

Bernard-Marie KOLTES NY 2003
presents a ROTOR PRODUCTION

WEST PIER

by Bernard-Marie KOLTES

Directed by Jay Scheib

new american translation by Marion Schoevaert and Theresa Weber

Bernard-Marie KOLTES

About the Author

"As for me, I merely wish, some day, to relate well and in the most casual of words the most important thing that I know and that can be put into words. A desire, an emotion, a place, some sort of light or sound, whatever would constitute a fragment of our world and belong to us all."

Bernard-Marie Koltès

April 9, 1948: Born in a middle-class family in the Eastern French town of Metz, where he attended the music conservatory. Bernard was the rebellious son of an army officer who actively



Photo by Elza Ruiz

participated in the French decolonization wars between 1946 and 1962. As a teenager, Bernard witnesses all Arab nationals being rounded up and relocated to a ghetto in Metz during the Algerian War.

1958-1966: Koltès attends Metz's Saint Clément School. Trained by his Jesuit masters in classical rhetoric, he reads Jules Verne, Victor Hugo and Shakespeare extensively. Trying to emulate one of his first idols, Arthur Rimbaud, he begins composing poems in the mid-'60s. Fond of Fellini and Antonioni, he develops an interest in American cinema as well (Welles, Kazan, Hitchcock).

1967: He enrolls in journalism school but drops out and decides never to work for a salary.

1968: He takes his first trip New York City, where he discovers the intense emotions of the city and American gay culture. After seeing Maria Casares in Jorge Lavelli's production of *Medee* by Pierre Corneille, he realizes that he should write for the theater.

1970: He moves to the Eastern town of Strasbourg, where he takes a stage management course. He joins the Théâtre National de Strasbourg as an apprentice-stage manager.

1971: He writes and directs his first plays, *Procès Ivre*, based on Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*, and *La Marche*, based on the *Song of Songs*.

1973: Koltès travels to the Soviet Union and reads both Russian fiction and drama as well as Marx's and Lenin's works.

1974: He joins the French Communist Party and remains a member until 1978. He develops an interest in Latin American writers, such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Carlos Fuentes.

1975: Unable to write, he attempts suicide.

1976: He is treated for drug addiction. Later he begins to work on the novel that will become *La fuite cheval tr s loin de la ville*.

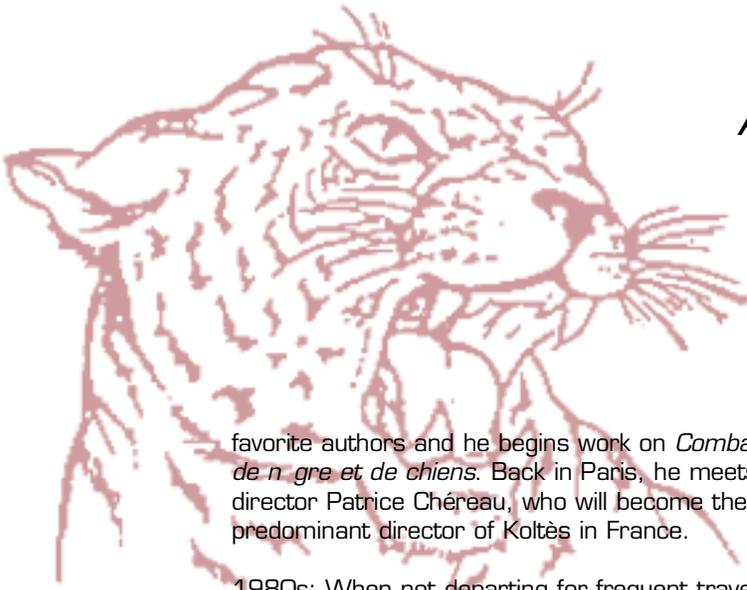
1977: Bruno Boëglin of Lyons' Théâtre de l'Eldorado commissions and produces *Sallinger*, based on J.D. Salinger's short stories. *La Nuit juste avant les for ts* premieres at the Avignon Theatre Festival. Koltès visits Nicaragua.

1978: travels to Guatemala, Mexico, Nigeria.

1979: He travels to Mali and the Ivory Coast. Joseph Conrad and Herman Melville become his



About the Author Continued



favorite authors and he begins work on *Combat de n gre et de chiens*. Back in Paris, he meets director Patrice Chéreau, who will become the predominant director of Koltès in France.

1980s: When not departing for frequent travel to West Africa, Latin America, or New York, Koltès frequently returned to the Barbes district in Paris to watch karate movies. One of his heroes is Bruce Lee, and he sees a parallel between ritualized rhetoric and the movements of martial arts.

1981: The Twilight Zone introduces Koltès' writing to English-speaking London. Works on a commission by the Comédie Française, which will become *Quai Ouest*, and one commissioned by London's Almeida Theatre, which will become *Dans la solitude des champs de coton*.

1982: He visits New York again.

1983: *Combat de n gre et de chiens* premieres at Nanterre's Théâtre des Amandiers directed by Patrice Chereau's. Koltès reads William Faulkner and William Styron and meets Jean Genet and James Baldwin. Bernard feels effects of AIDS.

1984: He travels to Senegal and publishes his novel *La fuite cheval tr s loin de la ville*.

1986: Produced by Patrice Chéreau, *Quai Ouest* premieres in Nanterre.

1987: *Dans la solitude des champs de coton* premieres in Nanterre.



Photo by Eliza Ruiz

1988: Koltès adapts Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, produced by Luc Bondy in Nanterre.

1989: He travels to Guatemala, then Lisbon, where he starts working on a film script about the ivory trade. Due to his deteriorating health, he returns to France.

1989: Bernard-Marie Koltès dies at Paris' Laennec Hospital, on April 15 at age 41. He is buried in the Montmartre Cemetery. Though always popular in France and Germany, Koltès begins to gain a place in other countries' theaters. His work has already been performed in Germany, France, Holland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and in the next decade will travel to London and New York.

1990: Traverse Theatre in Scotland premieres *The Struggle of the Dogs and the Black*. *Roberto Zucco* premieres in Berlin, followed by 17 separate German productions in the next five years.

1994: Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Dance holds Festival Koltès.

1995: The Editions de Minuits publish *Sallinger* and commits to the publications of Koltès' other early plays. *Roberto Zucco* opens in London (first English production?). *In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields* runs at the Edinburgh Festival.

1999: *Quay West* is first performed in English (?) in Dublin.

Works by KOLTES

La Fuite cheval tr s loin dans la ville, roman, 1984

Les Amertumes, théâtre, 1998 présentation par l'éditeur

L'H ritage, théâtre, 1998 présentation par l'éditeur *Sallinger*, théâtre, 1995

La Nuit juste avant les for ts, théâtre, 1990 en savoir +

Quai Ouest, théâtre, 1985 en savoir + *Combat de n gres et de chiens*, Carnets, théâtre, 1983-1989

Dans la solitude des champs de coton, 1986 *Le Conte d'hiver* (adaptation of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*), 1988

Le Retour au d sert, théâtre, 1995 *Prologue et autres textes*, 1991

Roberto Zucco suivi de *Tabataba*, théâtre, 1995 *Une part de ma vie*, entretiens, 1983-1989 présentation par l'éditeur

Proc s ivre, roman, 1971 présentation par l'éditeur