

A person is shown in profile, wearing a VR headset. The scene is dimly lit with prominent neon light strips in shades of blue and purple, creating a futuristic or laboratory-like atmosphere. The person's face is partially obscured by the headset, and their hair is visible. The background is filled with various pieces of equipment and more neon lighting, some of which are out of focus.

# THE BLIND

IN>I>O

>>

ARTISTIC DOSSIER

# I am here, yet I do not know where.

Maurice Maeterlinck / *The Blind* / 1889 / translated by Sumaya Al-Attia

## THE BLIND >>

>> VR PLAY FOR 12 SPECTATORS

>> PRODUCTION NOV. 2021 – THÉÂTRE NOUVELLE GÉNÉRATION – CDN DE LYON

An adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck's original play *The Blind*

Design concept, adaptation and scenography: Julien Dubuc

Sound design: Gregoire Durrande

VR development: 3D design: Antoine Vanel – Blindsp0t

Voice actors: Sumaya Al-Attia, Jean-Rémy Chaize, Jeanne David, Grégory Fernandes, Alexandre Le Nours, Maxime Mikolajczak

IT set up: Samuel Sérandour

3D printing and light design: David Udovtsch

Stage manager and scenography collaborator: Elsa Belenguier

VR manager and IT assistant: Pierrick Chauvet

Management: Lise Déterne, Eloise Royer, l'Echelle

Production and promoter: Emilie Briglia

Producer: INVIVO

Co-producers: Les Gémeaux – scène Nationale de Sceaux, Théâtre Nouvelle Génération – CDN de Lyon, Théâtre de l'Union – CDN de Limoges, Némo – Biennale des Arts Numériques de la Région Île-de-France – Le CENTQUATRE – PARIS, Lux – scène nationale de Valence

With the support of: Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée, DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Ville de Lyon, Théâtre des Îlets – CDN de Montluçon, La maison du numérique.

## SUMMARY >>

In an ancient forest of eternal nature and under a star-strewn sky, twelve blind people – six women and six men – wait for the return of their guide, a priest. They attempt to locate themselves in both time and space. Through words they fill their silence and waiting. They discover one another and come to the realisation that they have always been strangers. Foreshadowed by nature's muffled calls, a crisis breaks out when they discover the dead priest lying among them.

On stage, the twelve spectators delve into a poetic and raw virtual world. An immersive collective VR experience highlighting the play's timeless message; we are all blind seeking some form of guidance.

By adapting Maurice Maeterlinck's well-known play, INVIVO pursues its vision of a hybrid theatre at the cross paths of theatre arts, digital arts, and virtual reality.



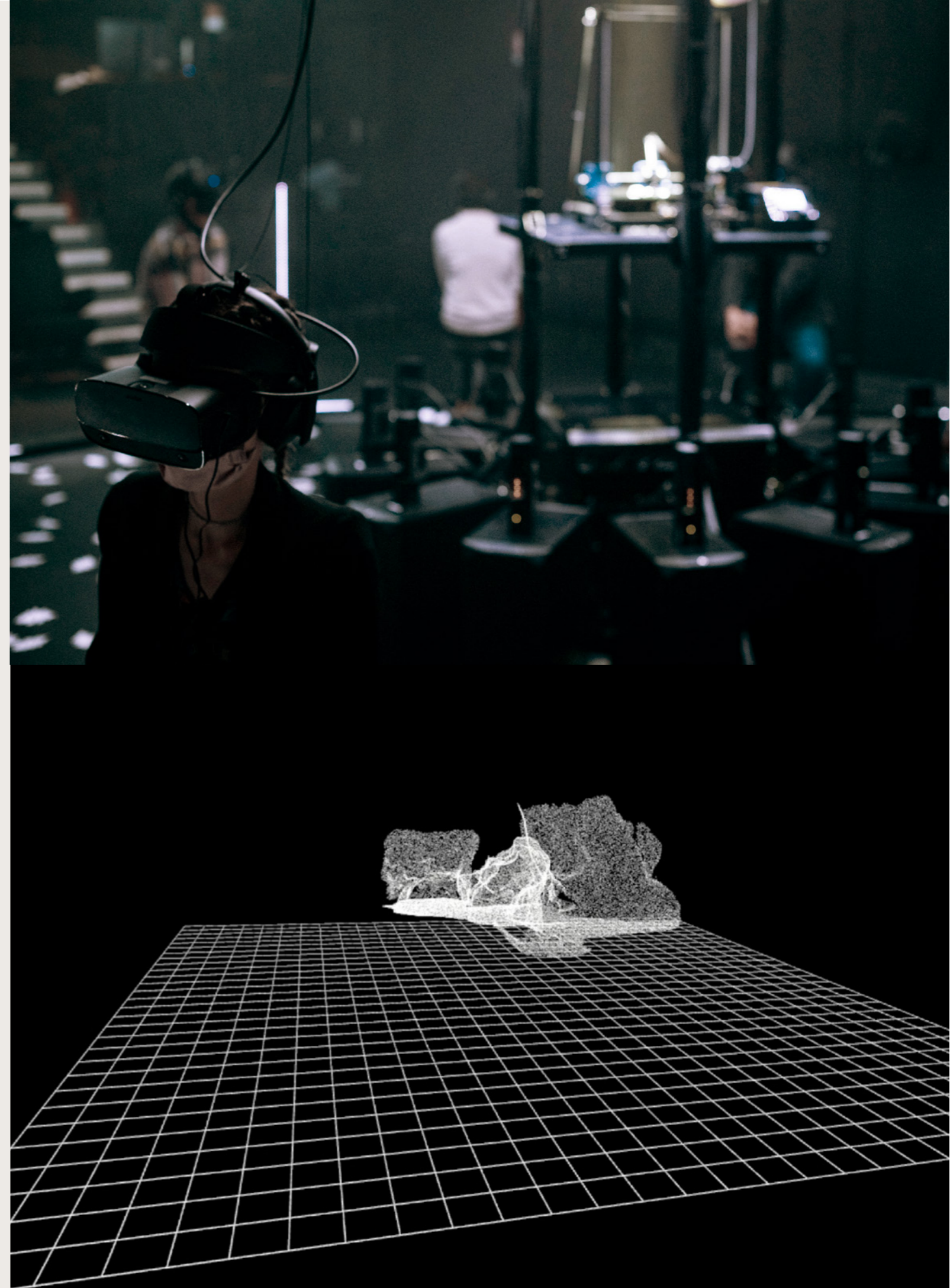
## INTENTIONS >>

As a metaphor for the absurdity and tragedy of the human condition, *The Blind* places us in a different time, waiting for an uncertain future. In a highly sensitive virtual reality world, the author's language and the situation he describes allow the spectators to question their own perceptions of the world. Experiencing *The Blind* is being present at a pivotal point, where the twelve protagonists suddenly awake from what seems like a long life of numbness. The twelve blind people represent the whole of humanity: hesitant, anxious, oblivious to its condition and waiting for outside help for guidance. The play is a realisation of our fate, it is a metaphysical and poetic awakening to the world we live in, a shock in which we reflect on our contemporary inadaptability to Nature. Using technology available to us today, our aim is to make Maeterlinck's language and the issues he tackles in his play – written in mid-nineteenth century – heard. Beyond the elaborated and immersive set design, we set out to reveal the sensory landscape the author imposes. By setting blindness as the primary element in the play, the author compels us to question the way we see our surroundings, in the same way virtual reality media does.

The visual and sound landscape built around the spectators is generated in real time. It is composed of white dots on a black background. Based on LIDAR scans of trees, forests, and caves (clouds of dots in the virtual space), the spaces created virtually are endlessly being built and deconstructed to emphasise the characters' different emotions. The spectator is sometimes a part of the landscape himself. The visual and sound narrative aims to focus on the spectator's changing point of view, alternating between an omniscient point of view and a weightless birds'-eye view. Our aim is to immerse the spectator into an altered and suspended world beset by collapse, a sort of Nature running out of breath. A very different world to the one surrounding us, one that includes a form of clairvoyance in which we could pass through the ruins of our existence.

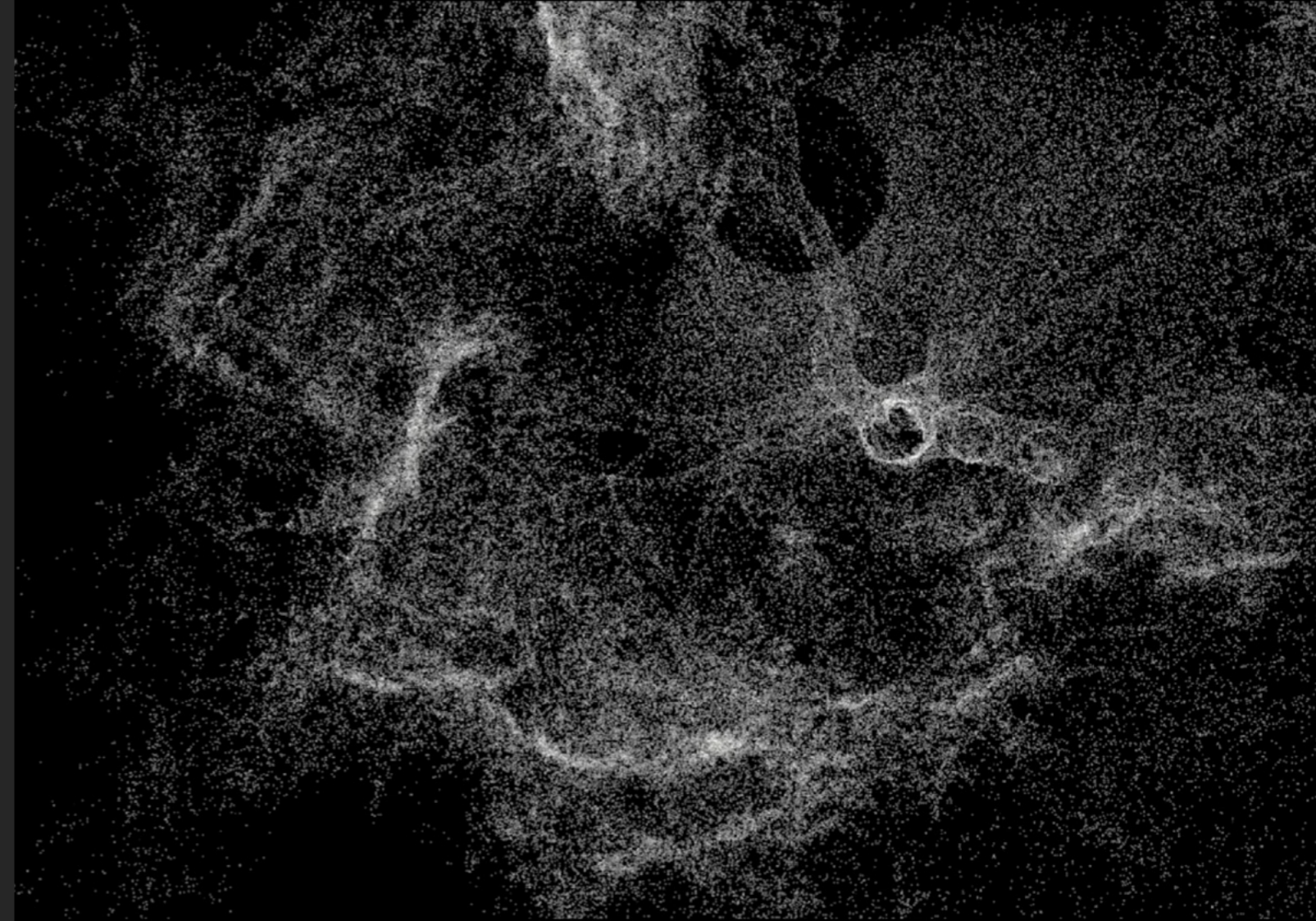
The plot takes place in a freezing forest on an island. The group of twelve spectators is seated in the set design around what seems to be a digital tree with virtual reality gear hanging from it. The floor is covered with white oak leaves printed during the performance by the 3D printer in the middle of the set. The leaves are a metaphor for the will to reproduce a form of Nature that is almost dead. They also create a link between the virtual space and the real tangible space surrounding us.

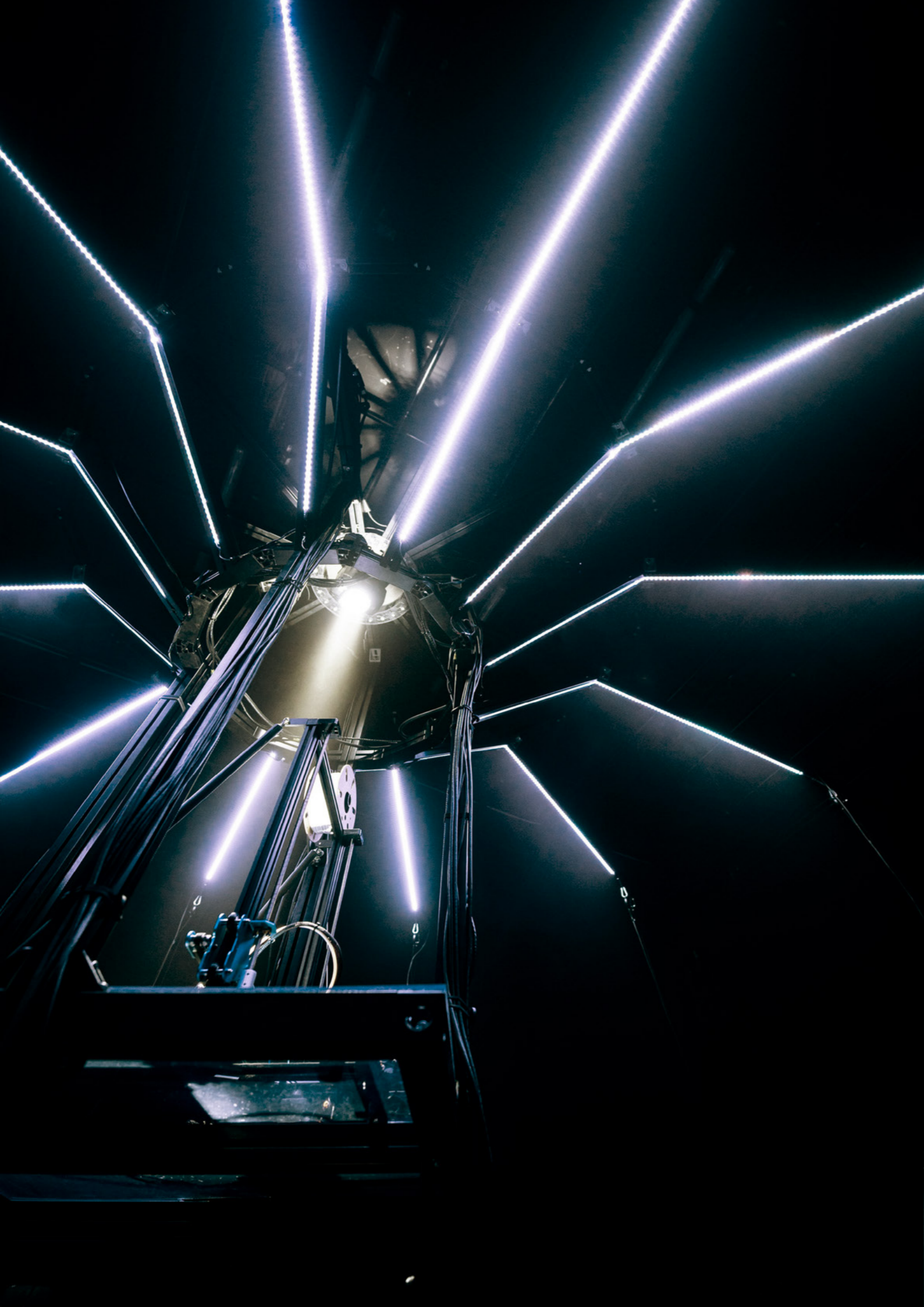
Since Maeterlinck's dramaturgy has always questioned the notions of embodiment on stage as well as theatrical performance, we decided that the twelve voices of the characters were to be performed by six actors in a pre-recorded sound setting similar to the one the spectators are in during the show. The recording is caught live with no edits and is the fruit of all the work put in by the entire team to analyse and rehearse the play. The voices spatialised in the VR space – sometimes nearby, sometimes further away – become like landmarks to us. The sound environment is essential in *The Blind*, we find it in the spoken words, in the perception of space and in the composition of the twelve character's mental landscape. Maeterlinck's dramaturgy requires us to work between the words.



He was tired of walking for such a long time. At one point I think he sat amongst us. He has been very sad and tired for the past few days. He has been afraid since the doctor died. He is alone. He barely speaks anymore. I do not know what happened. He insisted on going out today. He said he wanted to see the Island one last time in the sunlight before winter came. It appears this winter will be very long and very cold, and the frost is already heading from the North. He was quite worried as well. He heard that these last storms have swollen the river greatly and the dikes have weakened. He said the sea frightened him, it appears to be rough without explanation and the cliffs of the Island are no longer high enough. He wanted to see it all, but he did not tell us what he saw. – Just now, I think he has gone to find bread and water for the madwoman. He said he might have to go very far, perhaps. We must wait.

Maurice Maeterlinck / The Blind / 1889 / translated by Sumaya Al-Attia





## CALENDAR >>

16 > 28 November 2021 : **PRODUCTION** Festival Micro Mondes - Théâtre Nouvelle Génération, CDN de Lyon (FR)

11 + 12 December 2021 : Biennale Néo - Maison de la musique de Nanterre (FR)

17 > 19 December 2021 : Biennale Néo - Le Centquatre, Paris (FR)

12 + 13 April 2022 : LUX, scène nationale de Valence (FR)

11 > 14 October 2022 : Théâtre de l'Union, CDN de Limoges (FR)

4 > 13 November 2022 : **INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE** GIFF festival, Genève (CH)

1 > 18 December 2022 : Le Lieu Unique + Strereolux - Nantes (FR)

10 > 25 March 2023 : Festival MARTO - Les Gêmeaux, scène nationale de Sceaux + Théâtre de Chatillon (FR)

## LINKS >>

[>> TEASER](#)

[>> CLIPS](#) (for professionals only)

## TECHNICAL SPECS >>

5 sessions - 60 spectators/day

Running time 45 minutes including audience greet

The set stands in a dodecagon of a 3,5m radius

One space required for both stage + seating -> required minimum floor area 8m x 7m and 4m<sup>2</sup> booth space

Minimum height: 3,5m

[>> TECHNICAL RIDER](#)



SIXTH BLIND MAN.

– I cannot tell if we are beneath the open sky.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

– Our voices resonate as though we were in a cave.

THE ELDEST BLIND MAN.

– I think they resonate this way in the night.

A BLIND GIRL.

– I think I can feel the moonlight on my hands.

THE ELDEST BLIND WOMAN.

– I think there are stars. I can hear them.

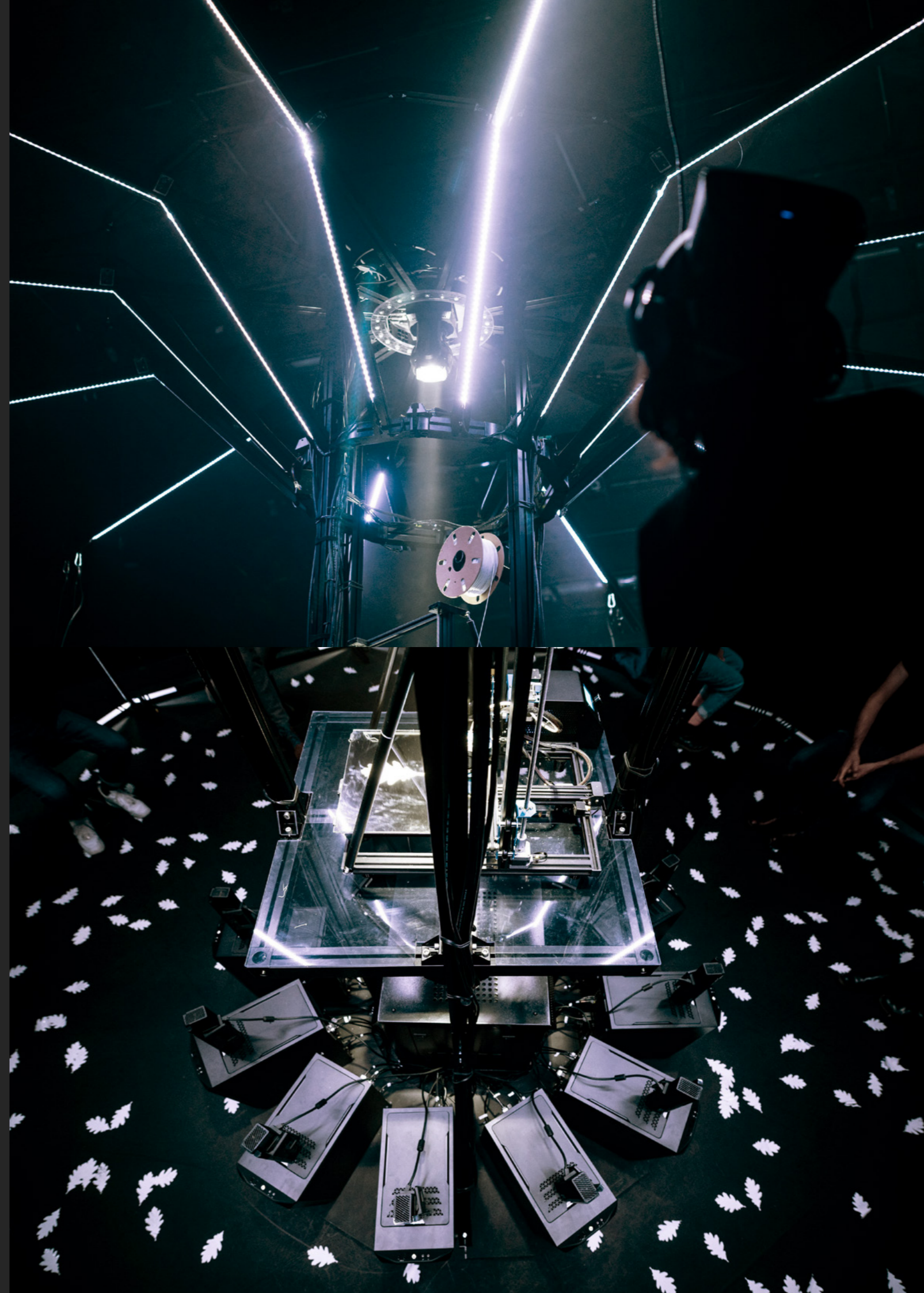
A BLIND GIRL.

– So can I.

FIRST BLIND MAN.

– I do not hear a single thing.

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## INVIVO >>

INVIVO was founded in 2011 as a collective of artists originally composed of six members: Alexia Chandon-Piazza, Julien Dubuc, Grégoire Durrande, Pierre-Yves Poudou and Samuel Sérandour (authors, lighting designers, sound designers, set designers and videographers...). It currently gathers several artists who come together through their vision and stage experiences to create unique stage forms on the frontlines of immersive arts, digital arts and theatre arts. INVIVO's work is structured on the audience's perception and immersion and focuses on how the viewer's perceptions and sensations contribute to new stage-writing forms. On each project INVIVO develops its own writing authenticity, its will to question the spectators' role and perceptions and the use of digital technologies both as tools and as subject matter.

Collectively, INVIVO created and wrote three productions. In 2014, *Sometimes I Dream That I See*, a show for 10 spectators with headphones addressing our relationship to images and screens. In 2015, *Blackout*, an experience for one spectator with a smartphone and headphones in a megalopolis where energy and digital streams are cut off. In 2018, they created *24/7*, a play immersing the audience into a dystopian narrative where a start-up seeks to increase our productivity by reducing our sleeping time. The show is in part with virtual reality gear and for a total of 40 spectators.

In 2019, at the instigation of Sumaya Al-Attia, Elsa Belenguier and Chloé Dumas, INVIVO created for the first time a show for young audiences called *Céto*, a contemplative and dreamlike underwater journey for toddlers starting 18 months old.

In 2020 Julien Dubuc created *Tesseract (0.00/0.00)*, a sound and visual experience in the form of a monolithic installation inspired by Merleau-Ponty's work and science fiction. In 2021, he created INVIVO's newest production *The Blind*, a virtual reality play for twelve spectators based on Maurice Maeterlinck's original play. In line with this last production, Julien is currently adapting and staging three plays by Maurice Maeterlinck in one hybrid and pro-tean show called *The End Of The Present*. INVIVO pursues its vision of hybrid theatre at the cross paths of digital arts and theatre arts.

In 2021 INVIVO – Julien Dubuc was named an associate artist at Gêmeaux – scène nationale de Sceaux, directed by Séverine Bouisset. INVIVO is supported by DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the city of Lyon.

[>> INVIVO](#)

[>> JULIEN DUBUC](#)

# I am frightened when I do not speak.

Maurice Maeterlinck / *The Blind* / 1889 / translated by Sumaya Al-Attia

## IN>I>O

other realities

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