

NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? Supplements to the international conference on postdramatic theatre, Amsterdam 2006

'After theatre we go home once more' (Jetse Batelaan)

Introduction

The international conference NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? in Amsterdam, was initially conceived by Nicola Nord, Marijke Hoogenboom and Alexander Karschnia to provide a platform for *Postdramatic Theatre*, the influential book by Hans-Thies Lehmann.¹ Seven years after its original German publication – and following translations into French, Japanese and Slovenian – it was finally to become available to an Anglophone readership. As theatre theoreticians, dramaturges and practitioners, living and working in the Netherlands in 2006, it naturally concerned us that Dutch and Flemish reception of the publication had, but for a few exceptions, been rather restrained. Up to this point, it had not received the recognition it so richly deserves for the ambitious position it takes by placing 'Lowlands' theatre practice of the 1980s and 1990s in the context of a truly international avant-garde.²

In the prologue to the German version, Lehmann acknowledges the crucial role in this process of 'one person and one place' – referring to the Mickery Theater in Amsterdam and its director Ritsaert ten Cate. He sees Ten Cate as a creative, daring and visionary producer of experimental theatre, and the Mickery as the forerunner of many venues that would become co-producers of the independent European theatre scene. In a period when the arts community in the Netherlands has tended to isolate itself from the rest of the world, we wanted to remind ourselves of the unique artistic capital built up by this man and this place, and to ensure their legacy. Furthermore, we sought the return to Amsterdam of the discussion surrounding new forms of theatre. For this is where Mickery trained, challenged and seduced its audience for around twenty years. As Lehmann writes, 'Between 1975 and 1991 almost the entire US and European avant-garde appeared at Mickery, creating a potential for perception that can no longer be excluded from the theory and practice of experimental theatre. At the same time it made it possible for new theatre to develop its own tradition.'³ But the need to relate to (and understand and learn from) the recent past was not only triggered by local concerns, and neither was it limited to our curiosity about aesthetic

¹ Lehmann, Hans-Thies, *Postdramatic Theatre*, translated and with an introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby, Routledge, London and New York 2006.

² *Postdramatic Theatre* discusses, among others, Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers/Needcompany, Theatergroep Hollandia, Maatschappij Discordia, Gerardjan Rijnders, Ivo van Hove, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, Dood Paard, Dito Dito, Tg STAN, 't Barre Land, Wim Vandekeybus and Michel Laub/Remote Control. Relevant responses to the book include Jans, Erwin, 'Theater voorbij het drama?' ('Theatre beyond drama'), in *Etcetera* 73, October 2000, pp. 54–59, written following the international colloquium New Theatre Concepts, organised in September 2000 by the Flemish initiative Aisthesis and the Centre for Art and Philosophy at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Dries, Luk Van den, Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers and Henk Oosterling, 'Reflecting (on) conceptuality', *InterAkta* #4, Rotterdam 2001. Dries, Luk Van den, 'Val in de leegte', in *Etcetera* 92, June 2004, pp. 71–74. Bleeker, Maaïke, 'Look who's looking!: perspective and the paradox of postdramatic subjectivity', in *Theatre Research International* Vol. 29, 2004, pp. 29–41.

³ Lehmann, Hans-Thies, *Postdramatisches Theater*, Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt/M, 1999, p. 39. For an extensive history of Mickery see *Mickery Pictorial 1965–1987. A Photographic History and Pictorial II 1988–1991. A Photographic History*, International Theatre Bookshop, Amsterdam 1988 and 1991.

developments.⁴ The Dutch part of the conference title, NA(AR) HET THEATER, is a play on words that suggests expansions: *naar*, meaning 'to(wards)', connotes a sense of *place* (going to the theatre), and *na*, meaning 'after', a sense of *time* (the time after the event of theatre). Hence, the conference posed the question: what is it that keeps us returning to the theatres? But it asked other questions, too. Where has this perspective taken us? What comes after postdramatic theatre? Where are theatre makers heading?

The term *postdramatic* has become a key point of reference in international discussions of contemporary theatre.⁵ It covers a wide range of aesthetic approaches and a number of analytical descriptions and categories, and it is frequently used as an umbrella notion for a wealth of new theatrical possibilities. It has brought about a groundbreaking shift in theatre's dominant paradigm – away from the limitations of exclusively dramatic representation. Theatre no longer represents the world through the speeches and deeds of *dramatis personae*; it is no longer the privileged mirror of society.⁶ Theories of theatre reflect on and react to new creations by providing a vocabulary to grasp the developments that break out of the frameworks of past categorisations. But behind every change in practice, there is a change in the circumstances of production.⁷

It is ironic that while postdrama is gaining widespread acceptance, the original players, venues, producers and networks that made these forms of production and reception possible have now disappeared from the scene, either by ceasing operations or by entering the establishment. Mickery closed down fifteen years ago and TAT (Theater am Turm) in Frankfurt finally closed its doors in 2004 after a long struggle for survival. On the other hand, in 2007 Kaaithheater in Brussels celebrated its thirtieth anniversary and Needcompany, its twentieth.⁸ The same principle applies to the educational frameworks that came into existence in response to innovative movements important for the rise of postdramatic theatre and dance, for they can no longer be considered pioneering. Although co-founded by leading practitioners, the Mime School (founded in 1968), the School for New Dance Development (1975), DasArts (1994, by Ritsaert ten Cate) in Amsterdam, P.A.R.T.S. (1995, by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker) in Brussels and even the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen (1982, by Andrzej Wirth) have been practicing their distinct pedagogical approaches for many years, and are, themselves, in danger of being subsumed by the higher education establishment.

These developments on an institutional level – however complex the reasons for them – testify to the fact that although *newness* is a desirable quality, it is not of itself sufficient; newness always presupposes the end of something. Postdramatic theatre marks a turning point in theatre history, but we find ourselves involved in a very fragile relationship between the past and the present; we need to place ourselves in a new world. The conference NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? grew from the idea that we *are* in the middle

⁴ For a critical analysis of the current position of Dutch arts and cultures in the international arena see *All That Dutch. Over internationaal cultuurbeleid (On international cultural policies)*, Ben Hurkmans, George Lawson, Gitta Luiten, Taco de Neef, Henk Pröpper, Femke van Woerden-Tausk (eds.), NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2005. For a recent attempt to document Dutch theatre history and to introduce theatre makers from the 1960s to the present see Anja Krans' *Vertraagd Effect, Hedendaags theater in 1 inleiding en 18 interviews, (Delayed Effect, Contemporary theatre in 1 introduction and 18 interviews)*, Theater Instituut Nederland, Amsterdam 2005.

⁵ The term 'postdramatic' figures, for example, in essays and criticism, FIRT (International Federation for Theatre Research) conferences, among others, and in a theatre dictionary. Repeated reference is made to Lehmann's book in *Qu'est-ce que le theatre* by Christian Biet and Christophe Triau, and it is discussed extensively in an issue of *Critique*.

⁶ For a definition of postdramatic theatre see Hans-Thies Lehmann's 'Postdramatic theatre' in Allsopp, Ric and David Williams (eds.), *Performance Research Lexicon, Performance Research, Volume 11, no. 3, 2006, p. 98.*

⁷ In 1993, an early attempt was made by Elske van der Hulst and Marijke Hoogenboom to compile an *Intersubjective Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* at the conference Context 01: Active Pooling New Theatre's WordPerfect. See 'On dramaturgy' in *Theaterschrift 5-6*, Brussels 1994.

⁸ Only the Hebbel Theater has been relaunched, as HAU, a fusion of three houses, making it one of the most important independent venues in Germany. See www.hebbel-theater.de.

of something – something different.

Lehmann suggests that his study is designed for the reader to, *mutatis mutandis*, translate and transfer the discussions of productions and artists to other work in the theatre.⁹ Likewise, the Flemish dramaturge Erwin Jans concludes that *Postdramatic Theatre* does not present a theory built up from a central point, but that it generously provides a number of ‘construction sites’ where everybody is invited to continue working.¹⁰ However, in both the conference and this publication, we have not been overly concerned with giving postdramatic explorations ‘their long-overdue cultural and intellectual legitimacy’.¹¹ Rather, we have aimed to move on and to passionately engage the participating practitioners, dramaturges, producers and theoreticians in conversation about the state of theatre-making today. EXIT drama. Where and how do we re-enter?

As a reflection of the ‘constructions sites’ explored during the conference (see page xx), this publication comprises five thematic blocks whose content ranges from theoretical explorations to journalism, and from artist’s statements to archival listings and images. The first block opens with Kathrin Tiedeman’s ‘Who needs responsibility?’, which focuses on one of the themes of the conference, Politics of Productions. This theme stimulated the most urgent exchanges about, on the one hand, those strategies either created or reformed in the 1980s and 1990s, and on the other, the very concrete challenges facing theatre artists (and organisations) today. ‘Ultimately, the work done in the networks formed by Mickery, Kaai, TAT and Hebbel didn’t affect the big structures all that much,’ said Tiedemann, ‘But they *did* change the ways theatre is produced.’ In the late 1980s, the German city of Frankfurt had a huge culture budget (half that of the entire Netherlands, for example). It became the primary European force for financing, presenting, and producing the world’s avant-garde. For Ritsaert ten Cate and the Mickery (which had, itself, become a mark of quality), this signalled the start of not just a cooperation between institutions, but an ‘intense collaboration with Tom Stromberg and TAT’.¹² Stromberg recalls, ‘We started talking about the possibilities of making productions with interesting international artists. The most important thing for us was to produce together; nobody cared who had the premiere or represented the oeuvre.’ Artists such as Jan Fabre or Jan Lauwers could not have developed their own language without the support of theatre programmers who kept bringing them back to their cities: ‘We gave it a chance, which cost a lot of money, but it was enormously important that the people talked about the work and spread the word around, so you could create some kind of repertoire with these artists.’ While the large, established venues in the Netherlands and Belgium are increasingly orienting themselves towards the German state/civic theatre (*Stadttheater*) model, today it is the small – under-subsidised – venues (in Germany usually referred to as ‘free theater’) that are operating in an international context – applying previous models of co-production and regional and supra-regional networks.

In her piece, Tiedemann, director of the Forum Freies Theater (Free Theatre Forum) in Düsseldorf, reveals startling trade secrets of the German independent theatre scene and comes to the gloomy conclusion that, ‘There is an increasing absence of necessary production funds and less and less room for experimentation and artistic risk-taking.’ She suggests investigating the potential for collaborative and collective working methods to form ‘part of the essence of theatre’. By way of a possible answer to Tiedeman, we offer an excerpt from Marianne Van Kerkhoven’s ‘Stones in the stream’. Here, she attempts to grasp the unique potency that characterised 1980s Flanders, and to meticulously map out the artistic freedom won by this generation of artists: the freedom to make ‘self-determined choices in the process of creation.’ While Stromberg described his programming policy at TAT as a formalistic rather than political statement, Van Kerkhoven insists that, at least in her

⁹ See Lehmann’s preface to the English edition of *Postdramatic Theatre*, translated and with an introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby, Routledge, London and New York 2006.

¹⁰ Jans, Erwin, ‘Theater voorbij het drama?’ (‘Theatre beyond drama?’), in *Etcetera* 73, October 2000, p. 55.

¹¹ Karen Jürs-Munby in her introduction to *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 9.

¹² Ten Cate, Ritsaert, *Man Looking for Words*, Theater Instituut Nederland, Amsterdam 1996, p. 120f.

experience at Kaaitheater, the artistic approach was highly political in nature. She demystifies postdramatic landmarks and makes accessible the innovations of the methods applied. She also demonstrates that the act of creation requires organisation, and, therefore, that the organisation must be as flexible as the creative work itself.

Today, we must regretfully acknowledge that the ‘talented moment’ of the Lowlands – when a ‘vital, hungry, self-confident generation’ created its own structures – has passed. Since the forces of cultural policy took over, facilities for younger theatre makers have been systematically professionalised. Over a period of fifteen years, they have been transformed into a well-balanced and fully subsidised infrastructure of production venues, arts centres, and artistic ‘hothouses’ (*werkplaatsen*). Despite the advantages such organisation offers, this sophisticated web is also a somewhat artificial environment of venues ultimately bound by their particular function. This leads to their discouraging producing artists from making radical choices regarding why, where, when, with whom and in what context to work. Ritsaert ten Cate’s artist’s statement is an ironic metaphor for this significant development: a giraffe whose inordinately long neck is cut down to a more moderate size – in order to keep ‘everything under control!’ Recently, some of these task-driven venues have, themselves, called into question the nature of their institutionalisation. They are making a case for organisations to no longer be bound to the *newness* of the artist, the (small) scale of the work or a single artistic discipline.¹³ But then... what? Would this necessarily lead to producers and artists being able to operate in radically different ways? And would there be room for – as Ritsaert ten Cate put it, recalling his own principles while discussing Politics of Productions – the ‘love and passion [that are] essential for whatever theatre you are involved in,’?¹⁴

With the contributions by Alexander Karschnia and Hans-Thies Lehmann, we turn once more to aesthetics and a closer integration of theory and practice, in order to articulate the enquiries that drive contemporary performance. Both writers describe the development of a theatrical form that retreats from dramatic imagination. They also address problems of culture in general by describing those artistic tendencies in theatre they regard as particularly important for the future.

Karschnia’s ‘The drama of drama’, could be seen as an introduction to Lehmann’s ‘Theatre after theatre’. It demonstrates that postdramatic theatre is not only concerned with formalistic issues, but also – especially – with ethics. Karschnia places artistic problems (or solutions) in a political context, and ‘The Drama of Drama’ culminates in a plea for both an autonomous ‘culture of cooperation and collaboration’ and an undermining of distinctions between state theatre and fringe, site-specific performance and rehearsed play, performer and visitor, stage and auditorium. ‘Performance itself,’ he says, ‘has become a set of *deteritorialised* practices. Groups like Discordia, The Living Theatre and Forced Entertainment present a counter-example of a culture of production.’

While Karschnia speaks from the position of a *producer* of theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann, in a transcript of his lecture, makes us *look at* theatre, and explores our undeniable desire for (theatre to function as) a mirror. If our discussion about theatre is to advance, he contends, we cannot allow ourselves to be limited to one particular preconceived ideal or another. We must acknowledge the duality of the notion *reflection*, which embraces *mirroring* (holding a mirror up to the world) and *thinking* (taking a stance in relation to surrounding life). Lehmann contends that there is no need to choose sides between ‘those who demand that theatre contribute to thought (...) and those who demand that it recognises the world.’ On the contrary, for, ‘Faced with the merciless commercialisation of all culture, theatre must ask in what ways it might be able to realise its very specific potential as “live art” and so remain (or become) a place of reflection, in the sense of contemplation.’ Lehmann proposes that ‘theatre after theatre’, must take place in a physical and mental space that should be more

¹³ The fusion of Victoria and Nieuwpoort Theater in Ghent (VN gent) and of Theaterwerkplaats Gasthuis and Frascati in Amsterdam are examples of very recent restructuring initiatives originating from within the theatres themselves.

¹⁴ Quote from the transcript of the conference.

forcefully defended by society than it is. It invites the audience to reflect, to contemplate, but also to gamble, to play. Although Lehmann does not explicitly address the function of theory here, he does remind us that current explorations of theatre and performance practice engage with a much larger area than can be revealed by focusing exclusively on theatrical institutions.

Some artists hesitate to associate their theatre with processes of concrete research and theoretical reflection. In this respect, the conference itself contained a drama, a conflict, or clash, of cultures. The British guests, Mike Pearson and Heike Roms from the University of Aberystwyth, and Bill Aitchison from Goldsmith College, London, explained how their work is developed and articulated within the academic framework and (at least in the British context) becomes recognised as *practice as research*. In an environment very different to that found in the Netherlands or Flanders, the universities offer opportunities for production to theoreticians and practitioners – and to theoretician-practitioners. But not without challenges, as Bill Aitchison explained. ‘I have to speak at least three different languages to communicate my work. One for the arts council and the funding bodies. Another is the academic language, because there’s more money now being funnelled to practical work. (...) And finally there is the artistic language, within the work itself.’

The examples from the UK and the arguments they stirred up in Amsterdam made clear that the notion of postdramatic theatre impacts on two aspects of the debate surrounding contemporary theatre-making. On the one hand, in continental Europe it is used by advocates of the live, performative aspect of theatre, who want to bring about a shift from traditional, text-based classical dramaturgy. On the other hand, in the UK and the US the notion challenges the division between the well-made play and performance art. Lehmann’s insistence on using the word ‘theatre’ helps avoid limiting practice to the question of how to perform, and also asks how to present. The key issue is the exchange between *theatron* (audience) and *scene* (performers). Applied theatre science, therefore, describes the newer forms of theatre as ‘situations’, or ‘moments in which there is mutual monitoring by all participants.’ Lehmann challenged the artists present when he asked, ‘Why don’t you just take the next best Shakespeare and put it on stage! Why not? Why is it obviously more interesting to you to create a *situation*? The term ‘situation’ can help us understand why these curious moments are created. This is the kind of theory-based question that come from practice and lead into practice.’¹⁵

Perhaps practitioners felt that the equation *theatre=theory* threatened to take the playfulness and spontaneity out of the work. But Lehmann argues that thinking, reflection and research are intrinsic to artistic practice, and expand theatrical possibilities, rather than contracting them. ‘I say “theatre equals theory” to discourage people from thinking theatre is merely decorative or ornamental. *Hamlet* is theory. A painting by Rembrandt is theory. If I look at these works long enough, I’ll find a depth of thinking and of reflection of life that will quite possibly move me to tears.’¹⁶ In the following ‘act’ of the conference a heated debate began. For the makers, the prevailing question is this: are we holding up a mirror to a fragmented world, or is it the mirror that is broken, while the world remains intact? This might serve as a metaphor for the divide between dramatic and postdramatic theatre-making. How the individual artist deals with this question will remain his or her choice – each time a work is created. It is, then, not a matter for a specific epoch or generation, but a fundamental task. And the terminology that academia has to offer is not a prescript, but an indication that this choice must be made. ‘Today, more even than at the time I wrote the book, I think theatre is a practice of criticism of what is going on in society,’ Lehmann said, ‘I often encounter *nice* theatre. I have a good time and I experience wonderful emotions, but I don’t find anything of what Heiner Müller described as, ‘the task of art to make reality impossible.’¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The contributions by Tiedemann, Karschnia and Lehmann in this book, make it clear (as did the conference itself) that the way theatre artists work is never solely an expression of an artistic credo, but also of a social positioning, of a *wanting to be in the world*.

In the third block of this publication, Marianne Van Kerkhoven, with 'War, silence', and theatre maker Lotte van den Berg, with 'Silent revolution', demonstrate that theatre has not given up relating to the world. However, and crucially, it no longer seeks to represent the world as a surveyable whole. Accordingly, both Van Kerkhoven and Van den Berg combine their reflections on theatre with attempts to, 'understand what is going on', and to investigate the point (or pointlessness) of their artistic activities. Although it was not our intention to present a generational dialogue, both Van Kerkhoven's questions and Van den Berg's answers are responses to the 'paradoxes of political theatre'. Van Kerkhoven is concerned with *how*: 'How can one give substance to a social theme when it must be represented on stage by characters/actors, that is to say individuals? How can an individual who is also a bearer of societal content be portrayed without adopting the characteristics of a "function"? How can we not see them as "representatives of a problematic issue"?' Van den Berg examines her own attitude and doubts about whether her work has a political dimension at all: 'Is it bad that I haven't had to fight for my rights? Is it bad that I haven't had to shout and change? Has it made me weak? Am I weak?'

Both Van Kerkhoven and Van den Berg hope for silence and calmness – as opposed to noise, struggle and resistance – to make reflection possible and to enable an alternative theatre that, rather than copying political discourses, generates 'meetings between [the maker] and an audience, between actors and big thoughts.'

Other testimonies of theatrical positions, originating within and beyond the postdramatic field, have been collected in a series of statements by theatre artists who participated in the conference, Bill Aitchison, Andrea Bozic, Jetse Batelaan, Edit Kaldor, Ivana Müller, Nicola Nord, Joachim Robbrecht and David Weber-Krebs, along with Lotte van den Berg and Ritsaert ten Cate introduced us to their current practice and to theatre that challenges our preconceptions of what theatre is – or is meant to be. Going back to the main objective of the conference NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE?, it is these artists that encapsulate just what it is that keep us returning to the theatres, and show us where the postdramatic approach has taken us.

Having said that, as early as the first day of the conference, we learned that nothing can be taken for granted, and that the application of aesthetic logic to postdrama can lead in a wide range of directions. Ivana Müller, for example, questioned the validity of the distinction between *mainstream* and *postdramatic*: 'I never got to see conventional repertory theatre,' Müller explains, 'What *postdramatic* refers to was – for me, in the eighties – already mainstream and fully established.'¹⁸ Edit Kaldor went even further, stating, 'Both the dramatic and the postdramatic traditions seem like history, to me. I feel their influences to be equally relevant – and irrelevant – to my practice as a theatre maker.'¹⁹

The term 'postdramatic' was not intended solely as a flag for 'Jan Lauwers and friends' to wave. It describes a whole range of activities that disassembles the elements of theatre and puts them back together in a new way. Lauwers, himself, confused standard dichotomies when he claimed in a recent interview that, 'The evolution of theatre shows that in the past, the limits were explored in small experimental theatres, while the large theatres were entirely oriented towards the bourgeoisie. Now things are completely different. In Avignon, I was struck by the fact that the fringe theatre shows only conservative work intended to entertain, while the official selection shows challenging experimental theatre in venues entirely annexed by the bourgeoisie and those in power.'²⁰

And indeed, one of the crucial conclusions we have drawn from the conference is that established theatres have started to open their doors to the independent theatre scene and

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ T'Jonk, Pieter, 'Because women are tremendously important. Jan Lauwers on Needcompany's Isabella's Room', *De Tijd*, September 21, 2004.

certain aesthetic principles from the 1980s and 1990s have already managed to infiltrate the big stage.²¹ But at the same time one can find evidence that the present generation of theatre makers is self-assured and independently minded. None of the artists invited to the conference are seeking an established public institution, or want to depend on one. They are responding creatively to the fundamental crisis in theatre, the matter of why and for whom it exists. They keep operating within nomadic working structures, taking advantage of a wide variety of collaborative opportunities, such as those between companies and communal theatres. They discard the traditional framework – a preconceived cultural infrastructure – and seek out non-aligned places to present their work and address their audience beyond familiar parameters; to present that audience with a theatre between the arts, close to performance, in the context of social and political activism, or beyond mere aesthetic practice.²² In order to achieve this, independent theatres and makers are needed, but so, too, are emancipated audiences. Ritsaert ten Cate, whenever asked to elaborate on his vision of ‘free theatre’, would refer back to Grotowsky and The Living Theater as ‘the forces that created an explosion which had a result called free theatre.’ And, as he explained, ‘It was the start of a time when we, the audience, could almost be sure of not getting what we bargained for when we saw a show. Of course what we got was more – much more. As our curiosity was honed we developed a taste for it: what might happen next?’²³

Last but not least, rather than devoting the fifth and final section of the publication to the usual conference documentation, we have invited the graphic designers Louise Moana Kolff and Niels Schrader to create a playful account of our discussions, represent them in a *non-hierarchical* way and investigate if our carefully chosen words will also make sense once liberated from their semantic order, first deconstructed and then reconstructed as a visual archive. This idea of a ‘performative database’, which emerged from the live blogging that took place during two days of the conference, appears here not only as a special section, but also as an open navigation system throughout the book.

So, have we come to terms with the postdramatic perspective(s)? Probably not. Not yet. But we are joyfully moving beyond, back to and towards theatre. And we remain curious about what will happen next – what we will *make* happen next!

The organisers/editors
Marijke Hoogenboom, Alexander Karschnia
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²¹ In Flanders two postdramatic theatre protagonists are now directing traditional state theatres: Johan Simons at NT Gent (former director of Theatergroep Hollandia), and Guy Cassiers at Toneelhuis Antwerp (former director of Ro Theater). Jan Fabre has created an autonomous home base that is both rehearsal space and laboratory, as well as a place for teaching, training and creation by young artists. www.troubleyn.be

²² The former Sophiensaele dramaturge Thomas Frank, makes an explicit connection between his reflections on the ‘free scene’ (*Freie Szene*) in Berlin and a recent trend to engage in international coproductions – but he also calls for more artistic crossovers. See ‘Cross the border, close the gap. Über internationale Produktion interdisziplinärer Kunst’, in Amelie Deuffhard (ed.), *Spielräume Produzieren. Sophiensaele 1996–2006*, Arbeitsbuch Theater der Zeit, Berlin 2006, pp. 72–74.

²³ Ten Cate, Ritsaert, *Man looking for words*, Theater Instituut Nederland, Amsterdam 1996, p. 63.