



DIFFUSION

Heritage

CÉDRIC EECKHOUT

Production

Théâtre de Liège, DC&J Création

Coproduction

Théâtre Varia, Théâtre Les Tanneurs,
Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne CDN,
Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg

CRÉATION
THÉÂTRE DE LIÈGE
13 OCTOBER 2023



Schedule

October 13-21, 2023 – Théâtre de Liège
December 6-15, 2023 – Théâtre les Tanneurs, co-presented with Théâtre Varia
February 23-24, 2024 – Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg
May 21-23, 2024 – Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne
July 3-21, 2024 – Festival Off 2024, Théâtre des Doms (Avignon)
March 12-14, 2025 – La Commune CDN Aubervilliers
April 4-5, 2025 – Find Festival, Schaubühne Berlin
September 23, 2025 – World Theatre Festival Zagreb (HR)
October 14, 2025 – L'Hexagone, Scène Nationale de Meylan (FR)
November 14, 2025 – Centre Culturel Juliobona à Lillebonne (FR)
December 6, 2025 – Théâtre de la Nacelle à Aubergenville (FR)
March 21-22, 2026 – Teatro Strochi à Modène, ERT (IT)

Cast

With Cédric Eeckhout, Jo Libertiaux, and Pauline Sikirdji
Writing and Direction Cédric Eeckhout
Assistant and Collaborator Eulalie Roux
Dramaturgy Nils Haarmann
Scenography and Costumes Bastien Poncelet
Wigs and Hairstyles Edith Carpentier
General Management Olivier Arnoldy
Lighting Design Antoine Fiori
Lighting Technician Mehdi Igoud
Sound Technician Benjamin Devillers
Video Work Coralie Denooz
Set Construction Workshops of Théâtre de Liège
Costume Making Workshops of Théâtre de Liège
Production Théâtre de Liège, DC&J Création
Co-production Théâtre Varia, Théâtre les Tanneurs, Théâtre Dijon Bourgogne CDN
and Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg
Support Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government, Inver Tax Shelter



Biography

Cédric EECKHOUT

Actor and performer, trained in Belgium, Cédric has worked since 2002 on numerous stages in Belgium and Europe with various Belgian and international directors and companies.

In Europe, he has played for Anne-Cécile Vandalem (*Hansel and Gretel*), Falk Richter (*Play loud / Rausch*), Christiane Jatahy (*Ithaca*), the Ontroerendgoed Company (*A game of you*), Sanja Mitrovic (*Do you still love me*), Thomas Ostermeier (*The Seagull, Return to Reims, Opéra de 4 sous*), *Les enfants du soleil* by M. Gorki directed by Mikaël Serre...

He also took part in the dance show *Fear and Desire* (Gaia Saitta and Julie Stanzac / "If Human"), premiered at the Equilibrio Festival in Rome in 2013 and toured Belgium and Italy from 2013 to 2017, and participated in the Thierry Salmon École des maîtres 2005/direction Rodrigo Garcia project.

In 2017, he wrote, performed and directed, accompanied by his actual mother (a retired hairdresser) *From here I will build everything*, a short 25-minute form about his family and private situation, mirroring the construction of Europe and its current crisis. This form was created as part of the XS festival at Belgium's national theater, then presented at FIND (Schaubühne Berlin) and at the Nest festival in Thionville. Cédric Eeckhout created the long version of this project, *The Quest* during the 2020/2021 season at the Théâtre National de Belgique, followed by a European tour.

In October 2023, he created *Héritage*, once again with his mother, but this time as the protagonist and main character. In this show, Jo tells her story with the help of Cédric and lyric singer Pauline Sikirdji. After Brussels and Luxembourg, *Héritage* was selected for the Théâtre des Doms in Avignon (2024) and for the Schaubühne's FIND Festival (2025). It is still on tour.

On the big screen, he has worked with Joachim Lafosse (*Ça rend heureux, Tribu*), Rithy Panh (*Un barrage contre le pacifique*), Laurent Tirard (*Le petit Nicolas*), Edouard Deluc (*Gauguin*), Thomas Vinterberg (*Kursk*), Martine Doyen (*No fun*)... He also made a documentary about his mother's work and life during the preparation of the show *The Quest*, the documentary film *JO* was released in June 2022.

Winner of the 2001 Belgian Artists' Union Prize, he was nominated for the 2005 Belgian Theater Prize as Best New Male Talent (for Chekhov's *La mouette* (directed by Xavier Lukomski) and Pinter's *Hot House*), and has received numerous other awards at international short film festivals. He has also written for a number of theatrical and film projects.

Summary

Cédric Eeckhout brings Jo Libertiaux, his mother, born in 1945, onto the stage. Free and independent, Jo built herself up alone in a man's world. Cédric sees her as a fighter, a heroine, his idol. Driven by a love for life, Jo shares her story. Cédric, in turn, romanticizes and performs his own, addressing themes of female emancipation, as well as economic, social, and political history.

Their voices are those of a divorced woman, a mother of four sons whom she raised while working as a hairdresser—who, upon retiring, became an actress—and that of her actor son, who identifies as queer and questions inheritance and masculinity. Interweaving intimacy, emotion, and humor, they explore the transmission from one generation to the next in an era that seems to be in a constant state of crisis, marked by climate change, the impact of the pandemic, wars, crises of solidarity, racism, and sexism.

However, in the cracks of this old world, shaped by colonial and patriarchal traditions, emerge fresh, naïve, marginalized voices—minor or minoritized voices, not heard enough, like those of a mother and her son—offering a glimpse of hope for the new.

Show duration : 1h30

Interview with Cédric Eeckhout

In your first creation, *The Quest*, where you simultaneously addressed European construction and family construction, your mother Jo Libertiaux was already – although not with the same importance as in *Heritage* – present on stage. What links these two shows?

With *The Quest*, I primarily wanted to create a "pop" show. I'm a child of the 80s, heavily influenced by the pop art movements, with central figures like Andy Warhol. I've always loved what these works conveyed. I wanted to play with these figures – sometimes in a somewhat crude manner – to talk about politics and family.

So, I had the idea to bring my mother on stage, not to play my actual mother, but more to play the maternal figure, to play a mother. An extension of my character, because I wasn't really Cédric, I was Cédric who was playing the knight, Cédric who was going to defend Europe in nationalist countries. In the show, everything was fake and everything was true, in a way. It all started from truth, but it was all "popified." I wanted to play with personifications, the personification of the knight, that of the mother, etc.

Yet, among all these things, there was a truth: the reconciliation of my parents. So, we started from that story, and I had the idea to play out the announcement of their divorce. My mother had never really talked to us about the divorce, and I wanted to play that scene. I invited three audience members to play my brothers – we are four brothers at home – and she announced to us that she was going to divorce.

During one performance, she stopped halfway, moved by the emotion, saying that it was too hard to replay the scene, that she couldn't. We discussed on stage, she took her time, and then she resumed. I found that moment very powerful – and I wasn't alone. It touched so much on truth... It was at that moment that I thought to myself, "Ah, she's capable of this!" We sometimes know how difficult it is to direct an amateur, especially when it's your mother (He laughs).

Deep down, I knew I wanted to go further than I did in *The Quest*, but I had to learn to work with her, I had to learn to build a show with an amateur, I had to know if I was ready, if I was capable of doing it myself. *The Quest* taught me these things. And this scene made me want to create a more intimate show, without artifice, without armour. And then I thought to myself, I can do something political without necessarily having to support it as well. It's the big moment of thought between the first and the second show. A certain idea of purification. And so I asked her if she would like to tell her life story. To be as close as possible to herself. And that I would accompany her.

Is this why it seemed important for you to tell this life? A rather simple life?

I didn't want confrontation
but rather to bring a certain softness.

I had the intuition that we didn't talk enough about these kinds of women. I wanted to show this simplicity. Putting her in the spotlight. My mother never felt too concerned about politics or, more specifically, feminist movements; however, through the way she built her life, with choices that were important for the time, that is to say by leaving my father and the house with her four children, she participated in changing mentalities. She her emancipation from a man's world. She showed a different way.

Often, in documentary theater, politics is directly present, it's already there. I think it's important that these works exist, but I wanted to do something else. I wanted to show an ordinary life that has almost everything. That's also why I wanted to avoid conflicts. I didn't want confrontation but rather to bring a certain softness.

Then, I also wanted to build bridges between generations. To show the differences between eras. To evoke realities that are completely different between yesterday and today. I often think of the younger generations who denounce the older ones – especially on climate issues – and I wanted to show them this generation, to show them that a stay-at-home mother who wanted a four-sided house wasn't necessarily a selfish monster. Her "selfishness" mainly brought about other ways of thinking; it contributed to the recognition of all women, of all types of women. Even if she wanted to change social class, my mother remained the same. My mother was this fake blonde in a miniskirt and high heels who wanted to send her children to a Catholic and bourgeois school. Nothing stopped her from being who she wanted to be. She could be called a "whore", she didn't care, she lived her life. And that's a political act that interests me.

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who wanted to send her children to a Catholic and bourgeois
school. Nothing stopped her from being who she wanted to be.

Your mother takes a much more significant place on stage than in your last show, but what was her role in the creation process?

She has always been present. As soon as she agreed to participate, I offered her lots of books about mothers, about motherhood. I gave her Édouard Louis, Annie Ernaux, Didier Eribon. She read them, then she gave me feedback, we discussed them together... It was already a way of building the show together.

Then, with Nils Haarmann, my dramaturge, and Eulalie Roux, my assistant and collaborator, we developed a questionnaire of 168 questions to which she responded over 10 months. The questionnaire was broken down by decade. It included fairly simple questions like "What is your favorite song and why?" ; "What is your favorite movie and why?", but also more complex questions like: "What was family and why?"; "When did you feel most like a woman and why?", each time related to a particular decade (from 1946 to 1955, from 1956 to 1965, etc.).

Thanks to her answers, we were able to sketch out the show. We were able to identify what seemed most interesting to us, what touched her the most, what drove her. It's thanks to these questions that, for example, we were able to extract a theme that runs through the whole show: the opposition between patriarchy and matriarchy, the relationships between men and women.

Based on these questions, I didn't want to write too quickly – as had been the case with *The Quest* – because I didn't want to confine my mother to a structure.

By deciding to create a show about heritage,
I had to accept that it might not necessarily match what I had
in mind at the beginning – as strange as it may seem.

So, is it more about stage writing?

It was mostly house writing! It was in her house that we discussed what we needed. Many ideas emerged, but I felt like I was falling into artifice – which I was trying to avoid. We removed, we pruned, and in the end, mostly the images remained. My mother filmed a lot, she collected a lot, and all these images were fertile ground for the show. It also corresponded to an era and allowed us to trace a timeline. First, photography, then Super 8, then digital video, and finally the voice messages she uses a lot today. It was also a way to see how family fits into these modes of communication.



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But to come back to the question, it's when we arrived at her house that we really started developing the show. We recorded her, we filmed her, we asked her to share these memories of houses, we discussed the kitchens she had lived in. The kitchen has always been an important place for my mother: she likes to cook, she likes to entertain. Talking about this place allowed us to touch on the intimate, to free her speech, and ultimately to move away from it...

From all these conversations, we wanted to build a narrative with Nils, even though we didn't have a conflict. We knew there was one at the level of the divorce, but I had already addressed it in *The Quest*. Yet, we still managed to do it; I also realized the importance of the era in this choice. She always told me, "I found myself a victim of my choices for freedom." She refused to participate in a system. She could have remained silent, stayed with my father, but she didn't!

There is a very paradoxical aspect to your mother. She decides to divorce, at a time when it was probably more complicated than today, to refuse the laws of an era in a way, but on the other hand, she fully accepts this she even appreciates it, in a way. One can feel a kind of joyful inevitability in her...

I discussed a lot with Nils about this. It was so strong for him to have a woman on stage saying that if her father cheated on her mother, it was probably partly the fault of women... We listen to that today, and we wonder how she dares to say it on stage... And at the same time, we can't help but understand her because it's linked to another education, another way of thinking...

So yes, this paradox was very important. Yet, even though she accepted a lot, there were moments in her life when she couldn't completely adapt, especially to the Church. People watched her, spied on her... What violence when we think back on it! And yet, she didn't give a damn... That's what we wanted to keep! I wanted to address her paradoxical way of being in the world, while still remaining light-hearted.

Jo's story is also the story of an era. Was this your intention from the start, or was it simply impossible to separate the two? Like the two facets of the same thing?

There is a reversal with *The Quest*, where I started from Europe to talk about our lives. I started from the big to arrive at the small. With *Heritage*, I'm making the reverse journey in a way, I start from my mother's life to tell the life of an era.

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That's also why I didn't want to force the writing, as I may have done with *The Quest*. Besides, I had a lot of trouble at the beginning with my questions about May 68. Yet, my brother was born in '68, and I really wondered about the relationship she had with social movements; precisely because she was not at all politicized.

Nevertheless, I quickly realized that the most important thing for her was to talk about herself, her life, her desire to simply have children and a home, not to change the world. Paradoxically, though, by refusing to protest, to engage politically, she still moves history forward. Because she allows for a different perspective on things.

The parents of Pauline Sikirdji, who accompanies us musically on stage, came to see the show. They were protesters in May 68, subscribers to *L'Humanité*... they have a totally different way of thinking. It was amusing to see them discuss with my mother, to confront them with other worlds. They used to judge people like my mother back then, but now they understand her will.



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It's by starting from her life that we were able to address bigger things, question social movements, the relationships between men and women.

Everything revolved around what she told us. She wanted things that were linked to a certain era. She could either be a typist or a hairdresser – and that's it. So she chose to be a hairdresser, and she was happy...

We get back to this joyful fatality in the face of an era...

Yes, exactly. She always dealt with the society of her time. When we bring out, for the needs of the show, all the objects that accompanied her life, they are truly objects that belonged to her.

We then come back to an era, with this relationship to accumulation. Her house is overflowing with objects, this need to have so many... It's in total opposition to our society, where we try to think about simplicity.

Objects are also witnesses of an era. When she talks about her washing machine, when she says, and I quote: "It changed my life!", it seems crazy to us today, because many of us were born after the arrival of the washing machine, but it says so much about the era! They lived in an incredibly impressive era when you think about it. They saw so many things that upheaved their daily lives... They could afford anything... And us, today, we have to reduce, reduce... They were very fortunate to experience what they did in a certain way, and I think they realize that well today... But once again, all these reflections were brought about by her life – intimate and personal.

They lived in an incredibly impressive era when you think about it. They saw so many things that upheaved their daily lives...

So, *Heritage* also becomes an attempt at mutual understanding between generations?

I don't necessarily like that expression, but I wanted to do justice, yes. I find the continued condemnation of this generation – who may not have been aware of the issues and consequences that this way of life could entail – is unfair.

Édouard Louis rightly says that we need a real analysis to understand how a society influences our lives, leads us to think in a certain way... It would be easier to make a show about Pauline's parents, who were committed, but there are already so many. So, yes, let's continue to talk about these people! But let's also talk about others, let's talk about the other side of the era... Let's create connections!

This brings us back to the question of heritage, which gives the title to the show. Why this choice?

The title appeared to me from the very beginning. Because I'm putting together the project, I thus look at my mother from my own point of view. I tell the story of my mother also to tell what I have inherited. In my approach, I wanted to tell the life of a woman to see how she had impacted the life of a man.

I watched a documentary on feminism some time ago, which struck me, which helped me build this project, which gave me confidence. In this documentary, a woman – a feminist from the 1970s – talked about the hope she had in the new generations, those generations who were raised by women and who no longer reproduce the old models. I don't necessarily agree with what she says; a woman can very well reproduce the patriarchal system. My mother could have done the same, but she didn't. I saw her fight against men, and I quickly understood that there was a whole system to fight against.

That's what particularly interests me: inheritance within the family unit. We can inherit in many ways, from society in particular, but I don't have the means to engage in pure sociology, to see how society can constrain. So, I shift, I try to question how the family can radically transform us when strong choices are made.

In the show, the names and surnames of the other family members are never mentioned. Is this to preserve an intimacy between the two of you?

I found it fairer to operate this way. By not naming them, they become figures. In a way, this helps with identification, and it prevents a certain voyeurism that could make people uncomfortable and turn into a psychodrama.

Heritage is above all a dialogue between a son and a mother. During a performance in Liège, my nephew was in the audience and asked me if his father received the same inheritance from our mother as I did. Obviously not. Simply because I didn't know her at the same times. I had the chance to discover a woman at key moments in her life. I am the youngest of the four boys. When my mother got divorced, I was only 5 years old. That probably conditions me much more than my brothers. My brothers experienced other things, and I couldn't speak for them. The relationship is necessarily different depending on age.

Maybe the divorce didn't impact them as much as it impacted me. If I talk about Spielberg and *E.T.*, it's probably for this reason. I was deeply touched by his latest film, *The Fabelmans*, which partly tells the story of his mother. I understand why I love *E.T.* so much, which is a film about separation; I understand why I love Spielberg so much, for whom separation is one of his recurring themes...

Speaking of influence, was Albert Cohen also one?

Yes, immensely. Albert Cohen allowed me to write my letter, the one that concludes the show, as a declaration. When I read *Le livre de ma mère* for the first time, the first twenty pages, I burst out laughing... I thought to myself, "Poor boy, your little mommy, your little mommy..." And in the end, I was deeply moved... I found it incredibly touching. I wondered why I judged him like that. His gesture touched me, daring to speak in this way about his mother, from his position as a man of that time... I thought it took a lot of audacity to write like that at that time. It liberated me to write.

Alongside Albert Cohen, there is especially Annie Ernaux, who has been a very important reference and has never let me down. There is a sentence in the introduction of *Une femme* that was revealing for me: "I want to stay below literature..." This sentence was almost the basis of my staging. I wanted to stay below theater. This sentence caused a lot of uproar, it was found to be pretentious, provocative, etc. While its purpose was simply to talk about her mother, to talk about her without overdoing it, without turning it into an exercise in style.

**All the imperfections present in the show are intentional
because we wanted to show this authenticity.**

So if I wanted, myself, talk about heritage while paying homage to my mother, I had to stay in a place where I didn't impose too many artifices on her. I wanted to stay with her in a place below theater, I wanted her to tell her life the way she would have told it outside of a theater. That's why I never wanted to write too much, to preserve this authenticity. All the imperfections present in the show are intentional because we wanted to show this authenticity. It was very important to keep a somewhat rough side. I'm not looking for everything to be precise; I don't want everything to be too prepared.

I want to give her space, let her speak, in her own way.

Press

As funny as it is touching, this intertwined self-portrait of an accomplished artist and his mother, a budding actress, reminds us that in theater, it is never too late to make one's voice heard.

RTBF – Delphine Ysaye

Héritage transcends eras, but also the mirror of the stage, to question, with a precise and generous writing style, the “silent heroines,” the everyday fighters who move the world forward, one step at a time.

La Libre Belgique, Marie Baudet ***

*Joyful, chaotic, full of little surprises, tenderness, and humanity, Héritage unfolds the story of one of those women who are rarely talked about—not because they made history or caused upheaval, but because, without waving any banner, they fought for their freedom and their joy.
A woman. Quite simply.*

Le Soir – Jean-Marie Wynants ***

*... a mise en abyme of family ties and the history of a world...
Sweeping from one end to the other and speaking to all.*

Focus Vif – Isabelle Plumhans ****

*A tender and humorous ode to all the feminists in the shadows,
many of whom will likely never fully grasp the legacy they have left us.*

Bruzz – Sophie Soukias

This quote from Portuguese writer Miguel Torga comes to mind:

“The universal is the local without walls.”

*This is precisely where Cédric and Jo gently take us—where walls no longer exist,
and the shared becomes possible.*

Collateral, la revue – Delphine Edy

*This beautiful and touching conversation about the female condition, changing social norms,
and class differences paints the subtle legacy a parent leaves to their child.*

Télérama – Kilian Orain

Festival Off: Héritage, a true gem!

Perhaps one of the most beautiful performances of this year's Off edition.

La Provence – Charly André Guibaud

*A hidden gem of the Avignon Off festival. Alongside his own mother,
Cédric retraces the family story through a moving confession that is also a celebration.*

Le Nouvel Obs – Nadjma Van Egmond



**THÉÂTRE
DE LIÈGE**

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