

Press release

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## **Séverine Chavrier appointed as next general manager of the Comédie de Genève Theatre**

**The board of the Fondation d'art dramatique (FAD, Foundation of Dramatic Arts) has today appointed Séverine Chavrier as the next general manager of the Comédie de Genève Theatre with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2023. Currently director of the National Drama Centre, CDN d'Orléans, Séverine Chavrier is putting together an ambitious, local, inclusive and committed artistic project.**

The City of Geneva and the FAD have earmarked Séverine Chavrier's brief, which proposes a project and new language rooted in the existing groundwork but also drawing on resources from the local region, institutions and Swiss artists. Some of the new choices she brings in include the promotion of women on the big stage, the input of different artistic forms – music, cinema, dance, contemporary circus – inclusion, the professional integration of young artists and the ecological artistic transition.

“The FAD is proud to appoint a woman of talent and experience at the head of such a prestigious institution as the Comédie de Genève Theatre, which offers creators a wide range of possibilities,” states its chairperson, Lorella Bertani. “We were captivated by Séverine Chavrier's approach that unreservedly addresses multiple issues currently affecting the performing arts. These are namely: favourable working conditions for artists and artisans in the performing arts, firmly anchoring dramatic performances in a Genevan, national and international cultural landscape, as well as supporting and promoting the work of artists from Geneva and the region, especially that of female creators,” explains Sami Kanaan, City of Geneva's Executive Council Member, in charge of the cultural affairs.

“An appointment such as this is both a true honour and challenge. I am delighted to work on an ambitious project, with a special focus on French-speaking productions and their

articulation on the international stage, on the importance of women, on young people and on sustainability issues. My work will champion artists' living art whose subjective authenticity gives pride of place to literature, images, gestures and bodies. Building on the momentum created under the current management of Natacha Koutchoumov and Denis Maillefer (NKDM), I intend to turn the Comédie into a mecca of creation, reflection in touch with the ever-changing world and open to today's issues, in particular those of inclusion and professional integration, a place of life, where we can debate, a meeting place open to the city and all its residents. I believe a theatre's stage represents a place of conciliation, even reconciliation between various passions," says Séverine Chavrier, who knows Geneva very well having studied music there and grown up in neighbouring France (Greater Geneva).

As regards the process, steered entirely by the FAD, it was carried out expediently by the committee with the aim of replacing the general management of the Comédie de Genève Theatre. It is made up of representatives from the FAD and the City of Geneva, as well as a group of four experts:

- Tiago Rodrigues, General manager of the Festival d'Avignon
- Anja Dirks, Co-Intendant of Theater Basel
- Virginie Demillier, General Manager at Théâtre de Namur
- Frédéric Naville, MBA, HR specialist and business operations expert

As the start date for this position is set for the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2023, a plan of action for the handover has been agreed with the current management of the NKDM to ensure a smooth transition.

#### Contacts

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#### The Comédie de Genève Theatre

Geneva's largest and oldest theatrical institution, the Comédie de Genève, officially opened its doors in 1913. Renowned artists and directors have helped turn it into a mecca of creation: Richard Vachoux, Benno Besson, Claude Stratz, Anne Bisang and Hervé Loichemol. Natacha Koutchoumov and Denis Maillefer (NKDM) have been co-directing the artistic institution since the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2017. A new theatre was built and officially opened in 2021, the new Comédie de Genève. The NKDM duo ensured the institution's seamless move into the new theatre, as well as its launch, with an Open Day weekend that attracted over 6000 people. Under their leadership, Geneva's theatrical stage has significantly increased its international programme with Swiss productions being performed on stages throughout Europe – such as Avignon, Barcelona and the Odéon-théâtre de l'Europe in Paris – boosting previous tour dates of twenty to a staggering 120 today.

### Séverine Chavier: biography

Manager of the CDN Orléans-Centre Val de Loire (CDNO) since 2017, Séverine Chavier is a musician, actor and director. She obtained a music diploma from the Geneva Conservatory, attended various theatre courses in both Lyon and Paris, and also studied philosophy and the arts at Lyon and Paris. She founded her own troupe, La Sérénade Interrompue, in 2003 whilst working as an interpreter and musician for various artists and choreographers.

At the CDN Orléans, a stage that has seen such general managers as Stéphane Braunschweig, Olivier Py and Arthur Nauzyciel, she celebrates a theatre of creators, a collective place that interweaves theatre, visual arts, literature and music – a propensity for combining artistic disciplines and genres. She proposes a rich program without barriers, mixing international talent with local talent, productions, co-productions and residencies, while placing women centre stage. Séverine Chavier created the SOLI festival. Each event delves into the dramaturgical question of form and formats as well as various journeys, a free meeting place dedicated to improvisation. With a view to opening doors and encouraging young people, it is free to students and strongly supports the professional integration of young artists. She also developed a crucial artistic section at schools, academies, local authorities, public institutions (contemporary art funds, hospitals, etc.) and travelling shows.

Among productions by Séverine Chavier, *Épousailles et représailles* (2009), loosely based on the novels by Hanokh Levin, was programmed at the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers and then at the Centquatre-Paris, where she worked as an associate artist from 2011 to 2013. She created *Plage ultime* inspired by J.G Ballard, for the 2012 Festival d'Avignon. She builds her shows by submerging herself in a world of her favourite authors and invents unique forms drawing on all sorts of materials: the body, spoken word, video, piano sounds, objects... She used this approach for *Les Palmiers sauvages* (2014) based on the novel by William Faulkner and *Nous sommes repus mais pas repentis* (2015) based on the novel by Thomas Bernhard. Both were performed in Vidy-Lausanne and enjoyed future productions, staged most notably, in Paris (at the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe) and Brussels (Théâtre National). Séverine Chavier has been working on a project *Après coups projet un-femme* since 2015, which shines the spotlight on female circus artists from around the world. Her more recent creations include, *Aria da capo* (2020) created at the Théâtre national de Strasbourg before touring at different stages in France, and also *Ils nous ont oubliés* (2022) based on *La Plâtrière* by Thomas Bernhard at the Teatro Nacional de Catalunya in Barcelona before a performance at the Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe and the Teatro Nacional São João de Porto. She is also developing a teaching activity with *After all*, in 2021, and is providing artistic direction for the 33<sup>rd</sup> year group of students at the Centre national des arts du cirque. She is currently rediscovering the writing of William Faulkner as she works on an adaptation of his novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*