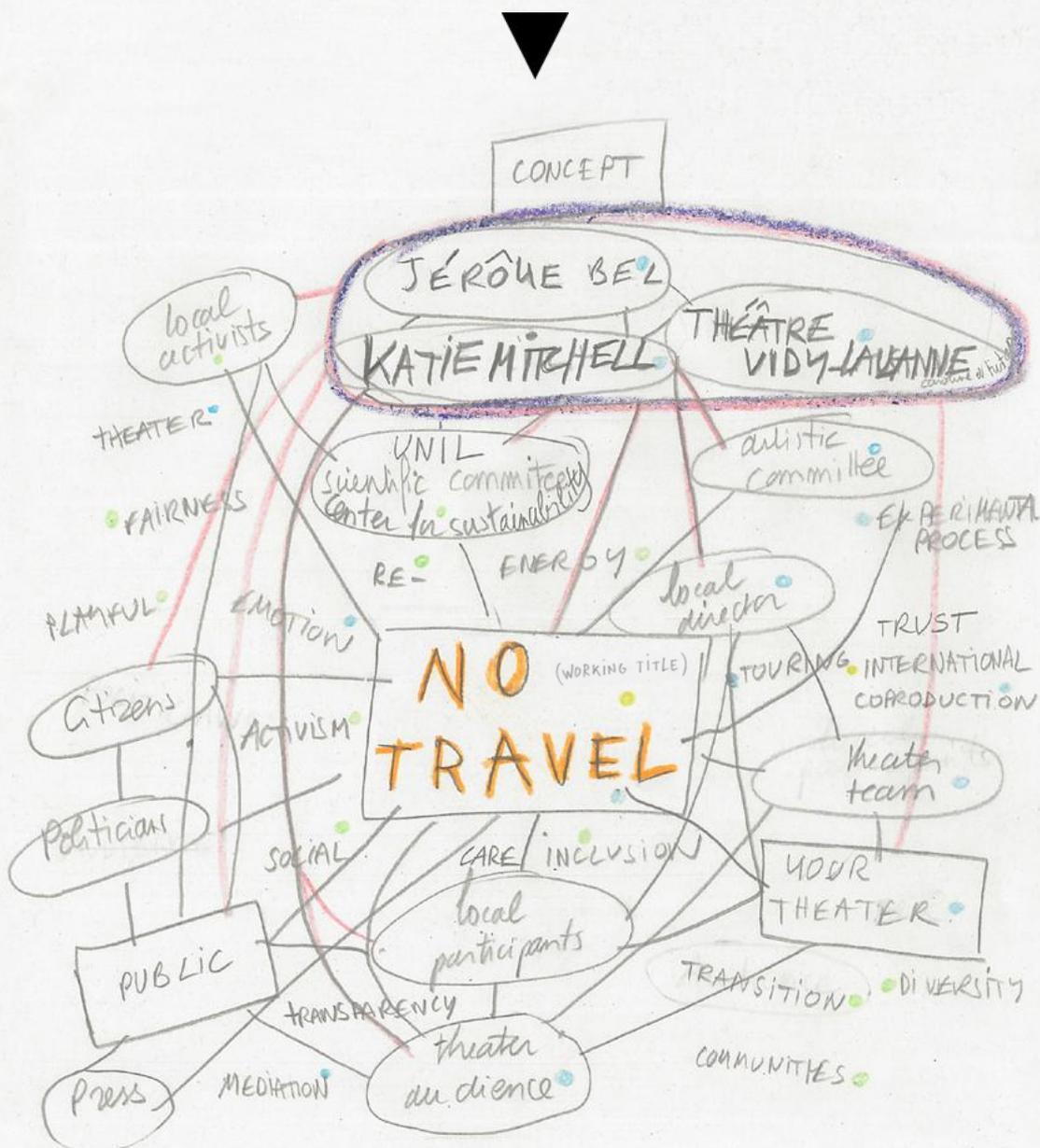


A SUSTAINABLE PLAY-FUL EXPERIMENT



A PLAY

BY

Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne
with the collaboration of the
Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability (University of Lausanne)

PRODUCED BY

Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, your theatre/festival and many others

PRESENTED IN

Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne
September 21

Your theatre/festival
As of November 21

DIRECTED BY

Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel

Your local director/choreographer

FROM MELBOURNE TO NEW YORK: THE JOURNEY OF A SHOW WITHOUT TRAVEL

Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel share several points in common. Both were born in autumn 1964. Both are major artists on the international contemporary scene. And both of them gave up traveling by plane to reduce their carbon footprint.

MELBOURNE, 2007

An experimental choreographer, [Jérôme Bel](#) lives in Paris and works internationally. In 2007, he is on a plane that brings him back from Melbourne where he has presented *The Show Must Go On*. He reads an article that encourages everyone to reduce their carbon footprint to fight global warming. Beside him are sitting the twenty dancers of his show. He then makes the decision not to travel anymore internationally with his entire company. In the future, only his assistants will travel and recreate his shows with local dancers.

LONDON – EUROPE, 2012-2020

Since 2012, Katie Mitchell has made 28 productions on mainland Europe entailing nearly 100 train journeys, averaging 8 hours per trip, thereby radically reducing her carbon footprint. She has also directed three other shows about the environment, most recently with Professor Chris Rapley, a leading climate change scientist in the UK.

LONDON, 2012

An international theatre and opera director, [Katie Mitchell](#) lives in London and works in mainland Europe. In 2012, concerned about the climate emergency, she creates *Ten Billion*. The show features scientist Stephen Emmott talking about over-population and the unprecedented planetary emergency it brings. The experience is significant for Katie Mitchell, who sees her understanding of the climate and environmental situation radically changing. At the end of the project, she decides to stop flying, thereby agreeing to limit her work possibilities. ([article The Guardian](#)).

LONDON, 2014

Katie Mitchell becomes an advocate of European night train travel and fights against the closures of many overnight trains ([article The Guardian](#)).

PARIS, 2019

One day in February 2019, Jérôme Bel is adjusting the heating of his Parisian apartment «to save as much energy as possible». But he realizes that at the same time four of his assistants are traveling to Hong Kong and Lima to restage one of his creations. «It is then that I tell myself that I am a hypocrite, that I lie to myself, that my life is nothing but bad theater».

He then makes an even more radical decision: from now on, neither he nor any member of his company will fly. This decision forces him to completely modify his way of working and to adopt new practices, such as collaborating with foreign choreographers or rehearsing by video.

LONDON – PARIS, 2019

After reading the article, Katie Mitchell asks the reporter to put her in touch with Jérôme Bel.

Katie Mitchell writes to Jérôme Bel. The two artists do not know each other. They have never met. Their artistic practices are very different. But they share the same ecological concern, and the need to integrate it into their work.

While chatting, they discover another common point: the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, with which they each have projects. Very quickly, a desire arises to make one together. Katie is already working with Vidy on a project about climate change and invites Jerome Bel to collaborate with her on the production.

PARIS – NEW YORK, 2019

For *Isadora Duncan*, created in October 2019, Jérôme Bel works in Paris with the French dancer Elisabeth Schwartz. But for the show's US tour, he rehearses by video with a New York-based dancer, Catherine Gallant.

In September 2019, *The New York Times* publishes a [report](#) on these unusual rehearsals with Catherine Gallant. The journalist also mentions other artists who have also decided to stop flying. She names Katie Mitchell.

LAUSANNE – PARIS – LONDON, JANUARY 2020

So Katie and Jerome approach the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne about working together on the production. The Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne is also thinking about how to reduce the carbon footprint of its activity and make an activist use of its position. The three partners agree to develop together a project on environmental issues. But there is no question of approaching the subject only on stage: the reflection must be present at each stage of the production and touring process. The project must serve as a real laboratory to question and rethink current theatrical practices. A full scale exercise.

LAUSANNE - PARIS - LONDON, FEBRUARY 2020

A team of the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne made up of Vincent Baudriller, director, Caroline Barneaud, director of artistic and international projects, Tristan Pannatier, project manager, and Christian Wilmart, technical director, is travelling from Lausanne to London by train to meet with Katie Mitchell. But before they reach their destination, the appointment has to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. It is replaced by a video meeting a few days later, at which Katie suggests that there should be absolutely no travel in the process of making the production. The three partners agree on adopting this principle as a first rule for their experimental process : the show must be created, performed and toured without anybody travelling ! It is therefore exclusively through video conversations that the contours of the project are currently taking shape. Jérôme Bel and Katie Mitchell have still not met physically.

LAUSANNE, SEPTEMBER 2021

Premiere of the play at the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne! Jérôme Bel and Katie Mitchell remotely attend it from London and Paris. They have also remotely rehearsed with the performers, who come from French-speaking Switzerland.

IN YOUR THEATRE, AS OF NOVEMBER 2021

The play is presented in your theatre or festival. You have restaged it from scratch from the script written by Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel and the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne. This script details not only the performance of the show but also the steps you need to take to stage it: from the casting of local performers, the organization of rehearsals, the construction of the set to the relationship with the audience. You have chosen a director or a choreographer to direct this staging. All your team is involved.

The process and the show travel all over the world ...
without anyone traveling!

JOIN US!

We make the same observation: we are aware of the ecological and climate emergency, and often also of possible solutions, we know that our ways of life must undergo radical changes, but we do not know how to take action. Or we do not succeed.

We are caught up in our habits, faced with our contradictions and the immensity of the task, perhaps discouraged by the fear of a radical change and the impression that small changes will not change anything.

The theater world is no exception to this situation. It too struggles to profoundly change its practices and falls short.

What can we do?

Start by coming together and joining our forces and knowledge to get down to business, joyfully and radically. And start with what we have the means to act on. While thinking much bigger.

We are theater makers. So let's act on the theater. Through the theater.

Let's use theatre to carry the voice of ecological activism and make a show in line with the historical moment we are going through.

Let's connect with scientists personally engaged to this cause.

Let's question and rethink how we make theatre, every step of our production system.

Let's remodel how we monetise the work we make.

Let's rethink our international touring practices.

Let's develop together an ecological and sustainable theatre that can support the movement towards a new way of living together.

The ecological emergency is global. This project must be too. The more numerous and diverse its participants, the more it will involve a large international community, the more it will be able to go far in its ambitions.

This project needs you. Let us pool our strengths, our knowledge and know-how, our networks, our audiences! Join us!

Katie Mitchell, Jérôme Bel and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne



Katie Mitchell has made 100 shows over a thirty-year career spanning opera, theatre and live cinema. Her hallmark feminist work focuses on the female experience and a passion for formal experimentation. She is committed to finding new forms of theatre to tackle the subject of climate change. She has made two productions about the subject with scientists - [*Ten Billion*](#) (2012) with Stephen Emmott, presented at the [*Festival d'Avignon*](#), and [*2071*](#) (2014) with Professor Chris Rapley both at The Royal Court Theatre. She has brought her environmental concerns to other concepts, including [*Lungs*](#) in 2013 at The Schaubühne (where the performers powered the electricity for the light and sound for their performance whilst acting the text) and Beckett's [*Happy Days*](#) at The Hamburg Schauspielhaus (where she replaced earth with water and relocated the action of the play in the aftermath of an environmental disaster). Currently she is working on a version of *The Cherry Orchard* from the point of view of the trees, and a new show about the pandemics and ecology for the Schaubühne, Berlin. In 2012 Katie stopped flying in response to her work with the scientist, Stephen Emmott.



Jérôme Bel lives in Paris and works worldwide. Through his use of biography, Jérôme Bel politicizes his questions, aware as he is of the crisis involving the subject in contemporary society and the forms its representation takes on stage. In embryonic form in [*The show must go on*](#), he deals with questions about what the theatre can be in a political sense—questions which come to the fore from [*Disabled Theater*](#) and [*Gala on*](#). In offering the stage to non-traditional performers (amateurs, people with physical and mental handicaps, children...), he shows a preference for the community of differences over the formatted group, and a desire to dance over choreography, and duly applies the methods of a process of emancipation through art. No longer travelling by plane, for ecological reasons, Jérôme Bel and his company have developed new working practices for the creation and touring of their shows, such as rehearsals by teleconference, working with transcripts and video and collaboration with local choreographers and performers.



The *Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne* invites artists of different origins to create shows, often in co-production with international partners, which it then accompanies on an international tour. This production and touring activity induces a carbon footprint which the theatre team is committed to find ways of reducing. Beside reducing the numbers and distances of the travels, the Theatre Vidy-Lausanne is willing to explore new ways of making theatre. It is also reflecting on how to make the best use of its skills and its local and international position for activist purposes. During the 19/20 season, it developed, with the philosopher of ecology Dominique Bourg, a cycle entitled *Imagination of possible futures* to think about the future, from the current situation of crisis, with the public, artists and researchers.



A **scientific committee** has been specifically set up for this project by Nelly Niwa, director of the *Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability* of the University of Lausanne. The centre aims to federate, valorise, support and stimulate research and teaching on sustainability for the 7 faculties of the university and its 15'000 students. It develops transdisciplinary projects involving the collaboration from different researchers and actors in society. This multidisciplinary scientific committee is made of 7 female researchers, each expert of a different field :

- Clémence Demay, PhD in law (commitment to sustainability / civil disobedience)
- Diane Linder, PhD student in nature aesthetics
- Nelly Niwa, director of the Centre for Sustainability
- Pascale Schwab Castella, specialist of carbon assessment and life cycle analysis
- Julia Steinberger, professor of social challenges of climate and expert from IPCC
- Heidi Strebel, specialist of business rhetoric
- Miriam Tola, professor of environmental humanities

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