

AF
ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL
1-17 MARCH 2019

THEATRE / PORTUGAL

By Heart

AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

Teatro Nacional D. Maria II

after an original creation by the
company Mundo Perfeito

Image: Magda Bizarro



5 – 10 Mar / Odeon Theatre

Duration 75 -120mins, no interval

Written and performed by Tiago Rodrigues

English translation Tiago Rodrigues,

revised by Joana Frazão

Set, props & costume Magda Bizarro

Producers, original production

Magda Bizarro, Rita Mendes

Co-producers O Espaço do Tempo

and Maria Matos Teatro Municipal

Stage Manager André Pato

Executive Producer Rita Forjaz

Text with fragments and quotes by William Shakespeare, Ray Bradbury, George Steiner, Joseph Brodsky, among others.

THIS SHOW IS A LOVE STORY TO MEMORY

At this performance, Tiago Rodrigues will teach ten of you, from the audience, a poem. While teaching the poem, he will tell the story of his grandmother, and of writers and characters from books, revealing unsuspected connections – between Nobel laureate Boris Pasternak, a cook from north Portugal, a Dutch television show... and the secret behind the poetry will gradually unfold.

The performance will end when the ten can recite the poem, not just from memory, but truly – *by heart*.

**“Once 10 people know a poem by heart,
there’s nothing the KGB, the CIA or the
Gestapo can do about it. It will survive.”**
George Steiner

Performance created with the financial support of Governo de Portugal | DGArtes. Presented by arrangement with Arts Projects Australia.

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Tiago Rodrigues, on poetry, memory and interior decoration

The essayist Joseph Brodsky wrote this – or something quite similar, I'm quoting from memory: *'The last thing to leave our dying lips may very well be a poem... As though it were aware of the fragility and treachery of man's faculties, the poem aims at the target of human memory, because memory is usually the last thing to disappear, even when our whole existence crumbles around us'*.

Brodsky claims that the poem is born as a device simplifying the task of apprehending the world. Rather than an end in itself, the poem would be a means or a tool to reach the goal of knowing a world by heart.

Because of my work as an actor, some texts have got inside me, they have settled in and never left me since. They are discreet tenants who dwell in my memory, although they can awaken at any time.

It is precisely because I am the proud landlord to all of these tenants of memory that I embarked on a journey when my grandmother, who is from Trás-os-Montes, was growing blind and asked me to choose a book for her to learn by heart, so she could read it in her mind after she stopped seeing.

This literary journey is still happening. While I was searching for the ultimate book for my grandmother to keep in her memory, I created a show called *By Heart*, where I teach a Shakespeare sonnet to ten members of the audience who volunteer to come on stage. In this show, I tell stories related to my grandmother, to Boris Pasternak or to Ray Bradbury. I quote literature professor George Steiner, who refers to the texts we keep in our memory as *'the decoration for the house of our interior'*, perhaps ignorant of the fact that in Portuguese, the word *'decorating'* is a synonym of *'learning by heart'*.

Our play is essentially the portrayal of a search for the ultimate book, the only one that my grandmother would keep inside her head once her eyes failed her.

Tiago Rodrigues

Since 2015, Tiago Rodrigues has been the Artistic Director of the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in Lisbon.

In 1997, he started to collaborate with the Belgian collective tg STAN, and in 2003 he co-founded with Magda Bizarro the company Mundo Perfeito, with which he created and presented about 30 performances in more than 20 countries.

His latest performances granted him international recognition and a number of national and international awards. Some of his most notable works are *By Heart*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Bovary*, *The way she dies* and *Sopro*, the latter being created at the Festival d'Avignon.

Whether mixing true stories and fiction, rewriting classics or adapting novels, the theatre of Tiago Rodrigues is deeply rooted in the idea of writing for and with the actors.

In 2018 he was awarded with the XV Europe Prize Theatrical Realities.

Teatro Nacional D. Maria II (D. Maria II National Theatre)

The theatre was inaugurated in 1846, its mission to produce leading works of world theatre, staged to the highest standards of artistic and technical quality, in the beautiful neoclassical *teatro* designed by Italian architect Fortunato Lodi. The Theatre was virtually destroyed by fire in 1964 and re-opened, rebuilt and modernised, in 1978.