

"Ymako Teatri" educates in Africa.

Scenario: Christophe Boesch in collaboration with the company "Ymako Teatri" under the direction of Luis Marques and Claude Gnakouri, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Composition of music and songs, and choreography : "Ymako Teatri"

Camera: Daniel Pauselius, Leipzig, Germany

Photos: Ilka Herbinger

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Our cousins in the forest

Through dialogues, mimes, songs, dancing, and comedy, this theatre play shows the striking resemblance between humans and chimpanzees, as well as their many conflicts due to their co-habitation. The chimpanzees live in the tropical rain forest; the people use it for hunting and cut it down to make plantations to earn their living. The conflict breaks out between two families. To the family Oussé, the chimpanzee is sacred – they neither hunt nor eat it. To the other family, chimpanzees are just a source of proteins like any other animal. This family of hunters is about to prepare a funeral and meat is needed to entertain the guests...



The chimpanzees, unaware of their imminent danger, go about their usual activities – they pound nuts using stones and wooden tools as hammers and anvils, they fish for ants with sticks, use sponges made of leaves to drink water, groom each other, make alliances to solve conflicts and communicate by drumming on buttresses. Zaipodo approaches a noisy group of chimpanzees eating a freshly captured small monkey and he shoots a female, a mother with a

youngster. Fascinated, he then witnesses the great emotions this murder evokes. All the individuals surround the dying female, grooming her and licking her wound, until they have to accept her death and cover her body with branches. Meanwhile, the newly orphaned youngster is screaming desperately; later the youngster is adopted by the mother's female friend.



The hunter is highly moved by these observations and he cannot imagine ever again shooting a chimpanzee, or even eating the meat from one. He is unable to bring the murdered female back to the village; but his brother takes care of that and gets the prey. Meanwhile, a violent discussion has exploded between the two families: the Oussés want to give the dead chimpanzee a traditional funeral, whereas the others want to cut up the body and prepare the meal. The solution of this conflict is brought before the public: should the chimpanzee be buried or cooked, and should the hunter go to jail?

We thank the local authorities and the direction of Taï National Park for their support of these activities, and we thank particularly the enthusiastic public.