

# ROOM

**James Thierrée  
La Compagnie  
du Hanne-ton**

Supported by **Sir Ewan and Lady Brown**

With additional support from

**INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS**  
ROYAUME-UNI

13 – 16 August 8pm  
17 August 3pm

**KING'S THEATRE**

The performance lasts approximately  
1 hour 45 minutes with no interval.

Contains strobe lighting and haze.

Please ensure that all mobile phones  
and electronic devices are switched off  
or put on silent.



# ROOM

## LA COMPAGNIE DU HANNETON

Created, directed  
and performed by

**James Thierrée**

Original Music

**James Thierrée**

With

**Anne-Lise Binard**

**Ching-Ying Chien**

**Mathias Durand**

**Samuel Dutertre**

**Hélène Escriva**

**Steeve Eton**

**Maxime Fleau**

**Nora Horvath**

**Sarah Manesse**

**Alessio Negro**

Lighting Design

**James Thierrée**

**Lucie Delorme**

**Samuel Bovet**

Sound Design

**Lilian Herrouin**

**Loïc Lambert**

**Jean François Monnier**

Costume Design

**James Thierrée**

Costume Realization

**Laurette Picheret**

**Sabine Schlemmer**

Technical Manager

**Rodolphe Padel**

Musical Assistant

**Mathias Durand**

Production Assistants

**Felicitas Willems**

**Philippe Royer**

Scenery and  
Props Construction

**Olivier Achez**  
**Mathieu Fernandez**  
**Christelle Naddéo**  
**Félix Page**  
**Samuel Dutertre**  
**Anthony Nicolas**  
**Thomas Delot**  
**Joanny Guillaumin**

Scenic Painting  
Stage Technicians

**Marie Rossetti**  
**Samuel Dutertre**  
**Mathieu Fernandez**  
**Christelle Naddéo**  
**Alessio Negro**  
**Rodolphe Padel,**  
**Félix Page**  
**Laurette Picheret**

Administration

**La Compagnie du Hanneton**  
**Benôte Gillet**

Production

**La Compagnie du Hanneton**  
**Emmanuelle Taccard**  
**Hélène Dubois**

Production Representative

**Quaternaire**  
**Sarah Ford**  
**Anne McDougall**  
**Felicitas Willems**  
**Anne McDougall**

Tour Manager

Co-produced by Edinburgh International Festival, Théâtre de Carouge, La Comédie de Clermont- Ferrand Scène Nationale, Théâtre de la Ville Paris, Le Théâtre de Namur, Le Théâtre des Célestins, Lyon, Chekhov International Theatre Festival, Moscow, Théâtre Sénart Scène Nationale de Lieusaint, anthéa Antibes, LG Art Center Seoul, Equilibre-Nuithonie – Fribourg, Le Volcan Scène Nationale Le Havre, Opéra de Massy, Théâtre du Passage Neuchâtel, Le Parvis Scène Nationale Tarbes, L'arc Scène Nationale Le Creusot, Berliner Festspiele, Festpielhaus St Pölten, Espace Jean Legendre, Théâtre de Compiègne, Bimot Global.

Residencies at Théâtre Sénart Scène Nationale de Lieusaint, L'arc scène nationale Le Creusot and Théâtre de Carouge.

La Compagnie du Hanneton is supported by Ministère de la Culture, DRAC Bourgogne Franche Comté

ROOM is supported by DRAC and Conseil régional Bourgogne Franche Comté

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

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Room  
Is a place  
It is a place  
Where is a place where I  
Up is a place where we  
Loom in a room  
Rewinding the loop  
Minding what all hours are made for  
More for  
For more  
For more ..  
Roots in the roof  
The upscale beat bites and disarray  
As I linger on on backwards end  
Spraying paint and preying faint  
I gamble on what all our hands can keep  
Holding your land  
Through a place in the maze I call it my room.

# PROGRAMME NOTE

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Founded by James Thierrée in 1998, La Compagnie du Hanneton takes its name from a type of beetle. Iridescent creepy-crawlies and a host of fantastical creatures scuttle through the company's shows. They are an essential part of Thierrée's signature melee of puppetry, magic, music, acrobatics and dance, all of which is spun together with a wonderfully whimsical sense of humour. The spiky, gilded critter which appears among the mayhem of his latest creation, *ROOM*, was first dreamed up for a production by Thierrée in 2018 at the Palais Garnier where a few dozen dancers of the Paris Opera were turned into shimmering mini-beasts.

The French word Hanneton also translates as "scatterbrain" and while this conveys something of the unruliness of Thierrée's shows it doesn't do justice to their meticulous and sophisticated construction. The stage is a playground for Thierrée and his company, whose clowning and contortions always feel newly minted, but this looseness exists within a carefully realised world. Thierrée himself describes such an approach as "studied carelessness".

Thierrée was last at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2016 with *The Toad Knew*, which was set in a subterranean horror landscape realised in a jaw-dropping set design. But although darkly compelling, that show – like *ROOM* – also featured

spellbinding vignettes of slapstick humour including some clowning around with a coffeepot, pratfalls with a towering pile of plates and musical instruments which had minds of their own. His shows often have a mixture of the most domestic, humble objects placed cheek by jowl with the extraordinary.

The worlds that Thierrée creates on stage have become more expansive and elaborate and his casts have also grown in the years since his 2011 one-man show *Raoul*. But he can still transfix the audience with the simplest of means: rocking on a chair, climbing a rope or just playing with his floppy fringe of hair.

The key to Thierrée's style is combining decades of experience (he has a hard-won understanding of circus that you sense in the slightest movement of his body) with a naivety that can present a perspective you'd never have dreamed of. Who else would start a show, as he did in *The Toad Knew*, by wrenching the theatre's red curtain down to the ground rather than delicately raising or opening it?

Perhaps it's because Thierrée has spent his life on stage. James and his sister Aurélia were born into a travelling circus family and made their stage debut in their parents' show, playing a walking suitcase, their little legs poking out of a box.

His own shows have had a similar handmade quality: his mother still collaborates with him and designed costumes for *Tabac Rouge* (2013) and puppetry for *The Toad Knew*. The sense of playfulness extends to such shows' meaning: they are enigmatic, nimbly avoiding categorisation or plot definition. 'Well, what's the story about?' he once jokily asked himself about his 2017 creation *Au Revoir Parapluie*. "It's a story about a story (about a story about a story about a story...) that cannot be told." *The Toad Knew* took its title from a roadside conversation that young James believed he'd had with an amphibian. It became a family joke as his parents would ask him what secrets he had learned from the encounter.

Thierrée's career has been a long and winding road: after launching his company with the award-winning *La Symphonie Du Hanneton*, he has spent almost 25 years touring his creations and also found time to appear in films including *Bye Bye Blackbird* (2005), an adaptation of Herman Melville's *Bartleby* (in 2010) and the circus drama *Chocolat* (2016), for which he won a César award.

He has gone from not just directing and performing in his stage shows but also, for ROOM, having credits for scenography, costumes, musical design and lighting. A total love of stage craft is what drives the productions, which often delight in revealing the equipment other directors prefer to hide. The sort of tasks usually discreetly handled by stagehands are instead choreographed directly into his productions.

Thierrée's childlike delight in the possibilities of the stage – no matter how grand or small the effect – makes his shows endlessly bewitching. When you watch a new production by La Compagnie du Hanneton, it can feel like you're watching theatre itself anew too.

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Chris Wiegand is Stage Editor for The Guardian

# JAMES THIERRÉE

James Thierrée was born in Lausanne in 1974 and made his stage debut aged four in his parents' circus, Le Cirque Imaginaire. From 1978 to 1994 he toured with Le Cirque Imaginaire, its successor, Le Cirque Invisible, and Le Cirque Bonjour, then trained at the Piccolo Teatro, Milan, and the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique, Paris. In 1998 he founded his own company, La Compagnie du Hanne-ton, for which his production of *La symphonie du Hanne-ton* toured internationally and won three Molière Awards in 2006. His other directing and performance credits include *La Veillée des Abysses* (2003); *Au revoir parapluie*, which won a Molière Award in 2007; *Raoul* (2009); and *Tabac Rouge* (2013), which won a Molière Award in 2014; *The Toad Knew* (presented at the 2016 Edinburgh International Festival); *Frôlons* (2018) for the Opéra National de Paris; and *Mo's* (2021). He has collaborated with the directors Peter Greenaway (on the film *Prospero's Books*, in which he played Ariel), Robert Wilson, Carlos Santos, Beno Besson, Coline Serreau, Agnieszka Holland, Jacques Baratier, Tony Gatlif, Claude Miller, Jacques Doillon and Roschdy Zem, among others.