Aurélien Recoing](#)



Ann-Sophie Archer and Aurélien Recoing - © [Mathieu Zazzo](#).