



CENTRE DRAMATIQUE NATIONAL
ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
DIRECTION ARTHUR NAUZCYIEL

THE SEA MUSEUM (Sædýrasafnið)

By Marie Darrieussecq

Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel



© Frédéric Nauzyciel

Creation

National Theatre of Iceland, Reykjavik

March 28 to May 10, 2009

Centre Dramatique National
Orléans/Loiret/Centre

May 26 -31, 2009

**REPRISE IN FRANCE
SEASON 2010-2011**

PRODUCTION

CENTRE DRAMATIQUE NATIONAL
ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE

Direction Arthur Nauzyciel

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COPRODUCTION

Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre
and the National Theatre of Iceland.

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of Iceland.



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THE STORY BEHIND THE PROJECT

After directing two productions in Reykjavik starting in 2007, *Le Malade imaginaire ou le silence de Molière* (*The Imaginary Invalid, or Molière's Silence*) (Molière/Macchia) and *The Image* (Beckett), Arthur Nauzyciel was invited by the National Theatre of Iceland to stage a production. Because they have in common Iceland, ghosts, family stories, travels at the end of the visible or invisible world, he asked novelist Marie Darrieussecq to write a play for the occasion. She wrote *The Sea Museum*. They thought about poet and Björk lyricist Sjon for the translation in Icelandic. Choreographers and dancers Damien Jalet and Erna Omarsdottir, musician Bardi Johannsson (Bang Gang, Lady and Bird), scenographer Giulio Lichtner and lighting designer Scott Zielinski joined the adventure as well. Strangely enough, this "science fiction" play, written in 2007 for an audience yet to be born, resonates strongly today, as the island is hit by a crisis unheard of before. And what seemed to be a projection into the future has turned out to be stinging, red-hot news.

PERFORMANCES

National Theatre of Iceland, Reykjavik
March 28 to May 10, 2009

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THE SEA MUSEUM SÆDÝRASAFNIÐ

by Marie Darrieussecq
Directed by Arthur Nauzyciel

Translation Sjon
Stage design Giulio Lichtner
Lighting design Scott Zielinski
Choreography Erna Omarsdottir and Damien Jalet
Sound design and Music Bardi Johannsson

With the actors of the National Theatre of Iceland
Elva Osk Olafsdottir
Stefan Hallur Stefansson
Margret Vilhjalmsdottir
Valur Freyr Einarsson
Vigdís Hrefna Palsdottir
Ivar Orn Sverrisson
Björn Hlynur Haraldsson
and Damien Jalet

In Icelandic with French supertitles.

RESONANCES

The opening of the production in both Reykjavik and Orleans fostered the encounter between the two cities: in partnership with various cultural sites in Orleans (Scène Nationale, Astrolabe, FRAC Centre, Université d'Orléans, Cinéma des Carmes) and in the wake of the performances of THE SEA MUSEUM, the CDN organized an Icelandic event over several weeks featuring the production artists.



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Liz and Will take refuge at May and Man's house. They come over with their two children from a besieged city, and they run out of gas. A war is on. May and Man live near the coast, they strive to maintain their museum despite the restrictions. They have left a few fish, an octopus, and a "thing", Bella, which could be a siren, or a seal ; an unidentified living object which could also be a ghost. Bella is beautiful and she bleats, Bella is monstrous and cries like a baby. Exposed to her soundtrack, May and Man try to remain neutral, to cultivate their garden, despite the local militias. But the bombardments get nearer, and Will and Liz, or their children, also bring war.

I have had this text in mind for a very long time, but I did not know by which end (of the siren) to take it. When I was a student I had been struck by a World War II story: the fish of the Naples Sea Museum had been eaten by the Italian liberation army, come to the rescue of the Americans in the famished city. Malaparte recounts the episode in *THE SKIN*, and a character asks whether manatees are edible despite their strange likeness to -he claims- little girls. Around the same time, I had seen Bergman's *SHAME*, based on a typically Swedish reflection on neutrality. The title of this very beautiful, dreamlike film already tells of how such neutrality can be a dead end, and I remember Liv Ullman having to sleep with the officer from the winning army - constrained or won over?

These two sources of unease followed me for a long time - eating the inedible, sleeping with the enemy. I had known for a long time that *THE SEA MUSEUM* was not a novel. My third novel, *LE MAL DE MER* (*UNDERCURRENTS*), already interrogated what one accepts or refuses to do - renouncing, fleeing, or fighting - but within the private, family sphere. At the time I had struck a friendship with a writer from Beirut and an artist from Sarajevo. Later on, I wrote *LE PAYS* (*THE LAND*), a novelistic reflection on smaller lands and their independence, on nations and languages. But *THE SEA MUSEUM* still was not taking shape. The more I went to the theatre, the more I realized I had to look in that direction, but I was persuaded that because I cannot write dialogues (there are very few of them in my novels), I could not write them for the theatre.

When I met Arthur Nauzyciel, I understood while working with him on *ORDET* that a dialogue in the

theatre had nothing to do with a dialogue in a novel. A sentence devised for the theatre must be *spoken*, and must even find its justification on the stage: in other words, it must answer a necessity stemming from the mouth of another character or from the stage itself, from the presence of bodies. Many sentences thus become unnecessary - "explicative" sentences, for example, anything psychological, anything that can be solved by a single gesture, lighting cue, intervention from the director, that can be solved without words... This work freed me from then on: I wrote *THE SEA MUSEUM* in the wake of this adaptation. *ORDET* means "the word", and it may have been a good way to start in the theatre.

I wrote *THE SEA MUSEUM* without punctuation or stage directions, in a very elliptical language. The play is not meant to be read, it calls for a production to exist. I have no idea what Bella, the children or the four adults look like, and I am curious to see them appear before me. If the reader of novels comes half way, then the director of a play like *THE SEA MUSEUM* goes even further: the play is wide open in order to give him free rein to invent it. It is a real team effort between us two that I wanted to offer Arthur - as psychiatrists say, there are *folies à deux*. So I do not yet know, although I wrote it, what my play looks like, other than on the stage of my imagination.

MARIE DARRIEUSSECQ



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ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
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Interview with Arthur Nauzyciel

*Interview conducted by Laure Naimski for
Culturesfrance in 2007.*

How did you meet Marie Darrieussecq and got to work on the creation of THE SEA MUSEUM in Reykjavik in 2008?

We initially worked on the translation of the Danish play ORDET, by Kaj Munk. I did not want to work with a theatre translator because I knew I would follow a more traditional route, much closer to habit. To me, in a translation, something of the *mise-en-scène* is already inscribed, because theatre is language, is rhythm. I thought I would work with someone who had a sense of rhythm, like a writer. I wanted to work with a woman of my generation. I had not read TRUISMES (PIG TALES) at the time it came out and I discovered her with her novel WHITE, in which I found my own obsessions: ice, ice fields, ghosts, visible and invisible worlds.

The National Theatre of Iceland in Reykjavik invited me to stage a new production. I thought something not yet done had to be written for this country. It came to me as I was strolling through the landscapes, the lava. It evoked Jules Verne, science-fiction. It started telling me stories. At the same time, I had the feeling I was connected to a very archaic past. Icelanders speak a language which has not evolved since the 12th century. At the same time, they have this acute longing for a getaway, a future. I felt that after translating ORDET, Marie Darrieussecq was starting to acquire another vision of the theatre and I offered her to write a play under the condition that it be written to be performed in Icelandic and premiere in Iceland. She accepted because she also wanted our work together to move in a different direction, and - what I did not know at the time -, because she was very attached to this country, where she had made frequent trips. We started out with the idea of a play that could be written in fifty years from now, like a kind of projection into the future, which is becoming THE SEA MUSEUM.

We wanted to work alongside the great Icelandic poet Sjon, one of whose novels, LE MOINDRE DES MONDES (THE LEAST OF WORLDS), was recently translated into French. Sjon, who is also the musician Björk's lyricist, is working on the writing/translation of THE SEA MUSEUM in Icelandic. We have an ongoing dialogue, he, Marie

and I, so that beyond the meaning, we may always be in a position to exchange on sentence construction, the choice of words, rhythm, linguistic registers. As if the French and Icelandic texts were being written at the same time.

This project is tied to your presence in Reykjavik for the event "Pourquoi Pas? - Un printemps français en Islande" (Why not? A French Spring in Iceland) and during which some decisive encounters took place...

The creation of THE SEA MUSEUM was impossible within the time constraints of "Pourquoi Pas?". The National Theatre then thought about showing one of my productions to enable me to get acquainted with the theatre, the company, the audience, its functioning, before coming for the creation. This way of working was for me absolutely logical and consistent. The director of the theatre picked a choice I would not have made myself- my first production, done in 1999, LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE OU LE SILENCE DE MOLIÈRE, which mixes classical and contemporary texts and deals with issues such as passing on knowledge, memory, privacy. She succeeded in convincing me by explaining that the National Theatre company was made up of descendants of its founders. These actors know little about French classical theatre. In Iceland, Molière is seldom and badly produced. It was thus a judicious choice to start with a French classic tied to a contemporary text, in other words a text which connects the past with the present and the future, which looks at the family, what French theatre and its memory are, all the while reading the text in an innovative manner. I view classical texts as souvenirs of the future, both deciduous and dead, but in which one ought to immerse oneself again with the artists of today, in order to reinvent the theatre of tomorrow.

Coincidentally, Kira Kira, an Icelandic musician who works with fellow musician Johann Johannsson and an artists' collective under the label Kitchen Motors, offered me to recreate Beckett's THE IMAGE, of which she had heard, and which had premiered in Dublin in 2006 as part of the Centenary Beckett Festival, in collaboration with actress Anne Brochet, dancer Damien Jalet and scenographer Giulio Lichtner. I asked Kira Kira to write music for the piece - and we also invited dancer Alexandra Gilbert to join us. We performed in a former tobacco manufacture, a magnificent place with large picture



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ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
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windows overlooking the sea. Coincidentally again, I met musician Bardi Johannsson, whom I deeply admire, to whom I offered to design the sound and write the music for THE SEA MUSEUM. We started working together and since then he mentioned a pop opera project called RED WATERS, written with Sjon and which he offered me to direct. I also organized public readings of texts by Marie Darrieussecq at the National Theatre with the Icelandic actors of THE SEA MUSEUM and Brynhildur Gudjonsdottir, whom I had added as a collaborator to the Molière production. Also working on the project is dancer and choreographer Erna Omarsdottir. For this production, I had wanted to invite the artists I admire in Iceland and who, like me, like to trust encounters. LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE, L'IMAGE, along with the Marie Darrieussecq texts readings were a way to usher in THE SEA MUSEUM, to give permanence to the work and collaborations. I have worked in Reykjavik for two years and I do not have the impression I am making four projects but a single one. It is a whole. For me, it is a story being written by means of the theatre. That is what I feel like fighting for. That all these encounters come together with the creation of a play.

You often mention the notion of displacement to speak about your work...

I have always inscribed the *there* in my work process. It is my driving force. Though I try to balance out the here and there. In order for me to work, I always need to be in a state of displacement, not just physical or spatial, but also mental. To experience the text within a context. I need to be in between and above all in the unknown. The in between state inspires me and for each project, I must reinvent a different mode of production and creation. That is what excites me, what makes me inventive. The process and the experience I put into place are the very material of my theatre, which itself bears witness to this process and experience. When I work in France, I need to make the displacement an integral part of my project by hiring actors with whom I am not used to working, a clothing designer instead of a costume designer, another director instead of a set designer, as I did with ORDET. I pick a project because I feel the fiction I will be able to put into place to get it done interests me and because I have no preconception of the object that will come out

of it. Today, I even derive a certain pleasure in triggering an encounter by having people who will be working in the theatre for the first time, or with whom I will work for the first time, come and work together on a project, because our encounter will lead to a production which will be the product of these encounters, of a displacement and a context. This way of working is a necessity for me now. It is equally interesting for the people who do the work as for those who watch it.

What connection do you make between your concern for the there and displacement and your own family history?

My grandparents spoke Yiddish and never really learned to speak French. Nonetheless I could understand them even though I could not translate what they were telling me. It must have developed in me a sense of language, rhythm, of how to carry meaning beyond a word. As a result, I take pleasure in working in foreign languages and translating French texts into foreign languages. I do that a lot indeed.

Could you be more precise?

I sometimes have a greater feeling of being part of something when I work outside of France. In a foreign language, I find familiarity, a state of childhood. A reassuring feeling of surrender. I surrender myself in a foreign language. As long as I find a text which I can fit into a territory, I build something and live in it. I live in the text I direct in the context in which I direct it. It is the foundation from which I can work to eventually have the projects come to France.



CENTRE DRAMATIQUE NATIONAL
ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
DIRECTION ARTHUR NAUZCYIEL

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Marie Darrieussecq

She was born in 1969. *TRUISMES (PIG TALES)*, her first published novel, came out in 1996 and has since been translated into forty-three languages. She subsequently authored *NAISSANCE DES FANTÔMES (MY PHANTOM HUSBAND)*, *LE MAL DE MER (UNDERCURRENTS)*, *PRÉCISIONS SUR LES VAGUES (BREATHING UNDERWATER)*, *BREF SÉJOUR CHEZ LES VIVANTS (A BRIEF STAY WITH THE LIVING)*, *LE BÉBÉ (THE BABY)*, *WHITE*, *LE PAYS (THE COUNTRY)*, *ZOO*.

She also wrote shorter texts for Annette Messager and Jürgen Teller's catalogues, and a tale published by Editions des femmes/Antoinette Fouque: *CLAIRE DANS LA FORET – Suivi de PENTHESILEE, PREMIER COMBAT. (CLAIRE IN THE FOREST, FOLLOWED BY PENTHESILEIA, THE FIRST COMBAT)*

The translation of *ORDET (THE WORD)*, staged by Arthur Nauzyciel at the 2008 Avignon Festival, was her first work for the theatre. A staged reading of her latest novel, *TOM EST MORT (TOM IS DEAD)*, was directed by Arthur Nauzyciel at the 2007 Avignon Festival. She wrote her first play *LE MUSÉE DE LA MER (THE SEA MUSEUM)* for Arthur Nauzyciel. It was created with the actors of the National Theatre of Iceland in March 2009. Since June 07, she is associated artist at the Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre.

Sjon

An Icelandic artist and intellectual, he is the author of several collections of poems, including *SYNIR (VISIONS)*, thanks to which he rose to prominence in 1978. He also writes novels, plays and children's books. Close to the musical and contemporary art scenes, he wrote for singer Björk *BACHELORETTE*, *ISOBEL* and *OCEANIA*, as well as the lyrics to the Lars Von Trier musical *DANCER IN THE DARK*. He earned an Oscar nomination for best song with *I'VE SEEN IT ALL*.

He became well-known in France in 2007 with the publication of *LE MOINDRE DES MONDES (THE LEAST OF WORLDS)*, an original and dreamlike tale of the Icelandic lands, for which he was awarded the Nordic Council's Literature prize in 2005. He founded the publishing house *SMEKKLEYSA (BAD TASTE)*. Founder of the literary group *MEDUSA*, Sjon claims to be an heir to the surrealist and dada movements.

Arthur Nauzyciel

After studying plastic arts and film, he enrolled at the school of the Théâtre National de Chaillot, then headed by Antoine Vitez. As an actor, he was directed by Jacques Nichet, Eric Vigner, Alain Françon, Anatoli Vassiliev, Tsai Ming Liang... An associate artist at the CDDB-Théâtre de Lorient, he directed his first production, *LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE OU LE SILENCE DE MOLIÈRE*, after Molière and Giovanni Macchia in 1999. The show has been reprised regularly since then in France and abroad.

In 2003, he directed *HAPPY DAYS* starring Marilù Marini, performed in France and reprised in Buenos Aires (awarded the critics' prize for best foreign play, best actress, nominated for best director). In 2004, he directed *PLACE DES HÉROS (HELDENPLATZ)*. The show marked the introduction of Thomas Bernhard into the Comédie-Française repertory. In 2008, he directed Kaj Munk's *ORDET (THE WORD)* for the Avignon Festival at the Cloître des Carmes reprised at the Festival d'Automne à Paris in 2009.

Aside from his French and foreign career, he has frequently worked in the United States, where he directed B.-M. Koltès' *BLACK BATTLES WITH DOGS (COMBAT DE NÈGRE ET DE CHIENS)* at the Seven Stages Theatre in Atlanta in 2001 (performed in Chicago in 2004, Avignon and Athens Festivals in 2006), Koltès' *ROBERTO ZUCCO* at the Emory Theatre in Atlanta in 2004 and Mike Leigh's *ABIGAIL'S PARTY* in 2007 at the American Repertory Theatre (ART) in Boston, where he directed Shakespeare's *JULIUS CAESAR* in 2008. The production was reprised in Orléans and at the Festival d'Automne à Paris in 2009 followed by a tour in France in October and November 2009. Invited in Iceland since 1997, he presented there in particular Samuel Beckett's *THE IMAGE*, with dancer Damien Jalet and Anne Brochet, then replaced by Lou Doillon. The show was created in Dublin in 2006 at the Centenary Beckett Festival. In March 2009, he premiered at the National Theatre of Iceland Marie Darrieussecq's *LE MUSÉE DE LA MER (THE SEA MUSEUM)*. In the summer 2009, he has been invited by Franco Quadri to direct a project with young European actors within *L'École des Maîtres*: he staged *A DOLL'S HOUSE* by Ibsen, performed in Liège, Reims, Rome, Lisbon.

He was a Villa Medici Hors-les-Murs scholar. Since 2007, Arthur Nauzyciel is at the head of the Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre.



CENTRE DRAMATIQUE NATIONAL
ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
DIRECTION ARTHUR NAUZCYIEL

CREATIVE TEAM

Erna Omarsdottir **Choreographer**

In 1996 she founded the EKKA company in Reykjavik, with four other female dancers. Since then Erna has worked as a performer with various choreographers, including Jan Fabre on the solo work MY MOVEMENTS ARE ALONE LIKE STREET DOGS and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui on FOI (FAITH). She has also developed her own projects, among which IBM- 1401, A USER'S MANUAL AND THE MYSTERIES OF LOVE, created in collaboration with musician Johann Johannsson, WE ARE ALL MARLENE DIETRICH FOR with Emil Hrvatin for the Iceland Dance Company, OFAETT (UNBORN) with Damien Jalet and plastic artist Gabriela Fridriksdottir, THE TALKING TREE with Lieven Douselaere, or a piece for five female dancers and two musicians, TEACH US TO OUTGROW OUR MADNESS.

She is a singer in the Brussels-based collective Poni (Projects 1 and 2), founded by Frank Pay.

In 2007, Erna created the "multifunctional" group SKYR LEE BOB with plastic artist Gudni Gunnarsson and musician Lieven Douselaere. SKYR LEE BOB, a performance and installation around the concepts of panic and control, was created for the Reykjavik Art Festival in May 2008. During the summer of 2009, Erna will be invited by Chunky Move in Australia to create a piece with dancer Damien Jalet.

She was awarded the Grimman Prize, an Icelandic prize for theatre and dance, three times (in 2003, 2005 and 2007) and the Wind Prize from the PUF festival in Croatia in 2008, where her piece IBM-1401, A USER'S MANUAL was performed.

Damien Jalet **Dancer and choreographer**

A franco-belgian choreographer, he started performing as a dancer with Wim Vandekeybus, LE JOUR DU PARADIS ET DE L'ENFER (THE DAY OF PARADISE AND HELL) in 1998. In 2000, he started working closely with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui as an associate artist with the Ballets C. de la B. company. Together, they created RIEN DE RIEN, D'AVANT, FOI, TEMPUS FUGIT and MYTH. In 2002, along with Cherkaoui, Luc Dunberry and Juan Cruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola, he created D'AVANT. He is regularly collaborating with Erna Ómarsdóttir (OFAETT, THE

UNCLEAR AGE, TRANSAQUANIA). They just codirected for the prestigious Melbourne Arts Festival the piece BLACK MARROW for the Australian dance company Chunky Move. In 2006, he created a duo, ALEKO, with Cherkaoui and Alexandra Gilbert, for the Museum of Modern Art in Aomori, Japan. He has worked with Arthur Nauzyciel since 2006. With actress Anne Brochet, he created THE IMAGE for the Beckett Centenary Festival in Dublin, reprised in Reykjavik in 2007 and in Bordeaux, invited by Erna Omarsdottir as part of the Grandes Traversées festival in 2007, then in New York City in 2008, with actress Lou Doillon. He choreographed Shakespeare's JULIUS CAESAR directed by Arthur Nauzyciel at American Repertory Theatre in Boston in February 2008 and ORDET (LA PAROLE), created at the Avignon festival in 2008. He is currently touring his triptic THREE SPELLS with live music performance by famous electro-acoustic musician Fennesz and the dancer Alexandra Gilbert. In 2010 he will be codirecting the piece BABEL (WORDS), a collaboration with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Anthony Gormley.

Giulio Lichtner **Scenographer**

After graduating from Oxford University with a degree in architecture, Giulio Lichtner attended the Ecole nationale supérieure d'art dramatique in Strasburg, where he trained as a scenographer. He was Anna Viebrock and Christoph Marthaler's assistant and a recipient of the residential program scholarship at Villa Kujoyama.

In the theatre, he collaborates regularly with directors as a scenographer, primarily with Benoit Giros, Balázs Gera, Bernard Levy, Anton Kousnetzov, Sebastien Lefrançois. In film, he designed the scenography for L'AGE DES POSSIBLES by P. Ferrand (1995). For Arthur Nauzyciel, he created the scenography for VOYAGE DE SETH (SETH'S JOURNEY), an opera by Philippe Dulat, Koltès' BLACK BATTLES WITH DOGS, Duras' LA PLUIE D'ÉTÉ (SUMMER RAIN), Beckett's THE IMAGE, Darriussecq' LE MUSÉE DE LA MER (THE SEA MUSEUM) and Ibsen's DOLL'S HOUSE.



CENTRE DRAMATIQUE NATIONAL
ORLÉANS/LOIRET/CENTRE
DIRECTION ARTHUR NAUZCYIEL

Scott Zielinski

Lighting Designer

Born in the United States. At the American Repertory Theatre (ART) in Boston, he designed the lights for DONNIE DARKO, OLIVER TWIST, the Krystian Lupa-directed THREE SISTERS, DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE, WOYZECK, PETER PAN AND WENDY, and the production of JULIUS CAESAR directed by Arthur Nauzyciel in 2008. He has worked in all the main theatres of New York City and the United States : Classic Stage Company, Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theater Club, New York Theater Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, the Public Theater, Theater for a New Audience... On Broadway he worked on Suzan-Lori Parks' TOPDOG/UNDERDOG. He has also worked in dance and opera in the United States and abroad, in Adelaide, Berlin, Edinburgh, Fukuoka, Göteborg, Hamburg, Hong Kong, London, Oslo, Ottawa, Paris, Rotterdam, Singapore, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Tokyo, Toronto, Vienna, Zurich...

Bardi Johannsson

Composer

A composer and performer, he became in 2000, with the release of his first album, YOU, a prominent figure of musical melancholy. Influenced by trip-hop and electro, this record was followed in 2003 by SOMETHING WRONG, an album in which the use of acoustic instruments gave a new dimension to the singing. The same year, he recorded LADY AND BIRD, in duo with Keren Ann. He has performed in Europe, Japan and the United States. He also writes music for film. He directed a short feature, RED DEATH, shown at the Pompidou Centre in 2004. He wrote an original soundtrack to the 1920s film HAXAN.

With BANG GANG, he composed GHOSTS FROM THE PAST, a record infused with ethereal melancholy. The band played the closing concert of the Art Festival in Reykjavik in June 2008 and was invited to the INDETENDANCES festival in Paris the same year.