



NUMAIN

BY STÉPHANE CRÊTE

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NUMAIN

SOLO
FOR A HUMAN
AND A SILICON
DOLL

SYNOPSIS

Alone on the stage, a human tries to find some relief from his solitude by spending time with a human-sized silicon doll. In almost ritual contemplation, the man unwraps the doll and then assembles it, in the hopes that he can bring it to life. His attempts at seduction and tender gestures are all for naught: intimacy with this inert body is impossible, and his attempts only lead to disappointment and bitterness. Being alone frees him from any moral constraints that could be imposed by others. He finds himself with a worshipped idol that he can only desecrate, so he explores the limits of what is possible in a fight combining violence, desire and transgression.

The man desperately seeks to give meaning – a life – to this inanimate object. His overwhelming loneliness eventually culminates, in a way, in a funeral ritual, as if going into mourning is the only way he can find peace.

Through the sacrificial death of the doll, the dance between Eros and Thanatos leads the man to confront his own divine nature and, finally, accept his journey as a human being.

Existing in the margins between performance art and theatre, *Numain* (a play on words in French combining the words for «nude» and «human») takes up the same themes as Esteban (Stéphane Crête's first solo show): *solitude, the limits of immodesty, and insanity*. Tinged with more gravity and driven by ethical and humanist questions, Numain is an artistic happening full of spirituality, that is nevertheless not without humour and creativity.



**VIDEO OF THE
FULL SHOW**

<https://vimeo.com/371695084>

Password: crete

TEASER

<https://vimeo.com/356767297>



STÉPHANE CRÊTE

Stéphane Crête is a transdisciplinary artist, author, multi-talented man of the theatre, teacher, ritualist, and performer who has had an astonishing and atypical career. For over 30 years he has been as at home in mainstream productions (*Dans une galaxie près de chez vous*, *Séquelles*, *Toute la vie*, *Jeune Juliette*) as he is in experimental theatre.

Through a body of work intended to be free of conventional labels – and which, as a result, is often considered impossible to classify – Stéphane Crête has devoted his career to exploring the great themes that are dear to him: **the transgression of moral conventions (often linked to expressions of sexuality and death), trance and altered states of consciousness, and the dance between the profane and the sacred.** He is passionate in his work and research, and emerges with creations that try to shake up the audience's perceptions and that question the limits of representation. Most of his theatrical work in recent years (1996-2016) has been in collaboration with the company Momentum where he was co-artistic director.

DRAMATIC WORKS (CREATIONS)

- 2019 **NUMAIN**
Creator, director and actor
- 2019 **MAUVAIS GOÛT**
Playwright and actor
- 2018 **SCRIPTARIUM 2018**
Creator and playwright
- 2016 **CABARET DADA MOMENTUM**
Co-director and co-facilitator
- 2015 **CÉPHALOPODES**
Playwright and actor
- 2012 **LE GRAND CÉRÉMONIAL
ET AUTRE ARRABALESQUES**
Director and actor
- 2009 **MYCOLOGIE**
Playwright and director
- 2008 **ESTEBAN**
Playwright, director and actor
- 2005 **NICOLE**
Playwright, director and actor
(with Didier Lucien)
- 2001 **LABORATOIRE CRÊTE**
Playwright, director and actor
- 1996 **CHAIR PHILIPPE**
Playwright and director

LINKS

LABO CRÊTE

facebook.com/labocrete

MOMENTUM

momentumenligne.com

PHÉNOMÉNA

electriques.ca/filles/fr/select/bio/?id=crete_st

INTERVIEW WITH STÉPHANE CRÊTE

zonevideo.telequebec.tv/media/39434/stephane-crete/y-a-du-monde-a-messe

PUBLICATIONS



REVIEWS

Translated excerpts from critical reviews

"...[the show] touches on transgressions of codes, fantasies and social projections with **great tenderness and honesty.**"

Audrey Desrosiers,
Inside and somewhere else

"In this allegory on the humanization of objects, **Stéphane Crête's physical performance is striking.** He doesn't hesitate to become his doll's thing, the stooge of his drama. (...) A premise that is both unnerving and rife with risk."

Patrice Bonneau, Revue de théâtre JEU

"The human being is a machine with emotions, and Stéphane Crête is **an excellent engineer.**"

MWebzine, Benoît Lacombe

"Surprisingly, *Numain* deals with a lot, and little at the same time, in terms of taboos. They are sometimes in your face, but mostly subtle, in **a perfect and controlled dose of audacity** (...) a real ritual unfolds and settles in on the stage, spanning the profane, eroticism, despair and the sacred."

Spirale, Marie-Paule Grimaldi

"...a silent performance that plays with the limits of what it means to be human, also reminding us that **Crête experiments with the stage in a way that is far too rare.** Stéphane Crête creates a universe that is open to interpretation, carried by a fragility as unexpected as it is a *propos.*"

Le Devoir, François Jardon-Gomez

"Stéphane Crête's strong stage presence provides some troubling moments in this successful exploratory show. **A real tour de force** by a very talented actor. (...) **an absolutely fascinating solo show.**"

VOIR, Marie Villeneuve

"**Jerzy Grotowski is alive and living in Montreal!**

Stéphane Crête's play, *Numain*, puts into practice the teachings of this great thinker of contemporary theatre. Theatre without words, stripped down, where everything goes through the actor's body in a kind of ritual, at times incandescent."

En toutes lettres, Mario Cloutier

"With no modesty, but without excessive immodesty, either, Crête leaves **considerable room for the audience's intelligence and imagination.**"

Zone Culture, Yanik Comeau

"Crête continues to refine his art with *Numain*, giving **a performance that is both physical and psychological**, and not a single word is uttered. He captivates the audience with a range of emotions and unparalleled physicality."

MonThéâtre, Gabrielle Brassard

"This is a magnificent work of research and exploration that, in my opinion, makes Stéphane Crête as **one of the most fascinating artists anywhere.**"

Bible urbaine, Virginie Chauvette

"The performance cleverly **avoids the pitfalls of cliché and caricature:** he has not staged the decadence of sexual despair (...) Rather, it is an exploration of human relationships when our underlying impulses cannot be satisfied."

Le Culte, Juliette Gaudreault-Tremblay



CONVERSATION WITH STÉPHANE CRÊTE

LEDEVOIR

Marie Labrecque / October 4, 2019

<https://www.ledavoir.com/culture/theatre/564041/phenomena-phenomena-le-performeur-et-la-poupee>

PHÉNOMENA: THE ACTOR AND THE DOLL

The other player who shares the stage in Numain with this atypical artist is not a member of the artists' union. She costs \$2,500 and lives in a box. The author of *Mauvais goût* acknowledges that his artistic approach is often "sensationalist" on the surface, based on an idea whose spectacular nature risks overshadowing the depth of his message. "It's a dangerous line that I like to walk. And I want to confound [these expectations]. So don't come to the theatre expecting me to make love with a doll on stage..."

This transdisciplinary artist likes to leave his comfort zone and plunge into experimental research. A decade after having presented *Esteban*, he felt the need to "put himself in danger" again with a solo work. "For the pleasure of seeing where it could take me if I had the chance to be in a space of total freedom," he explains, sitting at the *Phénomena* Festival where he rehearsed for some time.

The actor created the piece in complete solitude, which is rare. "In *Esteban*, I was on more familiar ground, with my costumes, my characters and my music. This time it's a bit different to find myself

alone, with a doll. In a relationship with a non-human human, a representation that looks very real, but is absolutely inert.» So as a kind of solitude, it is a bit ambiguous.

Stéphane Crête had an intuition that he could successfully explore his favourite themes, including *Eros* and *Thanatos*, by working with a silicon doll. "First, its primary function is sexual for the consumers who normally buy it. But at the same time, it looks a bit like a corpse. What interests me is to see how I can sanctify, magnify or idolize this profane object, which has a practical function, and is [the epitome] of the objectification of women.»

The artist nevertheless adds that his research has shown that, in fact, many men purchase these dolls to feel less alone. "They'll watch movies or eat with them... They're really life companions for some men." His show does not examine this social phenomenon, as sad as it may be creepy. The fact remains that Crête, who has watched documentaries on the subject and spoken to the doll's Quebec distributor, has discovered a

fascinating subculture. And this subculture is basically "not very erotic," he says. "There are forums where people share pictures of their dolls sitting in the living room, and give advice on how to take care of them. They'll talk about their problems with wigs, or how to do their makeup..."

The challenge for the artist was to find a doll that fulfilled his desires in a market that offers, instead, images of fantasies of women: very juvenile, elf-like faces, disproportionate breasts, etc. "I wanted to have a partner on stage, as if I was working with an actress, so I was looking for a realistic physical form. I didn't really succeed. The doll I'm going to work with has a very small [figure], because I had to be able to carry her on stage." His silicon partner still weighs 36 kg.

INTO A TRANCE

In order to create Numain, Stéphane Crête filmed himself in a state of trance, i.e. in a space without censorship or any questioning of his actions. "I assumed that, if I had the filter of an outside eye, such as a director, I would be constantly criticizing myself: it's too weird, it's too long, I have to be entertaining... Whereas this way, I can spend hours just playing with the doll's hand, for example, and see where it takes me. Afterwards, I look at what I've done, and then I select and develop the material."

How does one attain this state of trance? By altering one's consciousness in a natural way, explains the creator of the memorable Les Laboratoires Crête, which is interested in these altered states, as well as in the ritual work he teaches in his "parallel life." "It's as if I'm entering an intuition. I'm trying to let go of thinking, of the superego. It's about doing things without asking 'What am I doing?' Sometimes I find that it helps

to use music, breathing, a repetitive movement."

From this process emerged a creation with no text, "as if there were no words to describe that connection." The actor explores interactions with this inanimate but seemingly living subject, allowing him to make gestures that he would not be able to make with an actress. These transgressions "aren't necessarily related to sexuality." But certain manipulations of the body, on a real acting partner, would nevertheless be ethically dubious. "Or would require extensive discussions about consent!"

As the title suggests, Numain tries to humanize its protagonist as much as possible. The show explores different types of relationships that the actor establishes with this figure: ones of seduction, sorority, devotion, even impatience in the face of his inertia. Stéphane Crête, who wanted to work on violence, was not really able to transgress this limit. "The subject is so strong that [it becomes] disturbing to

look at [her]. The fact that I am a living man manipulating an inert woman inevitably raises a lot of questions about gender dynamics and issues of domination. I didn't necessarily want to address these themes, but they underpin the work, despite my best intentions."

SHAMELESSNESS

The play also takes up the theme of identity. "The woman on stage brings me back to thinking about my own femininity or questioning of gender. How can our skins speak to each other, how can I identify with her?" The artist finds it interesting to confront his 50-year-old male body, which has its share of rough edges, with the smooth, idealized plastic of his partner. It is work that implies equal amounts of "shamelessness and unveiling."

Stéphane Crête feels very giddy about this Numain that has not yet been seen much by anyone else, apart from occasional visits by collaborators. "I'm in a bit of a state of terror," he admits with a laugh. "It makes me feel highly vulnerable to present the results of this research to anyone, because I'm letting them see something very private and personal."

It is a solitary performance, from which a certain sadness would emerge. Assuming his "inner clown," the imaginative artist injected a bit of craziness into this creation, which started out as something very serious. "But I think it's more poetic in nature. I knew exactly what to do to create a funny show with a doll. I could have done it very well. But I wanted to outsmart myself, too. It's as if, at this point in my career, I want to see how I can reinvent myself." [translation]



CREATIVE TEAM

Creator, interpretation, staging
STÉPHANE CRÊTE

Lighting design, management,
technical direction
DAVID POULIN

Costumes, set, accessories
ROBIN BRAZILL

Soundtrack
ÉRIC FORGET

External consultant
DIDIER LUCIEN

Puppetry consultant:
MARCELLE HUDON

Production management
CYNTHIA BOUCHARD-GOSSELIN

Photography
PHILÉMON CRÊTE

Press relations
OLGA CLAING

This show was presented for
the first time at the La Chapelle
theatre, Montreal, Quebec, from
October 7 to 11, 2019. In collaboration
with Festival Phénoména

PARTNERS

NUMAIN benefited from a creative
residency at **La Chapelle Scènes
Contemporaines** and is a coproduction
with **Festival Phénoména**. The project
received support from the **Canada
Council for the Arts**.

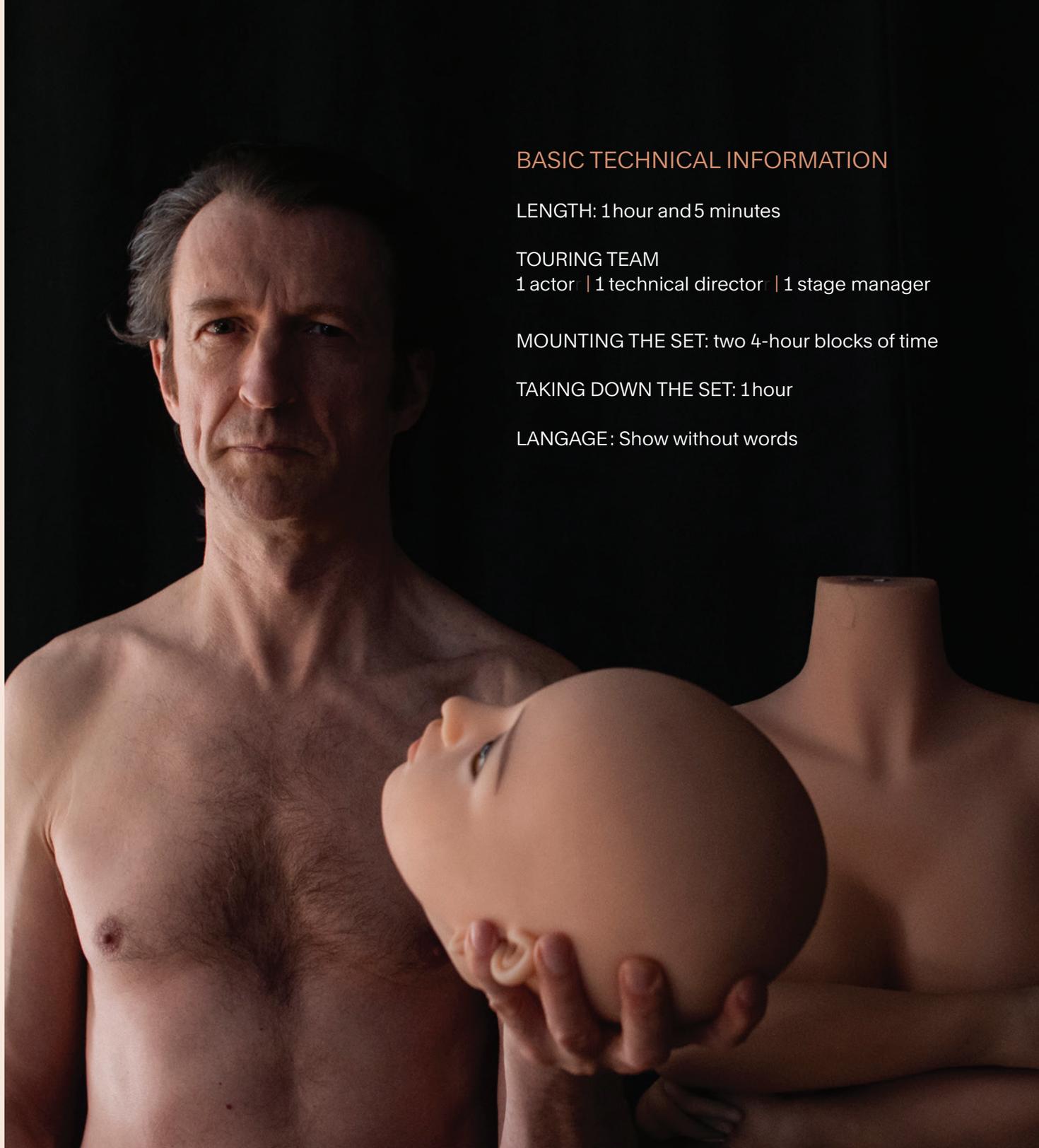
LA CHAPELLE
SCÈNES CONTEMPORAINES

PHÉ
NOMÉ
NA



Conseil des arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts



BASIC TECHNICAL INFORMATION

LENGTH: 1 hour and 5 minutes

TOURING TEAM

1 actor | 1 technical director | 1 stage manager

MOUNTING THE SET: two 4-hour blocks of time

TAKING DOWN THE SET: 1 hour

LANGAGE: Show without words

