

CASSETTE FOR TIMESCAPES PRESENTS

WHY WE FIGHT?



a film by **ALAIN PLATEL & MIRJAM DEVRIENDT**

editor DIETER DIEPENDAELE sound JEAN-FRANÇOIS LEVILLAIN composer STEVEN PRENGELS sound engineer LUCAS COLLE, JEROEN DEJONGHE director of photography MIRJAM DEVRIENDT additional photography MIRA DE BOOSE, BERLINDE DE BRUYCKERE, PIERRE-PHILIPPE HOFMANN colorist THOMAS BOUFFIOUX artwork CÉCILE VAN CAILLIE image poster CHRIS VAN DER BURGH producer EMMY OOST coproducers CHRISTIAN BEETZ executive producer TUAN LAM a coproduction by CASSETTE FOR TIMESCAPES, GEBRÜEDER BEETZ FILMPRODUKTION, ONOMATOPEE FILMS in coproduction with ZDF in association with ARTE, VRT CANVAS, RTBF TÉLÉVISION BELGE - UNITÉ DOCUMENTAIRE supported by FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF), CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES, CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE PASCAL DECROOS FUND, CITY OF GHENT, CULTURE GHENT, THE TAX SHELTER OF THE BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VIA FLANDERS TAX SHELTER, THE CORONA EMERGENCY FUND OF THE FLANDERS GOVERNMENT
www.whywefightdocumentary.com



SYNOPSIS

When we're out of words, the body takes over.

So far the dancers Bérengère Bodin, Samir M'Kirech and TK Russell agree, when you ask them: why are we fighting? Based on their personal experiences, they look for the why of violence around them in the world, but also the violence in themselves. How do you deal with fear, frustration and disappointment in today's world, where you feel unheard or misunderstood? Is it at all possible to act in a non-violent way? Or is that privilege reserved for those who create dance, music, art or words?

With their film *Why We Fight?* Alain Platel and Mirjam Devriendt pay tribute to the arts, but also to humanity, that always seems to balance between creating something spectacularly beautiful or horribly cruel.

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/612431844>

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Instagram @Cassettefortimescapes

WEBSITE

www.whywefightdocumentary.com



FACTS

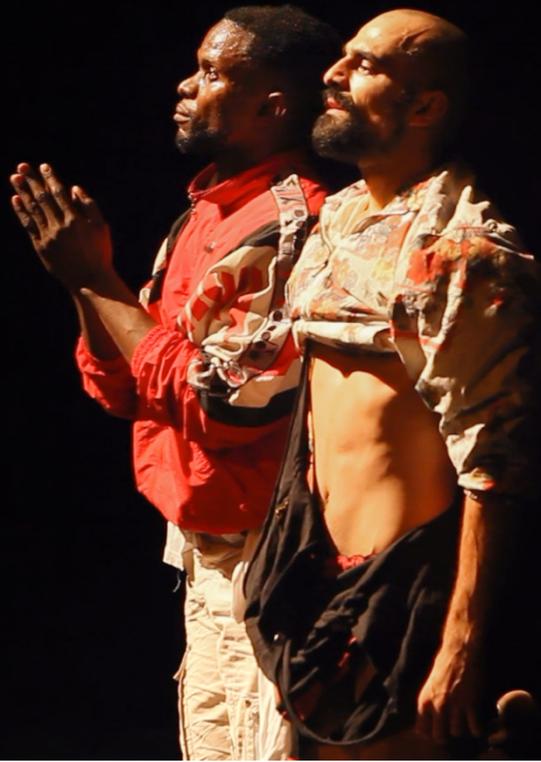
Belgian festival premiere October 2021, Film Fest Gent
German festival premiere May 2022, Dok.fest München
tv broadcasts autumn 2022, VRT, RTBF, ZDF/arte

writers-directors Alain Platel & Mirjam Devriendt
inspired by the dance performance Nicht Schlafen by Alain Platel
editor Dieter Diependaele
director of photography Mirjam Devriendt
sound Jean-François Levillain
composer Steven Prengels
producers Emmy Oost, Magalie Dierick
coproducers Christian Beetz, Tuan Lam
production companies Cassette for timescapes, Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, Onomatopee Films
in coproduction with ZDF in association with ARTE, VRT Canvas, RTBF Télévision belge – Unité Documentaire

partners Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF), Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Creative Europe MEDIA of the European Union, The Pascal Decroos Fund, City of Ghent, Culture Ghent, The Tax Shelter of the Belgian federal government via Flanders Tax Shelter, The Corona Emergency Fund of the Flanders Government

genre creative documentary
running time 98'
screening format DCP, ProRes HQ

languages Dutch, French, English
subtitles English, Dutch, French
aspect ratio 1.85:1



CHARACTERS

"Is it an existential rage that we carry within ourselves? I think so, yes. I think it's odd, the idea of living a life you didn't choose to live and having to go through it."

Bérengère Bodin ♦ dancer

"I do violence to myself to move forward. I do violence to myself to personally accomplish what is called 'jihad'."

Samir M'Kirech ♦ dancer

"The purpose is not to change the world, you can't do that on your own. It's rather to have enough rage, enough passion, and a bit of violence to start to change yourself."

Samir M'Kirech ♦ dancer

"The worst thing I've ever seen was somebody getting shot and die on site. These are images you don't wish your children to see."

TK Russell ♦ dancer, musician, performer

"People often look at me like I am a little African who's hungry'. Sometimes I just want to shout out: 'Listen, I was born in a wealthy family, OK?'"

TK Russell ♦ dancer, musician, performer

“Someone can be a victim in one situation and a perpetrator in another situation. This is often difficult for us to understand, because we like to believe in some kind of pure evil.”

Tinneke Beeckman ♦ philosopher

“Women can be equally violent. I think that women's violence is underestimated

Tinneke Beeckman ♦ philosopher

“War is not something outside of us, it's something inside of us.”

Teodor Currentzis ♦ conductor

“That magnificent horse's corpse that is so huge, comes much closer a metaphor for death than the human body.”

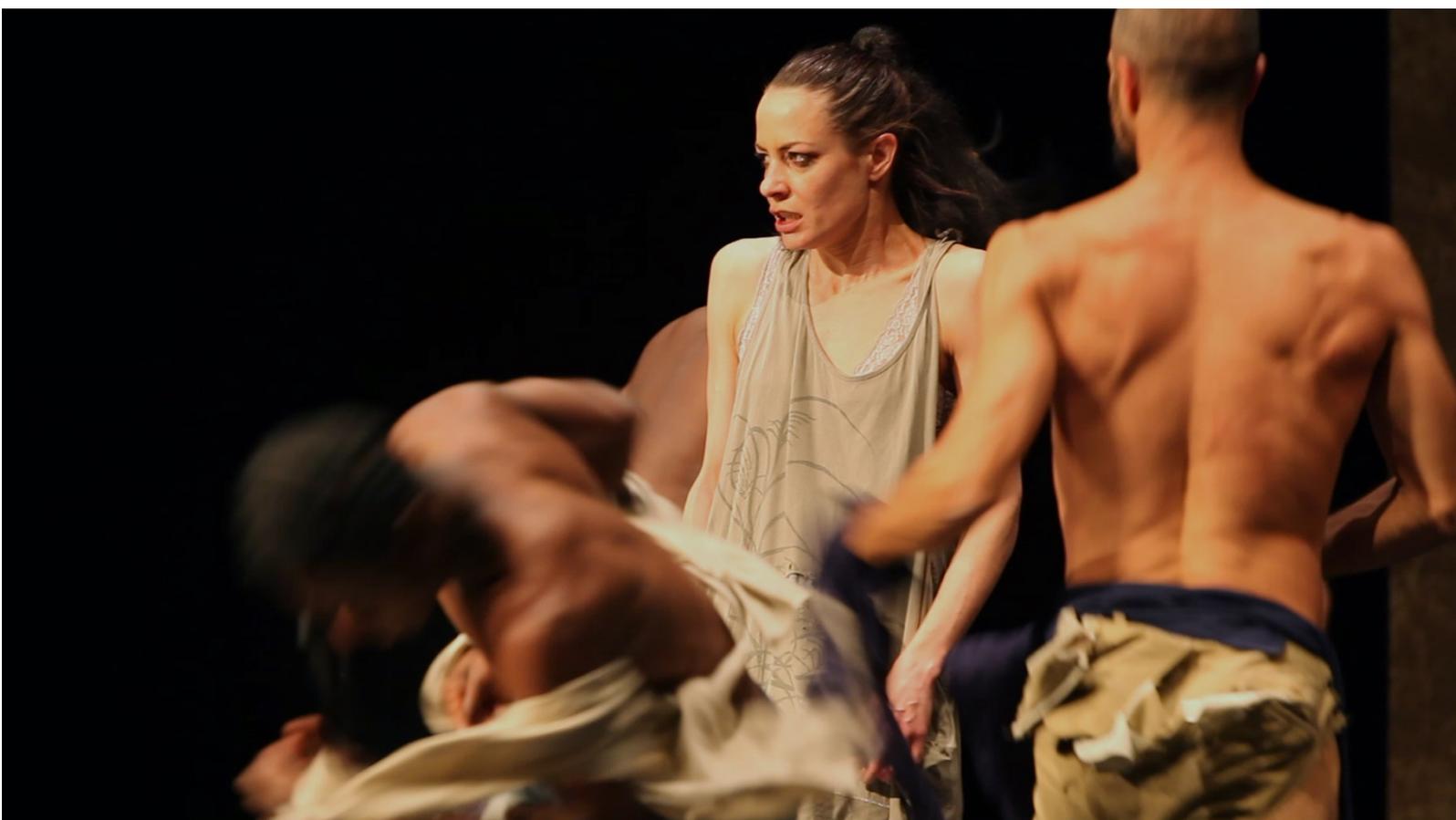
Berlinde De Bruyckere ♦ visual artist

“My fear is that, just as in other moments in history when globalisation stopped, this might lead once again to a big conflict, even at a global scale.”

Koert Debeuf ♦ author 'Tribalization: Why war is coming'

“We can't give up. That's really a luxury we don't have.”

Philipp Blom ♦ author, historian, philosopher



Bérengère Bodin was born in 1980 close to the ocean, in France. As a child, Bérengère dreams of a better world for everyone. As a teenager, she wants to become a street educator. It was not until the age of fifteen that she discovered dance. Since 2010, she has been part of the company les Ballets C de la B. She danced in "Primero" (Lisi Estaras, 2010), "C(H)OEURS" (Alain Platel, 2012), "tauberbach" (Alain Platel, 2014) and more recently in "Nicht schlafen" (Alain Platel, 2016). In "Nicht schlafen", she is the only woman between eight men, but at the same time very much part of the group, of this boys' club. Bérengère just became the mother of her first child.

Samir M'Kirech was born in 1985 in France, the country to which his parents emigrated from Morocco. Since his 12th birthday, he has been passionate about football. Then he did two years of breakdance. At nineteen, he sees "La Grande Fugue", a choreography by Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker. He decides to become a dancer. He begins his dance training in Rouen, which he continues for three years in New York at the Martha Graham Dance School, before returning to Europe, to Geneva. He takes part in rehearsals for shows in London, Paris, Brussels ... and he goes on an international tour. In 2015, he joins les Ballets C de la B. He is particularly happy to be part of "Nicht schlafen".

Samir is the dancer with the most defined opinions in that piece. His personal story - the son of a Muslim migrant in France - explains his sharp statements and his emotional responses. He adds some very interesting points of view to the discussions on religion - migration - (political) violence on social networks.

Russell Thsiebua is 26 and born in Congo. He's not only a good dancer, he's also a musical talent. Alain got to know him through the project "Coup Fatal" which he created with the composer Fabrizio Cassol, in 2014. Today, Russell lives in Ghent. He works on his music and regularly gives performances. In the film he links violence to racism.





DIRECTORS

Alain Platel

Platel is an autodidact director, who has 30 years of experience in theatre and dance. A selection of his pieces are: *C(H)OEURS* (2012, upon request of Gerard Mortier), *Gardenia* (2010, together with Frank Van Laecke), *Out Of Context – for Pina* (2010), and *Nicht Schlafen* (2016) and *Requiem pour L* (2018).

In France, Platel was made Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française in 2001 and again Commandeur de l'Orde des Arts et des Lettres in 2015. In the UK, Platel receives Time Out Live Award in 2001. In Belgium, Platel receives the Flemish Culture Prize for General Cultural Merit in 2015, in 2016 the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Ghent and the Gold Medal of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and Art.

Platel entered the arena of the dance film together with the British director Sophie Fiennes with the films 'Because I Sing' in 2001, 'Ramallah! Ramallah! Ramallah!' in 2005 and 'VSPRS Show and Tell' in 2007. In 2006, he directed the documentary 'de balletten en ci en la' (110 mins), in coproduction with Arte France.

Mirjam Devriendt

In collaboration with internationally renowned artist Berlinde De Bruyckere, photographer Mirjam Devriendt has created numerous video installations for opera and art exhibitions, notably for La Monnaie (*Penthesilea* - directed by Pierre Audi - 2015), Holland Festival *Mariavespers* - directed by Pierre Audi - 2017), *Het Vlot - Ostend* (*Penthesilea*, 2015-2017 - curator Jan Fabre), *And You Must Suffer – Muziektheater Transparant* and *B'Rock Orchestra* (2015). In 2017, Devriendt presented a series of photos and a video installation at the Dr. Guislain Museum in Ghent as part of the 'The Alzheimer Code' project.



INTERVIEW DIRECTORS

Where did the idea of making this film come from?

Why we fight? is inspired by a scene of the dance performance Nicht Schlafen that I created in 2016 with the company les ballets C de la B. Among other things, the performance questions why there is so much senseless and random violence. This led to discussions with the dancers that were quite confronting, but also purging and sometimes disturbing. It challenged me, in function of a film, to ask it again to a number of other people.

How did this cocreation between you arise?

Mirjam has been working with renowned visual artist Berlinde De Bruyckere for years. De Bruyckere made a horse sculpture for the dance performance Nicht Schlafen, which Mirjam photographed. And so, our paths crossed. In 2016, Mirjam started to film the dance performance from a very specific angle. Her images showed details of the show and enabled us to sense the raw emotions of the dancers, who lead us through the film.

How did you experience the cooperation? Was it difficult to merge the ideas of two different artists into such an intuitive film?

We can answer that very briefly: No. It came as a big surprise to us, we didn't have a single discussion. Not during shooting, not during production or post-production. We were open to each other's ideas and we were always on the same page, which appeared to be crucial for making this kind of sensitive film.

Very characteristic for the film are its visual associations. Why did you choose this approach?

By using various types of imagery and visual metaphors, the film analyses social change, the lack of emotional processing and the power of humanity, which always seems to balance between creating something spectacularly beautiful and something horribly cruel. Also, when you put different forms of images together, we think we might create the possibility for something to happen in the mind: it creates a kind of space, where an idea, an emotion, a thought can emerge. We try to create different layers in the mind, in such a way that every person can fill 'the gaps' with his or her own thoughts.

You were editing during the corona crisis. Did the pandemic influence your approach to making the film?

Yes and no. We were very lucky that we had already filmed a lot of the footage before the pandemic. So together with the archive material, we could continue in the editing. And because cultural life was shut down, we were both able to devote ourselves 100% to making the film. We do think you feel our fears and questions from that strange period incorporated into the film. Could it be that the catastrophe of the pandemic triggered a certain violence within us, filmmakers?

The film ends with a quotation from Marguerite Duras: 'True democracy, is to live every day its loss, the loss of the world.' Is this how you experience life?

Yes. Death and the ongoing decay of the world are the raw facts that all living/human species really share. It makes us truly equal. It might sound somber but knowing this, might encourage us to live and to enjoy our lives fully and be nourished to discover and develop our talents.

What impact do you hope the film will have?

We are constantly pointing out what's wrong in the world. With this film, we want to go beyond that and look into ourselves first. When we understand better how violence works within us, we might better see how we can better understand the violence around us. So, if we can really dream about the impact this film might have, we hope that people will take a moment to think about themselves. Apart from that, we truly wanted the film to offer consolation in turbulent times.

To conclude, what is the answer to the question 'Why We Fight?'?

The film does not give an unequivocal answer to the question. More importantly, it shows how a complex set of individual psychological, social, political and religious factors cause those constant outbursts of violence in the history of mankind. But despite the often pessimistic signs that we see on the global front today, we should never lose hope! Or as writer and historian Phillip Blom says in the film: "We do not have the luxury to give up!". So, we also hope the film nourishes our empathy for the human race. We're good and we're bad and we are also ... very fragile.

Alain Platel en Mirjam Devriendt



BIO PRODUCER

Cassette for timescapes produces films and XR projects that combine innovative vision and social or political engagement. It has successfully coproduced with the US, UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and aims at distributing its films worldwide. Cassette for timescapes is a team of four women: Magalie Dierick, An Oost, Zaïde Bil and Emmy Oost. They are part of the Doc Society Impact Producers, EAVE, Eurodoc and ACE Producers Networks.

Producer Emmy Oost received the Flanders Cultural Prize for Film in 2016 for a slate of migration films and her work on interactive documentaries. In 2019 she started Filmimpact, an organisation that implements impact producing in Flanders. She teaches 'Production Studies' as a guest lecturer at LUCA, school of arts, and is a fellow at the VUB, university Brussels.

Selection of productions

ALL-IN by Volkan Üce (docu, 80', 2021) world premiere at CPH:DOX, selected for the European Film Awards, Hot Docs, Full Frame Documentary FF, Crossing Europe, ...

Glad that I came, not sorry to depart by Azam Masoumzadeh (VR & AR, 8', 2020) special mention at Anima

Barber Shop by Luc Vrydaghs (docu series, 6x26', 2017) Broadcast on VRT, ZDF/Arte, UR, Al Jazeera, SRF, RSI. Sales: First Hand Films

The Invisible City [Kakuma] by Lieven Corthouts (docu, 74', 2016) More than 200 impact screenings worldwide with the support of the Bertha Britdoc Connect Fund

Problemski Hotel by Manu Riche (fiction, 110', 2015) World premiere at IFFR 2015, grand prix Roche sur Yon, Cinequest FF, ...

Double Take by Johan Grimonprez (docu, 89', 2009) Berlinale, Sundance, Black pearl Award in Abu Dhabi and more



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PARTNERS



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