



Elise Dubroca, right and Delphine Robert following an appartement theater performance at the 63rd annual theater festival in Avignon in July 2009. (Mildrade Cherfils/Global Post)

Takeout theater

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More on the arts in France:

In France, theater troupes will perform a play in your home, and customize it too.

By **Mildrade Cherfils** - GlobalPost

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AVIGNON, France — It's a bit more elaborate than ordering a pizza or Chinese takeout and popping in a DVD, but those intent on convenience might take advantage of a new trend in France: booking a live theater production to be performed in your living room.

It gives a whole new meaning to "home entertainment."

At a recent performance, a group of 20 people sitting side by side in a darkened study seemed unsure of what to expect next. After the murmurs died down, the first sounds they heard (thanks to two small microphones) were the chatter of unseen women's voices, friends perhaps, returning from a theater festival — one raving about the experience, the other disparaging it.

Judith and Aurore entered the apartment and continued debating the merits of theater, whether it was too high brow, required too much hassle, was too uncomfortable to sit through, too hot, too boring, a good place for a snooze.

As Judith used the restroom, whose toilet was tricky to flush, Aurore scoured the refrigerator for a snack and the two continued their conversation. Judith then moved toward the living room where she fumbled for and finally found a light switch. Nonplussed by the immediate gaze of 20 pairs of eyes staring at her, she sought an explanation. She summoned Aurore, who told her that it was normal since “you're the actress.”

Emerging with a tray of snacks and beverages, Aurore greeted the spectators and proceeded to eat her snack. Aghast, Judith asked how she could eat in front of them. Aurore assured her that it was all right. “We live and they watch us live.” Judith's facial expressions and questions revealed her reluctance and discomfort with the idea. “What are these people waiting for?” she asked. “Nothing,” said Aurore. “They watch and they listen.” Apartment Theater is not a new concept in France but it is gaining popularity with dozens of companies, like the three-year-old l'Effet du Logis, establishing themselves all over the country. Usually, the company's actors are hired to come into homes and perform for birthday parties or other special and surprise occasions. Fees can range from 400 to 1,000 euros depending on the piece and the number of actors, said Elise Dubroca, who played Aurore. A 55-minute show tailored to an apartment can include personalized details, such as the quirky habits of the honored guest. Audiences usually range from about 15 to 50, depending on the space.

The play performed by Judith and Aurore, “Sans Entracte” (Without Intermission), was running during the 10-day Avignon Festival, the country's oldest performing arts festival, which celebrated its 63rd anniversary in July.

“It really creates a link between the spectators during an evening,” said Dubroca, 43, one of the three founders of l'Effet du Logis.