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A Heads Up with Mathieu Cabanes

With Covid-19 lockdowns worldwide and health authorities urging people to self-isolate and practice social distancing on a massive scale as part of an enormous effort to #FlattenTheCurve of this global pandemic ... we are reaching out to industry friends, colleagues, associates, partners, etc., and asking them to share their #StayAtHome and #QuarantineAndChill activities with us during this extraordinary time.

Usually, lighting designer Mathieu's schedule is hectic, realizing many opera, theater and concert projects. Currently, he should have been touring all the major cities in China on Robert Wilson's production of the Jungle Book, followed by a stint in Rome in July working on an artistic collaboration for assorted sporting events with fellow French LD Frédéric Fayard from Concept K. Instead ... he's Inspired in Isolation.

Robe: Where are you right now?

Mathieu: I am currently in (beautiful) Montpellier in the south of France.

Robe: How are you spending time whilst isolating / on lockdown?

Mathieu: I am trying to see the positive side of it! I spend more time with my family ... And I have had to create a special office at home to continue working and producing new designs. It's been very funny to see a child's reaction then controlling a GMA2!

Robe: What's the most creative thing you're able to do whilst in isolation?

Mathieu: Probably lighting up my house or giving my neighbours a little concert! I think that culture and music have the power to give people hope and joy. This is a chance to offer the people around us a part of what we share in our daily life.

Robe: Are you looking after anyone else during the Covid-19 crisis? Like neighbours or others in the family?

Mathieu: As I said before, it is important to keep social ties during this time of confinement. I take care of my family but also of our elderly neighbours...

I also strive to maintain regular contact with my assistants and my artistic collaborators. I find it necessary to keep in touch so that no one around me gets trapped in a situation of loneliness.

Robe: Has anyone particularly inspired you since this crisis started?

Mathieu: Of course! In this period, we are much more sensitive, and I find it encouraging to see the artistic and creative performances by people around the world.

I was particularly touched by a performance by Bob Wilson on Arte (Franco-German free-to-air TV network that promotes cultural programming). Having already worked with this great artist, I felt strong emotions when I saw him in this armchair performing his own text!

Theatre is an art that conveys emotions and seeing a great director like Bob Wilson reveal his personal feelings is quite unique and touching.

Robe: What has been your favourite book / movie / Netflix or TV series / viral video / Games / music?

Mathieu: So, the film I enjoyed watching again in this period was "Le Corniaud" by Gérard Oury (1965 French, Italian and Spanish comedy crime film). It is a great French classic starring Louis de Funès, an icon of comic cinema! Sharing this moment with my family was truly extraordinary! I have liked this film since I was a child.

Robe: What's the first thing you'd like to do when we are through this crisis?

Mathieu: Go out and meet the people I love and I have not seen since the beginning of the crisis! And share a glass of pastis with my friends on a beach in the south of France.

Robe: Own question / answer / message of solidarity or something you'd like to say?

Mathieu: I would like to quote a few words from William Shakespeare, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players" – we need to leave the past behind and build the world of tomorrow together!

