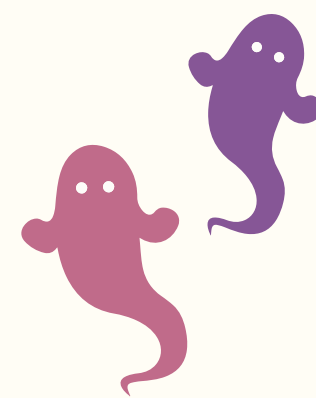


# From the Beginning to the final performance: Discover *Fantômes*



Photographer: Anaïs SLIMANI. Minerva on stage.

*Fantômes* is a play depicting three characters who meet again after spending years away from each other. The first one, Minerva, tries to remain the actress she used to be. Hyacinthe, the second character, quit her life onstage years ago and is now Minerva's assistant. When the third character, Tom, comes back after leaving years ago, he meets the two women again on a rainy night. Throughout the play, we understand that these characters used to be colleagues, friends, or even lovers, but also that they shared a past that is still driving their present.

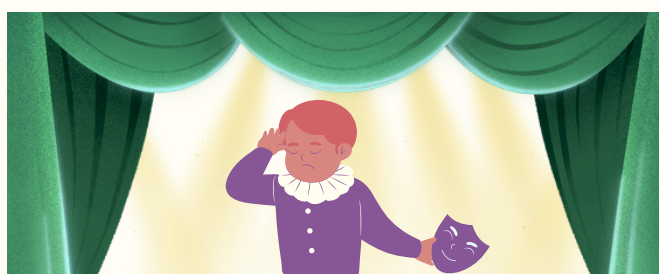
The title is self-explanatory: in this piece, there are *fantômes*. The question is whether or not it references the ghosts wandering in the theater, who happen to be Minerva's only audience. Or, the characters who are becoming the ghosts of their own life.

As the story goes on, the relationships between the characters unravel, allowing the audience to understand the characters' present by witnessing fragments of their past.

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“Give me a glue gun, and  
I rebuild the world.”

Néféli Moustakas, costumer.



On the 30th and 31st of May 2026, in the Théâtre La Luna in Avignon, it was possible to discover *Fantômes*. A play written by Catherine Annis, staged by Helene Landau, and starring Anaïs Gabay, Martina Ribera Saavedra, and Patrick Séminor.

This piece is part of the Ville des Langues and the Clashing Classics festivals and was also part of a double production with *Tiresias Never Made It To New York*, in live collaboration with theaters from Berlin and Milan.

I was fortunate enough to witness the production of this play from its first rehearsals to the final performance, and I can confidently say that I was impressed with the outcome.



Photographer: Anaïs SLIMANI. Néféli Moustakas and Anaïs Gabay, adjusting Minerva's wig.

One of the main questions that arose during the production was how to honor Minerva's diva self. This is why the stage director, Helen Landau, in collaboration with Néféli Moustakas, a student at Avignon Université, studied the costumes precisely to resonate with the character. From the creation of her wig, which took a good two weeks, to the fabric of her dress, every aspect of her character had to reflect how Minerva still hangs on desperately to the stage. Even the lightning had to consider the shining layers of her dress, to make sure that Minerva stood out, without stealing the public's attention from the two other characters.

Tom and Hyacinthe's costumes were less extravagant, somehow more humble. Tom is wearing the everyday costume of the man who left behind a life in the spotlight- a working man who left the stage and has to blend in with the rest of the workforce. When Hyacinthe's dress is humble and elegant. Moreover, it also shows how she was once a star- a past she can't seem to forget, but chose to hide. It embodies her more reserved persona and is the perfect contrast to Minerva's extravagance.

In terms of scenography, the stage was also part of the characters' reminiscence of their lives. The effective use of video projection served as a gate towards a past colliding with reality. While the props on stage each represented a different part of the long-lost friends' lives, they did not overwhelm the public's eye. The technical aspects of the play, that is to say, the lighting, the soundtrack, and the projection of memories, worked hand in hand with each actor's rendering of their characters to bring the public deeper inside the play.

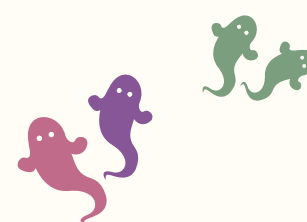
During the casting, Helen Landau already had Patrick Séminor in mind for Tom's role, but he was not exempt from passing an audition. He ended up portraying Tom faithfully, as expected, while also bringing the energy the character needed in order to properly showcase, the sense of urgency he feels as the story goes on. While the stage and casting director never worked with Anaïs Gabay before, she loved her acting, using Stanislavski's Method to bring her character to life. To say that the actress became Minerva would be an understatement. She managed to portray her in a way that made the character shine. Probably as much as she would have wished to, for her very last performance. However, she knew Martina Ribera Saavedra, as she had worked with her before and knew she could trust her with the role of Hyacinthe. Indeed, the young actress, of whom *Fantômes* marks her first professional contract, offered an astonishing performance as Hyacinthe. She managed not to restrain herself due to the character's personality and past, but instead showed the woman's strength and softness.

Since the first rehearsal in February 2026, the actors have worked to offer the best performance possible for their audience. Therefore, on the 30th and 31st of May, below the spotlights, the actors revealed their fine understanding of their character, showcasing their talents.

*Fantômes* is a story about not letting go, but also of the acceptance of what is forever lost. It embodies how theater kids only feel at home when on stage, whether they climb on it again after a long time away from the spotlights, or whether they never leave it in the first place. And in this case, even if their home, a theater stage, is in ruins and haunted by the *fantômes* of a past in conflict with the present.



Photographer: Anaïs SLIMANI. Hyacinthe, Minerva and Tom on stage.



Photographer Anaïs SLIMANI. Final Bows, Martina Ribera Saavedra, Anaïs Gabay, Helene Landau, and Patrick Séminor.



Photographer Anaïs SLIMANI. Final Bows, Martina Ribera Saavedra, Anaïs Gabay, Helene Landau, and Patrick Séminor.



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<b>Role/ Title:</b>	Contributor: Fantômes production team. Author and Photographer: Anaïs Slimani
<b>Bio:</b>	Anaïs Slimani studies artworks from initial stages of production to the final piece to highlight every aspect of artistic creation.
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