

DRAMA

Magnificent colours and destruction

Yellowcake, Little Boy

STIJN DEVILLÉ

On 6 August 1945, the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped the very first atom bomb, nicknamed Little Boy, on Hiroshima. The world would never be the same again. In 'Yellowcake, Little Boy', Stijn Devillé brings together four contrasting decors and eras surrounding that historical event: New York 1933, London 1944, Hiroshima 1945 and Congo 2025.

In Hiroshima in 1945, a woman is astonished by a sudden magnificent display of colours in the sky. A few seconds later she is wandering through a devastated city, seeking her partner and child. A decade earlier, the physicists and Jewish exiles Leo Szilárd and Albert Einstein are trying to guard the world against a breakthrough in atomic physics in Nazi Germany. Szilárd's attempt to warn the United States eventually leads him to become part of the Manhattan Project team, working on the weapon that he wanted to protect the world against. The greedy director of the Belgian mining company in Congo that is exploiting the Shinkolobwe mine sees his portfolio grow astronomically when half the world suddenly wants to buy his entire stock of uranium concentrate known as 'yellowcake'.

This play lays bare the political and social responsibility for the trade in raw materials in 2025. Eighty years later, the Shinkolobwe mine is still active; it is now the linchpin of an illegal circuit that provides the world with precious metals while fatally poisoning adults and children. The proactive David, observer for the United Nations in Congo, can no longer stand the impotence of the UN and goes in search of the young 'creuseur' Petit, who daily digs up the poisonous materials with his bare hands.

Basing his work on extensive historical research and drawing upon the personal stories of a range of figures, Devillé sheds light on the political backroom music, the moral arguments and the human suffering that nuclear weapons have left to us. In an era in which the international arms trade is thriving because of a brewing international conflict, this play is painfully topical.



AUTHOR



Stijn Devillé (b. 1974) is a Flemish playwright and director. He has worked for a number of renowned companies, including Braakland/ZheBilding (awarded the Flemish Culture Award for Performing Arts), KVS, Theater Utrecht and BRONKS. These days, Devillé is the artistic director of HET NIEUWSTEDELIJK, the city theatre for Leuven, Hasselt and Genk. Devillé has penned a range of extraordinarily successful plays such as 'Hitler is Dead' (2009) and the trilogy 'Greed' (2012), 'Fear' (2013) and 'Hope' (2015). The trilogy was awarded the prestigious Quinquennial Prize for Drama of the Royal Academy of the Dutch Language and Literature. Photo © Katrijn Van Giel

ORIGINAL TITLE Yellowcake, Little Boy (2025, Het nieuwstedelijk, 90 pp.)

CHARACTERS 4 characters (2 M 2 F), première 25 February 2025

TRANSLATION RIGHTS The author is the rights holder. Please contact us to obtain their contact details.

TRANSLATION GRANTS Yannick Geens - yannick@flandersliterature.be, Esther de Gries - esther@flandersliterature.be