

AR) ET TER — TER TRE?

EDITED BY MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM

AND ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA

ABOUT THE BOOK

The term *postdramatic* has become a key reference point in international discussions of contemporary theatre. It covers a wide range of aesthetic approaches 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. However, *NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? Supplements to the International Conference on Postdramatic Theatre*, is not concerned with giving postdramatic explorations their long-overdue cultural and intellectual legitimacy. Rather, this book aims to move on and to engage in the fragile relationship between the past and the present.

Presented here is a collection of essays and other testimonies of theatrical positions, originating within and beyond the postdramatic field, that seeks to identify the state of theatre-making today. It asks what it is that keeps us returning to the theatres. Where are contemporary theatre makers heading? Exit drama. Where and how do we re-enter? Have we come to terms with the postdramatic perspectives? 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!

NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? Supplements to the International Conference on Postdramatic Theatre is published as a response to the exchange between practitioners, dramaturges, producers and theoreticians that took place in Amsterdam in 2006. It is edited by Marijke Hoogenboom and Alexander Karschnia. The book contains contributions from both editors, Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Hans-Thies Lehmann and Kathrin Tiedemann, statements from ten performing artists, and a non-hierarchical representation of the conference.

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**NA(AR) HET THEATER –
AFTER THEATRE?**
SUPPLEMENTS TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE

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BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION

After theatre we go home once more.
— Jette Batelaan

by Marijke Hoogenboom
and Alexander Karschnia

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 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 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

1.

Hans-Thies Lehmann. *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 Erwin Jans, ‘Theater voorbij het drama?’ (‘Theatre beyond drama’), in *Et cetera* 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. Luk Van den Dries, Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers and Henk Oosterling, ‘Reflecting (on) conceptuality’, *Interakta* #4, Rotterdam 2001. Luk Van den Dries, ‘Val in de leegte’, in *Et cetera* 92, June 2004, pp. 71–74. Maaik Bleeker, ‘Look who’s looking!: perspective and the paradox of postdramatic subjectivity’, in *Theatre Research International* vol. 29, 2004, pp. 29–41.

3.

Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Postdramatisches Theater*, Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt 1999, p. 39. For an extensive history of Mickery see *Mickery Pictorial 1965–1987. A Photographic History and Pictorial 11 1988–1991. A Photographic History*, International Theatre Bookshop, Amsterdam 1988 and 1991.

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 an introduction to 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 Else van de 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. www.hebbel-theater.de

9. See Lehmann's preface to the English edition of *Postdramatic Theatre*.

10. Erwin Jans. '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.

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 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?

RITSAERT TEN CATE I was living in a farmhouse in Loenersloot, a village fifteen kilometres from Amsterdam. It had a stable. Mickery opened there with *If there weren't any blacks, you'd have to invent them*, a play written by Johnny Speight. It was like a key to the whole programme for over 25 years.

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM Can you elaborate?

RITSAERT TEN CATE Basically, the world is yours to invent things in, and that's what we did with 800 programmes. An example is the artists' association Frau Holle, which was a Mickery project. At the time, there was a lot of moaning and complaining that young theatre makers didn't have a place – or sufficient choices of places – to go to. Essentially, we gave the theatre to those people. It was a total failure! So it was probably the wrong way to do it. But we really did just give them our theatre venue. We said, 'It's yours, go ahead!' Frau Holle was a test. I mean, there's a limit to how much you can complain about not having facilities! Suddenly everyone – a selected group of people, anyway – had access to all the facilities they could wish for. But they had to learn that whenever you switch on a light, it costs something; if you use a lamp and it blows, you have to buy a new one. In the end it failed because the gift of that theatre was too expensive for them. So I'd like to add two words to your idea of a new theatre encyclopaedia: love and passion. Without them, you wouldn't survive.

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM Love?

RITSAERT TEN CATE Love Love Love! Life – preferably with love and passion – is essential to whatever theatre you're involved in. I say 'love and passion' because in retrospect I don't understand how else we could have managed it. Of course, there must have been a lot of energy and a lot of conviction around to make an international theatre in a stable in Loenersloot. But you need love and passion to do it and you have to know why you're doing it. Never, ever, make theatre just because a deal's been made. If you're not bursting with passion to make the next play or be part of the next creative act, then forget about it, don't do it. It'll die on opening night.

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM Back then, there weren't many international collaborations. That was Mickery's main focus in the beginning, wasn't it?

RITSAERT TEN CATE A very old public relations lady from the Holland Festival said, 'Go to Edinburgh, there's this fantastic little theatre called The Traverse and they make wonderful theatre.' So I went there, I was blown away and I said, 'Could you come to Loenersloot?' I mean, it was as simple as that. It was as simple

as saying, 'I've never seen anything like it before – come, because we must share this with people in Holland.' It's as simple as when you read a wonderful book or hear a wonderful piece of music and you wish to share it with others. Because, if theatre is anything at all, it's something you want to share with everybody. Fewer people might come for the more so-called 'experimental' things, but there comes a time when you can infuse the climate with excitement, the unexpected, whatever, and inspire people.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN First of all, as Ritsaert said, it's a question of passion, and of course passion is related to personal taste. 'I want to see this! I'll try to get the audience to love it too.' Tom Stromberg and Ritsart ten Cate are my co-authors, as it were. Nowadays, there's an increased tendency for theatre – even progressive theatre – to act as a market place. This is perhaps typical of a certain period; it has a lot to do with the 'aura of culture'. I fear that the aura of culture has been lost, to a large extent. In the 70s – not because people were brighter or more sophisticated or better educated – there was the feeling in society at large that cultural activity was necessary. In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin claimed that the technical reproducibility of the artwork would destroy its aura. Theatre is, of course, special in that it's an auratic art form. It cannot be reproduced, it is existent, it is auratic – in a way that Benjamin thought would no longer exist.

RITSAERT TEN CATE Absolutely. There was very much a sense of limitless curiosity among the audiences at that time.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN We shouldn't forget that in the early 70s, 'media society' was in its infancy. I think the massive impact that media information has made on our perception – in terms of rhythm, time, and speed – runs contrary to what theatre can be: live art. The consequence of this must surely be a rethinking, a re-evaluation, of the opportunities available for this artistic activity to take place; can it take place in the same framework as it used to? Also, it's important that theatre remain exceptional. We tend to forget that in Ancient Greece, theatre took place, in principle, only twice a year – the tragedies at the Dionysian Festivities and comedies at the other festivities. We have to invent ways of again thinking about theatre in this way: as something only to be thought about at the specific moment. How can we create a theatre with this characteristic again: theatre that it is an exception? I keep telling young people, 'Believe in the exception! Stop complaining about how difficult it is. Remember that the exception is always possible: all you need is a constellation of people and someone who wants to support it, and you're there! You can always create an exceptional situation. It is possible to do something.'

(08) THEATRE
(06) ARTISTS
(03) ARTISTIC
(03) STROMBERG
(02) ART
(02) GENERATION
(02) INTERNATIONAL
(02) HICKERY
(02) NETHERLANDS
(02) NETWORKS
(02) ORGANISATION
(02) POLICY
(02) POLITICAL
(02) PRODUCTIONS
(02) STRUCTURES
(02) VENUES
(02) WORK
(01) 1996
(01) ABSENCE
(01) AMSTERDAM
(01) APPROACH
(01) BELGIUM
(01) BIG STRUCTURES
(01) CHOICES
(01) CITY
(01) CO-PRODUCTION
(01) COLLABORATION
(01) COLLABORATIVE
(01) COLLECTIVE
(01) CONCRETE
(01) CONSTRUCTION
(01) CONTENT
(01) CONTEXT
(01) CULTURE
(01) DIRECTOR
(01) ESSENCE
(01) ESSENCE OF THEATRE
(01) EXPERIENCE
(01) FABRE
(01) FLANDERS
(01) FORM
(01) FORUM FREIES THEATER
(01) FRANKFURT
(01) FREIES THEATER
(01) GERMANY
(01) IMAGES
(01) INSTITUTIONS
(01) JAN FABRE
(01) JAN LAUWERS
(01) KAIITHEATER
(01) LANGUAGE
(01) LAUWERS
(01) MAKING
(01) MOMENT
(01) MONEY
(01) ORGANISATIONS
(01) POLITICAL STATEMENT
(01) POSSIBILITIES
(01) POSTDRAMATIC
(01) PREMIERE
(01) PROCESS

As a reflection of the ‘construction sites’ explored during the conference (see page 158), this publication comprises five thematic blocks whose content ranges from theoretical explorations to journalism, and from artists’ 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 theatre’) 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 experience at Kaaithheater, the artistic approach was highly political in nature. She demystifies post-dramatic 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,

12.
Ritsaert ten Cate.
Man Looking for Words,
Theater Instituut
Nederland, Amsterdam
1996, pp. 120–121.

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 (2007) restructuring initiatives originating from within the theatres themselves.

14.

From conference transcript.

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 *detrterritorialised* 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 states 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

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN I don't think I'm pessimistic, but there are a lot of very interesting young people trying to find their way in a world that's much more difficult to work in than it was back then. One of our tasks is to try to find a new paradigm for this field of the arts. I see all these small groups of people working in their own little corners; we have to support that as well as we can. The Belgian minister of culture has his own policy on theatre: he thinks it's no longer necessary to fund organisations based around a single artist, so individual artists are being sidelined. Now the big theatres are opening up (that was a long struggle, too, but there are a lot of people working in civic theatres now who would not have been able to in the past). Since there is a tendency not to fund small structures directly, they have to go to the big houses and beg for money there. This is completely wrong, because it cuts the roots of the tree. That tree will stay standing for a while and then come crashing down. We need a good foundation in which all these small groups can grow.

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM What is Kaaiheater's position in this new process you describe? And why is that Kaaiheater didn't die, but Mickery and TAT did?

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN Mickery didn't die!

RITSAERT TEN CATE Thank you.

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN It was Ritsaert's decision to stop.

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM But still, it was a suicide.

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN DasArts came out of it!

MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM Different story. You had very good reasons to stop, right?

RITSAERT TEN CATE I could argue that Mickery should still exist for the function it fulfilled. There weren't enough international works being presented and people were complaining about it. My argument with my board was that after 25 years I could no longer be the cork on which the whole enterprise floated. I'd had enough; I was unable to figure out an inescapable necessity to continue. When I offered the board the opportunity to come up with a new plan, they just proposed something similar to the Mickery, but I insisted they had to murder me, kill the image of me.

MIKE PEARSON I remember meeting Ritsaert in 1974 when he had the five top Dutch journalists with him, insisting that they had to see our work. So when we came along, instead of just saying, 'It's four naked guys beating each other up,' it was 'It's four guys beating each other up, and maybe they mean this.' There was always an element of advocacy and arbitration, but it meant making real, serious value judgments. The difficulty now is that no one is making value judgements. The work can only be accessed by its side-effects, instead of its effects. You can tick all the boxes, all the labelling is about the side-effects of the work: social policy, how accessible it is, how it's an agency of social inclusion and so on.

ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA I've been wondering about the constellation of circumstances that proved so fruitful that it caused a major shift in theatre. Are we still living in a postdramatic period?

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN It was a period, but you can't wipe out what has been. And some things taken from that period will continue and grow and expand. Now, there are a lot of new problems in society we have to solve. Hopefully we'll have a post-postdramatic period. I think the whole process will continue.

RITSAERT TEN CATE It has to exist before it gets a name.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN 'Postdramatic' was a name that came after...

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN ...afterwards.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN The terms come afterwards; they are perspectives on the reality. 'Postdramatic' isn't merely a definition: whether one sees something as postdramatic or dramatic is a matter of perspective. If you choose to, you can find dramatic structure in the most open of performance practices – and vice versa. I'm not so certain about 'postdramatic' as a paradigm, as a unity. Because it's not just an umbrella concept, it's an answer to a problem, an artistic problem that arose from dramatic representation. The answers to the problem are varied.

I'm interested in what the driving forces are behind the will to do something. Maybe today it's different from in the 80s, when new forms were being tried out in the theatre (which had always been a possibility in theatre – one that had been under-utilised). Much postdramatic theatre involves crossing performance with traditional theatre. I get the feeling that for young people who want to do something today, it's all about material, while for a long time it was all about form. Perhaps that isn't a clear dialectic position, but I'm suggesting that this change affects the accent placed on the unconscious search. Postdrama is what people here and elsewhere are going to do. There is no conceptual answer.

(06) AUDIENCE
(05) THEATRE
(04) PUBLIC
(04) PUBLIC SPACE
(04) SPACE
(04) TIME
(03) CONVENTIONS
(03) DRAMATIC
(03) INVISIBLE
(03) SURVEILLANCE
(02) CARRYING LYNN
(02) GAME
(02) PERFORMING
(02) RULES
(02) STAGE
(02) THINK
(01) ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA
(01) CCTV
(01) CITY
(01) CODE OF CONDUCT
(01) COHERENCE
(01) DEVELOP
(01) DIGITAL
(01) DRAMATIC FORMULATION
(01) DRAMATIC THEATRE
(01) EDIT
(01) EDIT KALDOR
(01) EXCHANGE
(01) FRACTURED
(01) GALLERY
(01) GAME PLAN
(01) HANS-THIES LEHMANN
(01) HOUSE
(01) INTERESTED
(01) INVISIBLE AUDIENCE
(01) KALDOR
(01) KARSCHNIA
(01) LECTURE
(01) LEHMANN
(01) LOITERING
(01) LOITERING WITH INTENT
(01) MEANING
(01) MEDIA
(01) MIKE PEARSON
(01) MOMENTS
(01) NEXT
(01) NOTION
(01) PEARSON
(01) PERFORMANCE
(01) PERFORMANCES
(01) PERFORMER
(01) PERFORMERS
(01) PHENOMENON
(01) POSTDRAMATIC
(01) PRACTICE
(01) PRESENT
(01) PROBLEMS
(01) QUESTIONS
(01) RELATIONSHIP
(01) STOCK EXCHANGE
(01) TENSION

a physical and mental space that should be more 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.

15.
From conference transcript.

16.
Ibid.

17.
Ibid.

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.¹⁵

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.'¹⁶

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.'¹⁷ 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,

18.
Ibid.
19.
Ibid.

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 any evidence of art making reality impossible, to paraphrase Heiner Müller.’¹⁸

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 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 pre-conceptions 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.’¹⁹ Edit Kaldor went even further,

THEATRE (13)
POSTDRAMATIC (04)
ARTISTS (03)
POLITICAL (03)
ACTORS (02)
ARTISTIC (02)
BOOK (02)
EDIT (02)
KALDOR (02)
LEHMANN (02)
MAINSTREAM (02)
PRACTICE (02)
THEATRE ARTISTS (02)
TIME (02)
WORK (02)
ACADEMIA (01)
ACTIVITIES (01)
APPROACH (01)
ART (01)
AUDIENCE (01)
BATELAAN (01)
CHANGE (01)
CHARACTERISTICS (01)
CHARACTERS (01)
CHOICE (01)
CONTENT (01)
CRITICISM (01)
CURRENT (01)
DIALOGUE (01)
DISCOURSES (01)
EMOTIONS (01)
EXPERIENCE (01)
FIELD (01)
FUNCTION (01)
INDIVIDUALS (01)
ISSUE (01)
JETSE BATELAAN (01)
KARSCHNIA (01)
LOGIC (01)
MAKER (01)
MAKING (01)
OBJECTIVE (01)
PROBLEMATIC (01)
QUESTIONS (01)
REALITY (01)
REFLECTION (01)
REFLECTIONS (01)
REPERTORY THEATRE (01)
REPRESENTED (01)
SILENT (01)
SOCIETY (01)
STAGE (01)
TASK (01)
TERMINOLOGY (01)
THEATRE MAKER (01)
THEATRICAL (01)
THEME (01)
THINK (01)

EDIT KALDOR I don't have any problems with dramatic theatre. I think that its conventions can be well exploited. Nowadays, these conventions are most present in the attitude of the audience. The audience in the theatre is more patient than it would be in a gallery, for instance. This makes it possible to have more complex narratives that take longer to develop. And that's one of the things that attracts me to the theatre, and one way in which my work benefits from the conventions.

ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA The well-behaved audience, the traditional theatre audience, was always invisible, watching from the darkness as the drama unfolded on stage. In this time of complete CCTV coverage of public space, there is an invisible observer. As long as we behave well, we don't find out who's watching us. A regime of surveillance is taking over and a code of conduct is being introduced. You're expected to behave yourself in public space, to act as if you're visiting someone's house. So what has to be addressed – in the theatres and in the cities – is the notion of the 'invisible audience'; what is the meaning of 'acting', the tension between role-playing and just doing something, acting out, performing; what is the relationship between theatre and public space, audience and surveillance, the stage and the street, and so on?

MIKE PEARSON In our piece *Carrying Lyn*, I investigated the performance of place and the phenomenon of surveillance in the city. Questions arise about who is watching, who we're performing for, what the repercussions are for this kind of dramatic formulation. I was very struck by what Hans-Thies Lehmann said in his lecture about the stock exchange and the idea of 'game'. I think the ways in which these pieces are formulated make them about rules, about how rules and materials are related in time. The digital allows us to conflate different media absolutely and precisely against time in a way we haven't before: there is no 'out-of-sync' anymore. The practice of performances like *Carrying Lyn* becomes fractured, not only interrupted. The performers have to deliver for short moments of time. In different ways. Rapidly. Together. So all of those things that might have provided coherence in the dramatic become broken. In my piece I have to do something for three minutes, and then I have to run to the next place. For another three minutes I scream, I lay on the street. If I don't follow the game plan, it fails. Situations like this are essential phenomena for the postdramatic. Meanwhile, on a video screen, a performer stands in a public space, not acting, not doing anything] To do nothing – to stand – is considered criminal: it's called 'loitering with intent'.

HEIKE ROMS In Britain there's hardly a public space that isn't covered by CCTV cameras.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN You can't stand still in the street and do nothing: you'll get arrested, as I once was.

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN There's a story by Kurt Schwitters that starts with a man standing on a street and doing nothing. People get so angry that it gives rise to a revolution.

HEIKE ROMS All theatre plays by rules, but those rules turn into conventions that we become unaware of. What we mean by the term 'postdramatic', I think, is that all the rules are up for grabs. I'm now based in the UK and I read a lot of Anglo-American literature and there they prefer the term 'performance' because it's a little more open: you don't have to worry about its relationship to the dramatic institution if you call it 'performance'. The aesthetics we are talking about today are often labelled 'performance' and not 'theatre'. What's interesting about Lehmann's book, though, is that it recognises that some of this work still engages with theatre and theatrical themes and histories. Take *Carrying Lyn*, for example – it is a theatre-related act, to put something into the field of vision of an audience, and then to ask how the audience relates to it; such a work uses the idiom of performance art within a theatrical framework. And questions arise from this: is it theatre, is it performance, does it matter? What can be theorised well as performance is the act, the doing. But it's interesting to relate these aesthetics back to theatre, to the particular relationship it establishes with the spectators, which *Carrying Lyn* foregrounds. I don't think this aspect is covered sufficiently by the notion 'performance'. Throughout writings about performance, the spectator is often defined as somebody who witnesses an act and has an ethical responsibility towards it. I think that's too brief, too easy: audiences have so many different relationships to what they see, they don't just 'witness'; there can be tension, there can be both a distance-taking and an engagement. This goes beyond what performance theory has provided us with – until now.

DAVID WEBER-KREBS Calling your work 'performance' in Germany or here in the Netherlands, means something different from in the UK. I describe my piece *This Performance* as theatre, because it's very much related to the theatrical tradition. To call it 'performance' in Germany would be to narrow its audience to the performance-art world. This is a matter that theatre programmers are dealing with.

(14) THEATRE
(04) POSTDRAMATIC
(03) AUDIENCE
(03) LAUWERS
(03) NEXT
(02) 1996
(02) ARTISTS
(02) BERLIN
(02) DIRECTOR
(02) EXPERIMENTAL
(02) JAN LAUWERS
(02) MAKERS
(02) NOW
(02) PRACTICE
(02) PRESENT
(02) TIME
(02) WORDS
(02) WORK
(01) ACTIVITIES
(01) ADDRESS
(01) AMSTERDAM
(01) ANTWERP
(01) ARCHIVE
(01) ART
(01) ARTISTIC
(01) ARTS
(01) AUDIENCES
(01) BIG STAGE
(01) BOOK
(01) CASSIERS
(01) CHALLENGING
(01) CO-PRODUCTIONS
(01) COLLABORATIVE
(01) COMPANIES
(01) CONNECTION
(01) CONSERVATIVE
(01) CONTEXT
(01) CRISIS
(01) CURIOSITY
(01) DOCUMENTATION
(01) DRAMATIC
(01) DRAMATURGE
(01) ELEMENTS
(01) EMERGED
(01) ENGAGE
(01) EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE
(01) FABRE
(01) FLANDERS
(01) FRAMEWORK
(01) FRANK
(01) GENERATION
(01) GENT
(01) GUY CASSIERS
(01) HISTORY
(01) HOME
(01) INFLUENCES
(01) INFRASTRUCTURE
(01) INSTITUTION
(01) INTERNATIONAL
(01) JAN FABRE
(01) LABORATORY

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.'²⁰

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.'²¹

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 certain aesthetic principles from the 1980s and 1990s have already managed to infiltrate the big stage.²² 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.²³ 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 Theatre 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?'²⁴

Last but not least, rather than devoting the fifth and final section of the publication to the usual conference documentation, graphic designers Louise Moana Kolff and Niels Schrader created a playful account of our discussions, representing them in a *non-hierarchical* way and investigating 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!

20.
From conference transcript.
21.
Pieter T'Jonk. 'Because women are tremendously important. Jan Lauwers on Needcompany's Isabella's Room', *De Tijd*, September 21, 2004.
22.
In Flanders two postdramatic theatre protagonists are now directing traditional state theatres: Johan Simons at NT Gent (former director of Theatertroep 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.troublelyn.be
23.
The former Sophien-saele 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 co-productions – 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. Sophien-saele 1996–2006*, Theater der Zeit Arbeitsbuch, Berlin 2006, pp. 72–74.
24.
Ritsaert ten Cate. *Man Looking for Words*, Theater Instituut Nederland, Amsterdam 1996, p. 63.



andcompany&Co., *LAST EXIT TAT*, 2004

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN I think one of the main tools for artists of recent times has been the work in progress. You start with material and something comes into being along the way. The practical work is still the motor, but the relationship is shifting to become a means of bringing theory and practice together again – in a very interesting way, since theory is being developed in the performance itself.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN Some say drama, or a desire for it, is returning. We should take into account that Sarah Kane said she wrote 'theatre for performance'. The best authors – Heiner Müller, Sarah Kane – write very long silences and do not use dramatic structures in their text. As I see it, that's why so few people in our time continue to perform them.

EDIT KALDOR I don't think theatrical texts are more suitable for use in theatre or performance than other texts. I don't have a preference. It's not a decision I have to make. I love Chekhov, but I prefer to read the text and imagine it, I love the spirit, but I don't need to see it staged. Perhaps parts or bits are useful to me: for instance the rhythm of how the events, emotions unfold. But there are so many other sources as well.

JETSE BATELAAN When we were talking about the previous generation of theatre makers – who continue to deal with their relationship with the dramatic – I wondered whether we are again searching for a new kind of unity. I'm looking for new stories, new kinds of unity. We have to deal with a reality that is divided and fragmented. Perhaps it's a way of reconsidering the principles of traditional drama.

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN Working on material and taking a distance from it are two different things. Everybody has a method even if they are unaware of it. As Rutger Kopland, a Dutch poet said, 'Your method is the path you follow.' It can be different in every good work of art. And with regard to the importance of being in the process and to the ability to analyse the process: the dramaturge is the one who steps in and then out, becoming completely immersed, then taking a step back to analyse it. Reflection is about stepping back and reconstructing what has happened. I've tried many times to keep a diary of dramaturgical processes, but never yet succeeded. I've never had the right distance to say, 'At that moment we took that direction.' It's only afterwards I can look back at the whole and see it as such, and see the routes chosen. This gap between theory and practice is a big problem, which you see in education, too. If people involved in practice and in theory would meet frequently to communicate, it would help both parties a lot. I don't understand why they're kept apart. It would be far more fruitful to bring them together! The arts community would do well to place importance on reflection, and on theatre as theory – as reflection on society. In society itself – in the Netherlands, England, everywhere – it's always the same populist ideology that rejects this; it finds contemporary theatre too difficult, too inaccessible. I think that one of the tasks of theatre is to react against that and reinstate theatre as a place where reflection is possible.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN I agree with Marianne. Why is it that nowadays we discuss dramaturgy of the spectator rather than dramaturgy of a structure on stage, as we used to? It's because a media-influenced perception is swallowing up everything – nearly everything. The only way to avoid being swallowed up is by using a dramaturgy of the spectator, which allows the spectator moments of destabilised insecurity. You might ask why one should destabilise. But you must destabilise! Because, as reflection bears out, frameworks create a stable condition which prevents us from developing an individualised perspective on the society we live in. It is the frameworks, not the individual ideas, that keep us from saying what it's really all about. 'Postdramatic' means to open up, to create destabilised moments for the spectator, and it is one of a thousand ways to do this. And now invent the next thousand!

JETSE BATELAAN If you're talking about a theatre that doesn't confirm the spectator's perception, but destabilises it, I'll join you! [laughs]

LOTTE VAN DEN BERG To see is to think! There is a belief – and a hope – inside me that you can be aware without reflecting!

MARIANNE VAN KERKHOVEN I think it's impossible not to reflect. There is a point in everyone's development when you become self-aware, when you learn to speak. As far as I understand it, you're talking about a kind of longing, which many artists have, for a lost paradise, for pure presence, simply being present. It brings to mind something Heiner Müller said: 'Beckett – a lifelong attempt to make his own voice silent.'

WHO NEEDS RESPONSIBILITY?

**On Current (Co-) Production
Conditions in Germany's Independent
Theatre**

by Kathrin Tiedemann
translated and copy-edited
by Nicholas Lakides

*The new institutional order eschews responsibility, labelling its own
indifference as freedom for individuals or groups on the periphery.
The vice of the politics derived from the new capitalism is indifference.*

— Richard Sennett in 'The Culture of the New Capitalism'

When, with regard to the German theatre landscape, we refer, in the absence of a more adequate term, to 'independent theatre' (German: *das Freie Theater* / *das freie Theater*) we mean that professional theatre scene whose productions originate outside of or on the 'fringes' of the large cultural institutions, the municipal and state theatres. This theatre scene, whose infrastructure of production and performance venues is independent of the communal theatres, has its centre in Berlin, but virtually every large city in Germany has places where, under the widest range of conditions, performing art is produced in an 'independent' manner.

In the western *Bundesländer*, the origins of independent theatre can be traced back to a time when social capitalism was still dreaming of the Leisure Time Society (German: *Freizeitgesellschaft*), and the spectre of mass unemployment in the capitalistic industrialised nations could not even be glimpsed on the horizon. Back then, in the 1970s and 80s, there was widespread concern that the working class would not know how to use the leisure time they had gained through technological progress, and *Culture for everyone!* and *Everyone an artist!* were amongst the culture-political mottos propagated by the Social Democrats. The hope was that the labour hitherto required by society could be replaced with artistic self-realisation – a concept which we now know to have been spurious. This explains why since the end of social movements of the period – most recently since the dissolution of the socialist states in Europe – socially engaged art has been unable to shed the label of failed utopias, and why the connection between art and society, which for a time has been somewhat out of style, has only very recently begun to experience a moderate comeback.

In contrast to what many had hoped or expected, the replacement of human labour with machines, as well as most recently the replacement of domestic labour through the transfer of production to other parts of the world, has in the western industrialised countries given rise to an army of the 'useless,' whose productivity is no longer sought or required. This paradigmatic change in the effective value of human work has brought with it a parallel change in the status of art and culture.

Under the pressure of the new capitalism, the *Bundesländer* and, especially, the cities and local authorities, have instituted numerous budget cuts in the areas of social and cultural institutions. The ideal of participation in art and culture by the widest possible strata of society was supplanted by an elite concept of culture (high culture of an exclusive character) on the one hand, and a totally commercialised one (industrial mass-consumption products for entertainment) on the other. The activities falling outside this process, those which do not form part of the culture industry or cannot be subordinated to market forces, include: educational and social work serving and supporting the integration of the marginalised (children, the aged, migrants,

the unemployed), through, amongst other things, the integration of volunteer work into theatre operations (usually through theatre-pedagogy projects), as well as hands-on cultural education programmes that are prompting a positive reappraisal of the virtues of both DIY and open-source technologies, especially as they relate to digital media and the Internet (MySpace, YouTube).

The rambling producers of immaterial labour, a group which includes the wandering personnel of independent theatre, fulfil with their activity, which reconstitutes itself anew from project to project, to a high degree the social requirements of the New Economy, being, as they are, flexible, non-permanent, continuously changing associations of independent artists: by no means a basis for resisting the New Economy. On the contrary: these lifestyle pioneers have made Ego Inc. a normal part of everyday life and have helped de-solidarisation attain such a degree of success that, for the longest time now, it has been biting the very hands that fed it: those of artists themselves. From *Heidi Hoh arbeitet hier nicht mehr* (*Heidi Hoh doesn't work here anymore*) to *Tod eines Praktikanten* (*Death of a trainee*), writer-director René Pollesch has, above all, succeed in criticising these constellations whilst at the same time making them productive for the theatre.

In analogy to the distinction between a first and second labour market, an intensified dichotomy can be observed in cultural production: as highlight and event, art is withdrawing to the few large, financially successful, well-equipped institutions, whilst the basic supply of culture to the general population (cultural education and participation) is expected to come from freelance artists and the institutions of the independent scene. In the future, the distinction between amateurs (work out of love) and professionals (work out of the need for money) could undergo a radical change in meaning.

It is before this backdrop that German theatres are perched to reposition themselves. There are increasing signs that the discussion that has been going on for some 20 years regarding the (legitimacy) crisis of the publicly subsidised municipal and state theatres, as well as of the independent scene, is starting to break out of its accustomed orbit. And this is not happening lastly because the communal theatres and the independent scene have moved closer together and now enter increasingly often into collaborative efforts.

It should nevertheless be borne in mind that Germany's municipal and state theatres continue to be large-scale cultural operations, frequently employing several hundred salaried and external personnel who earn their livelihood from artistic and non-artistic activities, and whose combined efforts produce, through a process characterised by a high degree of labour division, what we know as repertory theatre: a year-round operation with a permanent ensemble (supplemented with guest artists), usually able to change programmes on a daily basis, drawn from a minimum of 60 contrasting productions. In addition, these productions often embrace a variety of categories, theatre in the narrow sense, opera, ballet/dance.

Co-productions produced by networks are a typical feature of the working methods of the independent theatre scene. Important centres for their activities are: Hebbel am Ufer (HAU), the Sophiensæle (both in Berlin), Kampnagel (Hamburg), Mousonturm (Frankfurt) and the Forum Freies Theatre (Düsseldorf). These houses work with both artists and groups of artists based in their respective cities, as well as groups from all over German-speaking Europe and – increasingly – in the Europe-wide and worldwide contexts, although

THEATRE (07)
ARTISTS (06)
WORK (05)
ACTIVITIES (02)
ART (02)
CHANGE (02)
ECONOMY (02)
GROUPS (02)
INSTITUTIONS (02)
NOW (02)
PRODUCTIONS (02)
TIME (02)
ARTISTIC (01)
BACKDROP (01)
BALLET (01)
BERLIN (01)
CO-PRODUCTIONS (01)
COLLABORATIVE (01)
CRISIS (01)
CULTURE (01)
DANCE (01)
DIGITAL (01)
DISCUSSION (01)
ENSEMBLE (01)
FRANKFURT (01)
FUTURE (01)
GERMANY (01)
HAMBURG (01)
HAPPENING (01)
HAU (01)
HOUSES (01)
MAKING (01)
MEANING (01)
MEDIA (01)
MONEY (01)
NETWORKS (01)
OPERA (01)
POLLESCH (01)
POPULATION (01)
POSITIVE (01)
PROCESS (01)
PRODUCERS (01)
PRODUCTIVE (01)
PROJECTS (01)
REPERTORY THEATRE (01)
REPOSITION (01)
SUCCESS (01)
SUCCESSFUL (01)
TECHNOLOGIES (01)

(15) THEATRE the latter is only possible with help from special subsidies from foundations
(03) ARTISTIC and funds, including amongst others, the *Hauptstadtkulturfonds*, *Fonds*
(03) PRODUCTION *Darstellende Künste*, *Kulturstiftung des Bundes* and the EU.
(02) CONCEPT

(02) PLACES What the theatre scene as a whole is presently lacking are places where
(02) QUESTION the future of the performing arts not only can be viewed in terms of survival
(02) VIEW of the institutions in question, but, moreover, places which can supply
(01) ABSENCE the requisite resources that will make possible a form of theatre that does not
(01) ART define itself as a reproducer of well-known, established and successful models,
(01) ARTS but is prepared to invest in the investigation and development of new, forgotten
(01) ATTENTION or neglected forms of production and reception.
(01) CO-PRODUCTIONS

(01) COLLECTIVE For it is one of the negative features of theatre operations in the municipal
(01) CULTURE and state houses that success is measured, above all, quantitatively and
(01) CURRENT that, consequently, there is less and less room for experimentation and artistic
(01) DEVELOPMENT risk-taking. On the contrary, the increasing absence of necessary production
(01) DIRECTORS funds, which would make possible longer-term planning and theatre activity
(01) ECONOMY with a view toward continuity, is one of the greatest difficulties facing in-
(01) EFFICIENCY dependent theatre. Making productive the existing potential of collective working
(01) ESSENCE methods, methods forming part of the essence of theatre, is probably still
(01) ESSENCE OF THEATRE one of the most important challenges facing theatre today.

(01) FUTURE How, then, is theatre to be produced in a world whose concept of work
(01) GERMANY is changing at a furious pace, and in view of the growing uselessness
(01) HOUSES and dispossession of the individual in a world in which politics has become
(01) INSTITUTIONS a kind of theatre of consumption (Richard Sennett)?
(01) ISSUES

(01) LIMITED Theatre has always demonstrated a readiness to get political where societies
(01) MAKING have been in a state of upheaval and where it was imperative to renegotiate
(01) NEGATIVE issues of representation and participation. And today, as well, increased attention
(01) PERFORMANCE is being focused on situations into which the concept of productivity can
(01) PERFORMING be introduced in a sense other than that prescribed by the models and rules
(01) PLAY of play of the New Economy: as waste and overexpenditure characterised
(01) POLITICAL by a dedication to the supposedly useless, superfluous and literally obscene.
(01) POSITION The prerequisite here would be for the circumstances of theatre production
(01) PRODUCING to be understood as setting an example for societal and cultural productions
(01) PRODUCTIONS in general, and for public financing of theatre to be linked to such a mandate,
(01) PRODUCTIVE instead of requiring of theatres increasingly to adjust what they produce
(01) PROJECTS to the laws of the culture industry. Then the question arises: what is the point
(01) PUBLIC of co-productions beyond increased efficiency and the consolidation
(01) REALISE of limited resources?

(01) REALITY Rather than an answer, a few concluding remarks on the current situation
(01) REPRESENTATION of independent theatre in Germany – as is often the case, wishes and reality
(01) RULES lie far apart. In order to put available resources to better use, it would above
(01) SITUATION all be advisable to strengthen the position of those producing independent
(01) SUBSIDIES theatre, particularly at the level of independent-theatre directors, who, in contrast
(01) SUCCESS to those at municipal and state theatres, usually also produce their projects,
(01) SUCCESSFUL that is in addition to the artistic component, they also bear responsibility
(01) TERMS for financial matters, and bring together funds drawn from the widest possible
(01) TIME spectrum of ‘subsidy pots’ in order to be able to realise their artistic plans
(01) VENUES (and in addition, it is they who in turn must account for the proper use of the
(01) WORK funds, necessitating a considerable investment in time). Further, at the levels
of the theatres themselves, the production and performance venues upon whose

support independent groups and theatre artists depend, and at whose disposal they place their infrastructures, rehearsal rooms, technical equipment and personnel, performance spaces, press and publicity and distribution facilities, front office personnel, etc. In the competition for public subsidy funds, these houses are the 'first resort' of independent-theatre projects; it is they who in the first place agree to include a given production in their programmes. In addition to such non-cash items, where possible, they also provide funds from their production budgets and pay fees or royalties, as well. Subject to the means available to it, this is also a way for a theatre's direction to indicate the degree of estimation in which it holds a given project.

The most important contribution such houses can make often consists in nothing more, but nothing less, than making public funds available: since without a theatre's agreement to enter into a co-production, there is hardly any chance of succeeding in acquiring public monies (that is, unless the theatre artists in question have their own performance venues).

Although such a co-production model assigns theatres and their directions a relatively large amount of decision-making power, it is, from the standpoint of theatre houses, not an ideal situation, as it means an embedding of the heterogeneity and fluctuation of the independent scene in the operations of the theatre in question, which in turn impedes the development of a clear artistic profile. The independence of the decisions of juries and advisory boards regarding subsidies to individual projects directly contradicts the responsibilities of an artistic direction and its duties with regard to content. Not infrequently, it is not genuine partnership, but conflicts of interest between groups, artists and theatre houses that set the tone. In fact, local authorities could substantially reduce their bureaucratic costs and at the same time strengthen the role of independent theatre houses as producers or co-producers, if these houses were supplied with sufficient production funds and had the freedom to do with them as they see fit. It is thus difficult to avoid the impression that theatre directions frequently act more as the executory bodies for various subsidy policies than as genuine producers. On the other hand, the necessity constantly to negotiate new collaborations with changing partners is a guarantee that these institutions will not atrophy all too quickly – since the houses in question are forced to continue to be open to the new and unknown.

From the standpoint of the producers of independent theatre, the opportunity to contribute their own funds under co-production agreements is a pure advantage, since the houses in question will have to realise the project concepts of the artists. All in all, however, the subsidy structures for independent theatre (which, aside from through the *Nationale Performance Netz*, foresee, in the field of dance, no subsidies for guest performances, but rather, often only subsidise up to opening performances) in recent years have led to a situation in which the much-mentioned diversity of the independent scene frequently turns into a confusing multitude of productions that are far too rarely performed individually and are thus robbed of the opportunity to develop a public resonance worthy of mention.

An exception to, and way out of this dilemma can be found in the co-productions at a range of regional, supraregional and international networks, in which the artists and houses involved work together as producers and bring in additional funds from third parties, and where as a result, high-quality productions can be realised that also reach correspondingly large audiences.

p.s. Why could it be useful to investigate methods and prerequisites of theatre production as they relate to specific situations in the Netherlands and Germany, as well as at the European and worldwide levels?

Because, clearly, for some years now, a widespread search for solutions has been underway to the problem of the increasing pressure bearing down on theatre operations that emanates from the culture industry; because one can ask oneself to what extent the structures created or reformed in the 1970s and 80s are able to meet today's challenges; because it would seem helpful together to seek models that can be made productive to ensure the existence of a vital theatre scene in the future.

(03) THEATRE
(01) CULTURE
(01) FUTURE
(01) GERMANY
(01) NETHERLANDS
(01) NOW
(01) PRESSURE
(01) PRODUCTION
(01) PRODUCTIVE
(01) SPECIFIC
(01) STRUCTURES

STONES IN THE STREAM

An Appeal for Trust¹

by Marianne Van Kerkhoven

The working structure determines the work

During the 1980s, young artists worked with a great sense of freedom and self-confidence, and their companions displayed similar qualities. The organisers and programmers that gathered around them turned out to be as talented as the artists themselves. Their know-how developed in parallel with the artists' growing mastery of the creative process. They built structures in which artistic work could thrive, provided platforms for showing this work, mobilised a new audience, organised foreign tours and brought important foreign artists and their work to Flemish-speaking Belgium, and initiated a framework for all manner of cross-pollination: between the national and the international, theatre and dance, practice and reflection, audience and performance, and so on.

In this period, the disciplines of theatre and dance were able to achieve maturity and autonomy. Following a long evolution with its beginnings in the nineteenth century, a point had been reached when primarily artistic-theatrical arguments could determine theatre practice in close connection with social motives and implications. Moreover, it seems to me that professionalism could at last be interpreted in an artistic sense as well as a social one.

One of the most important forces contributing to this was the awareness that working structure determines the work and that the way one works is not only an expression of an artistic credo, but also a social positioning – a way of 'wanting to be in the world'. The working structure – the approach, the method – determines the creation, and is also an expression of it. That is the essence of the artistic freedom won by this generation of artists. Artistic freedom is the right of the artist to self-determination with regard to his or her own artistic project. It is crucial to make self-determined choices in the process of creation, to choose the structure in which creation takes place, to go all out for autonomy and emancipation – an implicit political statement.

Artistic freedom is achieved when one has allowed the options taken in the creative process to permeate all segments of the structure in which one creates. This includes determining how, where and when one wants to work, and with whom; determining in what context one wishes to face one's audience; determining how one talks to one's producer or co-producer; determining how, where and why one wishes to perform in any particular place; determining the tone of publicity material; and so on.

Thus, the theatre-making process is viewed as a unified whole, and handled as such. The organisation as an expression of creative work must therefore be as flexible as the creative work itself. Artistic freedom is synonymous with artistic work receiving the central position within an organisation. Hugo De Greef, founder and first director of the Kaaitheater once said in an interview, 'The moment you allow an organisation to determine how an artist must organise his work, you're on the wrong track.' At that moment, the words 'produce' and 'producer' gained new meaning.

1.

The following is an excerpt from *Stenen in de stroom: Een pleidooi voor vertrouwen*, written for the Flemish Theatre Institute (VTI) and published as a supplement to its quarterly publication *Courant* (issue 76, February 2006). www.vti.be

Two enemies

Yet another element contributed to the potency of the artistic generation of the 1980s. Any general, any politician knows that there is one sure-fire way to get all eyes focussed on the same point, to get all troops moving in unison: a common enemy. The artistic movement of the 1980s had the dubious advantage of 'cherishing' not one but two enemies. On the one hand there was the government that failed to see, or at least was late to see, that fundamental changes were taking place in the arts, and on the other was the sterile presence of the repertory theatres, which were at a standstill at that time.

The healthy tension caused by the antagonism that so often exists between a centre and a fringe seemed wholly absent. The vital, hungry new generation – which, even without money, had created its own structures or had succeeded in doing its own thing by all means necessary – let fly at the big theatres that received the lion's share of government subsidies but closed their doors to any form of renewal. The big theatres wanted nothing to do with this young generation. And neither did these young people actually want to work in those large structures, not unless they could bring with them their own ways of creating and of organising the working process.

It was a lengthy – far too lengthy – process, this struggle to prise open those great doors and attempt to place artistic risk-taking at the very centre of these immense structures. In the Netherlands, the subversive idealist Gerardjan Rijnders came to head the nation's largest theatre in 1987. In Belgium it was only in 1998 that Luk Perceval given the opportunity to transform the KNS (Royal Netherlands Theatre, Antwerp) into Het Toneelhuis; I cannot rid myself of the feeling that this step in evolution came too late, that the 'talented moment' had been allowed to pass and that the repercussions of this poor timing impact on the present situation.

The artistic legacy to be championed

In recent years, much has been written about the artistic principles introduced by the generations of the 1980s and 1990s. An attendant aspect of the blossoming described above was the development of a reflective practice, of methods of criticism and theorisation that supported and interpreted creative work. Furthermore, this creative work displayed an enormous diversity in its use of themes, its forms of composition and its styles, making it exceedingly difficult to adequately summarise its essence. Nonetheless, I want to try to shed light on a few aspects of this creative process that, in my opinion, can be considered the artistic stem cells of the period. These are necessarily generalisations, perhaps even clichés by now, and moreover they probably will not escape a certain amount of idealising on my part.

— Openness and doubt are perhaps the basic attitudes of these artists. The option of a holistic worldview is no longer available to them; the world cannot be investigated as an ordered structure and understood as such; the fragments into which reality collapses offer no handhold. The certainty about what it is possible to know of that reality is gone. Every utterance is, then, characterised by doubt, and that doubt leads to vulnerability – a keyword in this period. This worldview allows attention to be focused on the functioning of coincidence and on scientific insights such as Chaos Theory.

ARTISTIC (06)
GENERATION (03)
PROCESS (03)
STRUCTURES (03)
WORK (03)
BIG THEATRES (02)
ENEMIES (02)
FORM (02)
NETHERLANDS (02)
PERIOD (02)
REALITY (02)
THEATRE (02)
ANTWERP (01)
ART (01)
ARTISTS (01)
ARTS (01)
ATTENTION (01)
BELGIUM (01)
CHANGES (01)
COMMON ENEMY (01)
CREATING (01)
CREATIVE PROCESS (01)
CRITICISM (01)
DEVELOPMENT (01)
DIVERSITY (01)
ESSENCE (01)
FAILED (01)
FRAGMENTS (01)
MAKING (01)
MONEY (01)
MOVEMENT (01)
NEW GENERATION (01)
PERCEVAL (01)
PRACTICE (01)
PRESENCE (01)
PRESENT (01)
PRINCIPLES (01)
SHARE (01)
SITUATION (01)
STRUCTURE (01)
SUBSIDIES (01)
SUBVERSIVE (01)
SUPPORTED (01)
TALENTED (01)
TALENTED MOMENT (01)
TENSION (01)
THEORY (01)
TIME (01)
TONEELHUIS (01)

— In creative practice, this fundamental attitude is translated into, among other things, a multidisciplinary perspective. These artists' repertoire, their reservoir, is the whole world – one where no differentiation is made between primary and secondary issues. The result is simultaneity, ambiguity, polyphony and complexity. Not only are the walls between the various disciplines levelled, but also those between tradition and renewal – and a start is made on demolishing the wall between high and low culture.

— Any building blocks can be utilised – indiscriminately: their utility is not predetermined by any code (for example, that text is more important than image, or that dance and music should correspond), but defines itself organically through the work. The material dictates where it wants to go. *Each production determines its own method.* These artists' practice consists primarily of the selection of 'materials' (including the performers) and the processing of these materials. Their practice is distinct from that of their predecessors in political theatre who focused on the dialectic between form and content. Nothing is sacred, for even works belonging to the artistic canon can be deconstructed, reduced to so much tinder or relegated to a mere quotation.

— Thus, it is not the end result that is central to the 'work', but the working process itself. The sense of a continual work in progress is core to this practice, in that one seeks while one is underway, and there is no previously outlined concept that must be fleshed out during the process. The working method suggests a direction, not a destination. Each performance is seen as a stage in the investigation and is therefore only a 'provisional outcome': each production is linked to both the previous and the subsequent one. To create is to work.

— The artist presents himself as a researcher. Intuitively, and without a concept clearly defined in advance (simultaneously rational and emotional), he clears a way through the debris of the world. And from this he creates a provisional unity. Its structure remains open with respect to the subsequent structure. A kind of anti-world comes into being on stage, one where there is cohesion and dramaturgy, but where the spectator is invited to seek out a possible unity in the symbolic language.

— Just as the hierarchy of the building blocks are dispensed with, so too is the hierarchy within the working community. This is not to say that the 'functions' disappear – as happened to those swallowed up in the 'absolute collectives' of the preceding period of political theatre – but a form of common responsibility emerges for each collaborator in relation to the totality of the performance. Each creative participant – and certainly those on stage – is considered a mature and emancipated artistic personality. This attitude applies also to the audience, which is treated as a collection of independently minded individuals, gathered by chance on a particular evening.

— The term 'theatre maker' came into use in this period to indicate that the act of creating is an all-embracing activity. With the boundless choice of material that can be associated with the diverse disciplines or fields, the theatre maker becomes an all-rounder who, as the situation requires, can apply himself to writing, composing, directing, choreographing, dancing, acting or devising a scenography. In this sense he is more a *bricoleur* than a *savant* (to once again use Claude Lévi-Strauss' terms), amateur rather than craftsman.

— The manner of acting, the ‘materiality of the moment’ has primacy: not to *pretend* but to *be*, not to *interpret*, but to *say* – to opt for reality rather than fiction and the actor rather than the character.

Many other aspects of this generation’s artistic vocabulary were explored, such as their use of space (choice of location), and time (experimentation with repetition and duration), and the importance of physicality, of abstraction and musicality, of self reflection and loss of identity, and so forth.

ACTOR (01)
ARTISTIC (01)
CHOICE (01)
DURATION (01)
FICTION (01)
GENERATION (01)
INTERPRET (01)
MOMENT (01)
REALITY (01)
REFLECTION (01)
SPACE (01)
TIME (01)
VOCABULARY (01)

1600
2004.02.14

Humanism
Humanism

Drama is absolute

transcendence
immanent

PEOPLE

- the dramatist absent
- drama is not written, but set
- Spectator in physical isolation
- actor = character

epic

social
dialogue

DRAMA is primary
Drama → present

1880

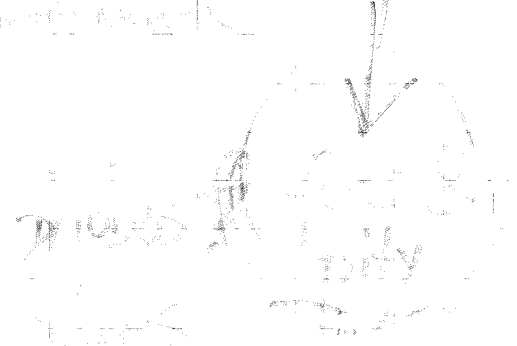
1600-1880

280 years

- (03) DRAMA
- (01) ACTOR
- (01) DIALOGUE
- (01) DRAMATIC
- (01) DRAMATURGY
- (01) FEAR
- (01) FORM
- (01) PRESENT
- (01) SPECTATOR

... form

...



The DRAMA of DRAMA ISM

Theory training at the Theatre School by Alexander Karschnia

Exposition
Complication
Peripeteia
Retardation
Catastrophe

Aristotle

Lessing

Hegel

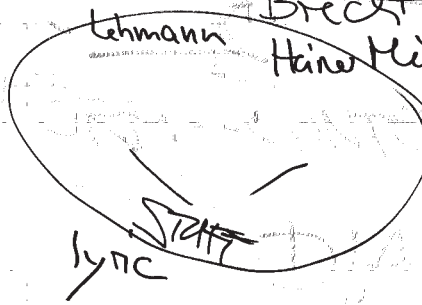
Staudl

Brecht

Lehmann

Hinter Müller

genre-based
philosophy
of
history



epic

dramatic

epic theatre

Staudl
dramatic
reality

action = character → situation

DRAMA ↔ IMITATION ↔ ACTION

ACTION SPACE TIME

~~DRAMA~~

→ dram = to act (or)
→ dran = dream

DRAMA →
DREAM
alogical
source

DRAMA → Dialog
→ dialectical

- DRAMA (07)
- FORM (02)
- HISTORY (02)
- ACT (01)
- AUTHOR (01)
- ARISTOTLE (01)
- AUTHOR (01)
- CONTENT (01)
- DIRECTOR (01)
- DRAMATIC (01)
- HEGEL (01)
- LEHMANN (01)
- SITUATION (01)
- SPACE (01)
- THEATRE (01)
- TIME (01)
- TRAGEDY (01)

THE DRAMA OF DRAMA

for Judith Malina
on her 80th Birthday

by Alexander Karschnia

I

If there is a drama of drama, it should be acted out in a soap-opera setting. Enter dramatis personae: History, Tragedy, Comedy, Romance, Pastoral, etc. Main character: History. Counter-character: Tragedy. Dramatic demand: Freedom. Question: Freedom for History to love or to rule? Classical conflict: History wants to marry Romance, but is prevented by Tragedy. This is the *exposition*: Act I. Now it is getting complicated: Act II. By their interactions, all the figures become interwoven like threads in an elegant knot (*complication*). Time for *peripeteia*:¹ Act III. History and Romance beg Pastoral to help them, together they make a plan, but all of a sudden History gets into a fight with a distant relative of Romance and kills him. Further complications: Act IV (*retardation*). History must escape, Pastoral has to change plans and gives Romance fake poison. The story comes to a climax and ends in *catastrophe* in the final act: Act V. History hears rumours about Romance's Death, enters the tomb, sees the body, commits *hara kiri*. Body count, end of story: Tragedy. Alternative: History is not really dead, both wake up, everything was a mere interplay of confusions that is resolved by mass-marriage rather than massacre. Happy ending: Comedy. Two faces, one laughing and one crying: Drama. But today, Drama is History.... This analogy drawn from *The most lamentable tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is not chosen arbitrarily. The Elizabethan Renaissance perceived the birth of European drama as the re-birth of human-kind: no longer was it ruled by a transcendent power; it lived in a radically immanent world based solely on interpersonal relationships. European drama starts and ends with Shakespeare, who is simultaneously at the centre and the margins of dramatic tradition. While drama was constituted as an absolute form – pure, primary and present, eliminating all other means (prologue, chorus, epilogue) – Shakespeare's use of these elements in his *Histories* contaminates them with older forms of theatre (moralities). There is a conflict between drama (as a classified form) and theatre (as a practice) that has existed since the beginnings of 'high drama' (in the 1570s). The English Comedians were originally travelling people, like gypsies, but then the first public playhouses opened in London. Just outside the City, they attracted the masses, as did cock-fighting, bear-baiting and other blood sports: this was theatre as spectacle, bloody revenge-tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Prince of Denmark* and other tragedies of blood, state and intrigue, domestic tragedies, and citizen's comedies, romantic comedies, comedies of humours and so forth. While a poetic system such as Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poetry* (1583) was an attempt to upgrade the developing form of drama by classifying genres (Heroick, Lyrick, Tragick, Comick, Satyrick, Iambick, Elegiack, Pastorell), Shakespeare ridiculed them, putting these terms into the mouth of the chattering Polonius to announce the arrival of Hamlet's friends, the actors: 'The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral...'. Shakespeare's rival and friend Ben Jonson praised and mocked him as 'nature's child' for not obeying the basic rules of drama, while Voltaire, an epigone of the French classicist age, called him a 'drunken barbarian'. The rediscovery of Shakespeare in Europe in the eighteenth century began as an insurrection

1.
Reversal
of circumstances,
turning point.

2.
Peter Szondi. *Theory of the Modern Drama*, translated and edited by Michael Hays, foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sassen, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1987.

3.
Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Postdramatic Theatre*, translated and with an introduction by Karen Jürs-Munby, Routledge, London and New York 2006.

against the hegemony of absolutist theatre in the French tradition. Paradoxically, it seems it is especially the irregularities and mistakes that made Shakespeare the primary reference for dramatic art in the following centuries. Three hundred years later, drama was entering a crisis, according to Peter Szondi's *Theory of the Modern Drama (1880–1950)*, first published in 1956, the year Bertolt Brecht died.² Drama itself, as a form, had become 'problematic'. To dramatists such as Ibsen, Chekhov, Strindberg, Maeterlinck and Hauptmann, these problems are technical ones pertaining to the creation of a form that unfolds only in the here-and-now, only focuses on interpersonal relationships through dialogues and monologues. Other dramatists including Wilder, Miller, O'Neill, Pirandello, Piscator, Bruckner and Brecht tried to solve the problems by experimenting with new techniques such as montage, *monolog intérieur*, political revue or 'epic theatre'. A hundred years later this crisis has not been resolved, but the problem has disappeared, according to Hans-Thies Lehmann.³ There has been no final act, no tragic failure of a form, but instead an old norm had faded away. Postdramatic theatre starts as Act VI of the drama of drama....

II

Dramatic conflict: in truth there is no clash between different kinds of drama, but between the three forms or genres that all poetic systems are based on: epic, lyric and dramatic. From Aristotle's *Poetics* until the correspondence between Goethe & Schiller, the most frequently discussed distinction was the one drawn between epic and dramatic poetry. While epic poets such as Homer tell their stories in manifold aspects, jumping back and forth in time, dramatists must concentrate on one main character and organise the action such that it unfolds along a single line from exposition to *peripeteia*, straight to catastrophe and *anagnorisis* (re-recognition, for example Oedipus: 'I am the murder of my father!') All explanations and digressions which hinder the flow of the dramatic action are to be eradicated; drama is by definition a strict organisation of time in linear sequence. The plot, or *fable*, has to present a whole: a beginning, middle and end. Since Aristotle, drama means *mimesis praxeos*, the imitation (*Nachahmung*) of an action (*Handlung*); its effect is *catharsis*, a purging of fear. But Aristotle had tried to develop categories for describing the craft of Ancient Greek theatre makers, not a set of absolute rules. It is the fate of authoritarian logocentric Western culture that Aristotle's loose and incomplete compilation of notes about epic and tragedy (the entire part on comedy was lost) were turned into a normative system after their rediscovery during the Italian Renaissance. Drama, after coming to life in Elizabethan England at the end of the sixteenth century, flourished in the classicist period in absolutist France until Voltaire's death in 1778, and reached a final peak in Weimar classicism at the turn of that century with Goethe & Schiller. But after the failed revolution of 1848, the bourgeoisie lost its dramatic impetus. The nineteenth century saw a decline of drama in spite of the dramatists Büchner, Grabbe, Hebbel and Grillparzer. It was the time of *The Epigones* as a novel by Karl Immermann was titled, when a popular dramatist like Gustav Freytag wrote a handbook about *The Technique of Drama* and Otto Ludwig conducted intensive studies of Shakespeare. But the 'great drama' just did not appear; it was the century of the novel, from Balzac to Tolstoy. The emancipation of theatre from the norm of drama stems from the revolt against this *faux* tradition of merely 'staging paper' in times of restoration, and chauvinist celebration of the classical national canon. Is postdramatic theatre,

then, a solely German idea? Not quite. Perhaps the old European dramatic tradition is connected to this German model, because Germany is a 'belated nation' (Helmuth Plessner) and the institution of theatre is also founded on a foul old compromise between feudalism and civic society. Around 1900, 'literature theatre' was attacked by a movement of 're-theatricalisation', but in spite of all attempts to reform, the logocentric foundation was unaffected by the avant-garde. Authorship and script continued to dominate over the *mis-en-scène*, and theatre was thus seen as representing a reality *prior* to the act of representation rather than being produced by the act. In this sense, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century the nineteenth century is alive and kicking.

Subject matter (*Stoff*) and action: since Aristotle, the central issue for dramatists has been how to find the right subject matter to be transformed into tragedy. According to Goethe & Schiller, the plot, the action (*dran* in Greek, *Handlung* in German), must take place in a dramatic present and not as a story set in the epic past. The Weimar classicists were re-reading Aristotle to develop categories for a well-grounded distinction between epic and dramatic art (epic elements were prohibited because they served as agencies of narration). The rules of the classical unities of time, place and action, are grounded in the specific requirement that drama function without narration – it has to get by without explanations such as 'Now we leave the conspirators in the forest and see what is going on in the castle.' The correct choice of subject matter is fundamental to fulfilling the dramatic form, but besides that, the work of the dramatist will always be possible: the dramatic form is seen as an eternal, universal category – outside of history. This idea was challenged around 1800 when classical neo-Aristotelian poetics was overcome by idealist philosophy, culminating in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics. Hegel held these lectures several times without ever publishing them – just like Szondi, whose lectures about *Poetics and the Philosophy of History* would only be published after his suicide in 1971. Szondi's aesthetics can be considered neo-Hegelian since it refrains from being a normative system or a handbook, but attempts to offer a model for the historical development of various art forms. The Hegelian 'science of the spirit' describes a story of development from A to B and through AB and BA to C. According to this scheme of progress we reach higher grounds on a third level in a synthesis whereby A and B are absent but still present, eliminated as well as conserved and elevated (*Aufhebung* combines all three concepts). In the typical Hegelian approach to poetry during the nineteenth century, drama is the crowning glory on the evolution of poetic art. The theatre is the temple of fine arts, the heart of the nation, and dramatic art is the synthesis of the epic narration of tales to be told (the rise and fall, the love and death of kings, queens and citizens) and the lyrical outburst of the soul (poetry as melody of the heart). The epic (objectivity, outer-world events, history or mythology, heroes or gods) is the thesis, lyrical poetry is the antithesis (subjectivity, inner self) and the synthesis is drama in which outer events are executed before our eyes: we witness the collision of characters and the values they stand for, while we hear them reflect on and react to each other. Drama is dialectical by nature, it is a synthesis of epic and lyric tendencies, but also of inter-character conflicts resolved in the final act. Drama is the model for a process based on conflict, collision and resolution on a higher level: *Versöhnung* (reconciliation). This model is teleological, which explains the affinity of poetics and the philosophy of history: Marx put Hegel's idealist dialectics

4. Primavesi, Patrick and Olaf Schmitt (eds.), *Aufbrüche. Theater zwischen Text und Situation*. The Festschrift presented to Hans-Thies Lehmann on the occasion of this sixtieth birthday. Theater der Zeit, Berlin 2004.

on materialist feet by retelling world history as a drama between oppressor and oppressed that will be resolved in a classless society. Thus, the proletarian revolution is the final act in the drama of humankind. For Szondi, the dialectical correlation between content and form is the driving factor of the development of modern drama. Consequently, a change in content can place the form in doubt. In all his studies Szondi shows how forms have a history, how drama develops, enters into crisis, cracks, breaks into pieces. *Stücke*, pieces, is the common German word for 'plays'. Brecht referred to himself not as a dramatist or poet but as a *Stückeschreiber*, a 'writer of pieces'. Wrapped in this self-description is a rejection of the central Aristotelian demand on dramatists to represent a 'whole', a totality. Brecht's theory and practice as a young dramatist violated all basic Aristotelian assumptions of imitation, empathy and *synopton* (overview). But after the return of the Brecht family from exile, his work at the Berlin Ensemble in the GDR became more representational, providing a 'whole' picture on stage, one that was once again suitable for the old *Guckkastenbühne* (looking-box stage). Brecht had only limited opportunities in East Germany, and he never realised his idea of creating mobile 'theatre squads' to enact problems encountered by the new socialist society. Szondi's reference to Brecht is based on his work within the dramatic tradition, not on his *theatre in performance*. Brecht wanted his pieces to be like dynamite in the bourgeois theatres, blowing up the 'dramatic apparatus' just as the free flow of labour and uninhibited productivity were to explode the circumstances of production in the capitalist system. To Brecht 'theatre' always meant 'production', living labour. Only when the corpus of Brecht's texts is read as 'performance writings' (Tim Etchells) can they again be put to practice – against the resistance of dramaturges and philologists, against the German tradition of plaster and paper. He differed from his heirs and epigones in that he insisted on theatre being *performance* rather than *dramatic literature*: a piece was not finished until it had been tested in practice. Instead, the post-Brecht dominance of dramaturgy in the *Epigontheater* suffocated live production, an all too German problem crisis: Act III. While in Szondi's view the synthesis is achieved by Brecht's epic theatre, which solved the problems of drama (in later studies he also observed the development of a lyric form of drama), in postdramatic theatre the certainty of reconciliation is lost. *Now we leave the theatre and see what is going on in the streets.*

III

The breaking down (*Aufbrüche*), or opening up, of theatre into text and situation, a Leitmotiv of Lehmann's studies,⁴ is linked to the arrival of Brecht's theatre in the 1920s, but departs from the orthodox reading and practice that had developed in the following fifty years. Brecht's awareness of the fragmentation of drama, of plays breaking into pieces, was constitutive for his attempt to develop a non-Aristotelian dramaturgy, because in his work he tried to grasp the new *Stoffe*, the raw material of twentieth-century reality: oil, inflation, wars, social struggles, religion, the wheat exchange and the meat trade. The new material breaks the old form open from the inside; the fight for oil prices 'resists the fifth act' said Brecht. The Shakespearean tradition, the high drama of great individuals whose great passions get them into trouble (causing them to commit great crimes or do silly things, about which they speak at great length), is discredited as 'culinary', cannibalistic theatre. The audience wants to identify with Romeo, Othello, Hamlet and Lear to feel the passion, love, envy and loathing

THEATRE (10)
 DRAMA (07)
 PRACTICE (04)
 DRAMATIC (03)
 FORM (03)
 PERFORMANCE (03)
 PRODUCTION (03)
 TRADITION (03)
 WORK (03)
 BERLIN (02)
 CONTENT (02)
 CRISIS (02)
 DEVELOPMENT (02)
 DRAMATURGY (02)
 HISTORY (02)
 LEHMANN (02)
 MATERIAL (02)
 PROBLEMS (02)
 SITUATION (02)
 SOCIETY (02)
 STAGE (02)
 TEXT (02)
 ACT (01)
 AUDIENCE (01)
 CHANGE (01)
 CREATING (01)
 DEVELOP (01)
 DRAMATURGES (01)
 ENSEMBLE (01)
 EXCHANGE (01)
 GERMANY (01)
 HAMLET (01)
 HANS-THIES LEHMANN (01)
 INDIVIDUALS (01)
 INSIDE (01)
 LIMITED (01)
 NOW (01)
 PASSION (01)
 POSTDRAMATIC (01)
 POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
 PRESENT (01)
 PRESENTED (01)
 REALITY (01)
 REFERENCE (01)
 TEXTS (01)
 THEORY (01)
 VIEW (01)

(10) THEATRE
(09) AUDIENCE
(05) ACTORS
(04) DRAMA
(04) REALITY
(04) STAGE
(02) ACT
(02) AUDIENCES
(02) CHARACTERS
(02) EMOTIONAL
(02) FUNCTION
(02) JAN LAUWERS
(02) LAUWERS
(02) PERFORMERS
(02) SHAKESPEARE
(02) WORK
(01) ACADEMIA
(01) ACTOR
(01) ADDRESS
(01) AMSTERDAM
(01) ARTIFICIAL
(01) ARTISTIC
(01) AUDITORIUM
(01) BECKETT
(01) BERLIN
(01) CAMERA
(01) CHANGE
(01) CINEMA
(01) COMMUNICATION
(01) DEVELOPMENT
(01) DIALOGUE
(01) DRAMATIC
(01) EXCEPTION
(01) EXPECTATIONS
(01) FICTIONAL
(01) FILM
(01) FORM
(01) FORMS OF THEATRE
(01) HANS-THIES LEHMANN
(01) ILLUSION
(01) INTERNATIONAL
(01) INTERRUPTION
(01) INVISIBLE
(01) LEHMANN
(01) LIMITED
(01) MAINSTREAM
(01) MEDIA
(01) MOMENT
(01) NEEDCOMPANY
(01) NETWORK
(01) NEW FORMS
(01) NEW FORMS OF THEATRE
(01) PERFORMING
(01) PHOTOGRAPH
(01) PLAY
(01) PRESS
(01) RECOGNITION
(01) REPRESENTATION
(01) SHIFT
(01) SPACE
(01) TERM

of a Shakespearean character, like emotional parasites. The *catharsis* became opium for a decadent class, the theatres were like drug dealers, selling an evening's entertainment. In a radical shift, theatre was to acquire an entirely new function within a network of interactive media institutes. Brecht's pieces no longer depended on development of events and situations which culminated in a clash between fictional characters, but instead functioned as narrated events that were shown rather than acted out for a cold-blooded audience indifferently smoking their cigars and thinking themselves 'the audience of the scientific age'. Their main capacity is a philosophical one: *thaumazein*, Greek for 'to wonder', to wonder about what is going on. Realism is not a photograph of reality, for what does a photo of IG Farben say about IG Farben? Rather, it is a representation of reality alienated (*verfremdet*) in such a way that the reality on stage no longer resembles normality: 'Behind the usual, recognise the abuse.' ('*Hinter dem Brauch erkennt den Mißbrauch.*') – the exception and the rule. Brecht called for a theatre in which utilitarian and hedonistic aspects are inseparable, which activates rather than pacifies. 'Don't stare so romantically!' said a sign over his stage, to confront the visitors with their dull expectations. Brecht wanted to break the spell that hypnotises audiences; modern cinema audience, for example. The auditorium was also brightly lit. Brecht coined the German expression '*bis zur Kenntlichkeit verändert*' by altering the expression 'changed beyond recognition' into 'made recognisable by change'. Accordingly, the stage was changed until it was recognisable as a stage, as an artistic and artificial space, not a naturalistic setting. Brecht's famous v-effect as A-effect: recognisability through alienation. Thus actors act out the parts of actors: 'I play Mack the Knife...'. The text was quoted rather than enacted, precluding emotional identification, *Einfühlung*; Brecht demanded *Ausföhlung*, a *détachement*⁵ from his actors, that is to 'get out of the character' in order to reveal it, and to show that this showing is taking place, to expose the quotation marks. Thus the shortest formula of epic theatre for Brecht was 'to make gestures quotable'.⁶ A precondition therefore was the *interruption* of the action. The actors no longer delivered speeches as dialogues or monologues, but turned to the audience to address them directly – *ad spectatores*. This turn towards the audience was already known from Shakespeare's aside speeches, which in turn derived from the vice figures of popular pre-Elizabethan theatre,⁷ but here the dialogue was no longer limited to the characters, but was opened up for communication with the audience: the invisible 'fourth wall', behind which the actors acted as if they were onscreen, was suddenly ripped open. This break with basic theatre convention was as much a taboo as talking straight to camera in today's mainstream movies. For theatre audiences between 1924 and 1933 it was as if a two-dimensional actor had stepped out of the screen and become three-dimensional. Drama died with the end of the illusion that it was being played in a separate reality; it died upon the rediscovery of theatre – *theatron* – and interaction with the audience. This is not the *peripeteia* of the drama of drama, but the point of departure for new forms of theatre at the moment of negation of drama, radicalised in Brecht's form experiments of the *Lehrstücke* (teaching plays) in the early 1930s. The 'teaching plays' (a term that Brecht translated into 'learning plays') do not teach the audience, for it is the performers who learn – by performing. The audience is only invited when useful for the performers. The gap between Grotowsky's work and Brecht is not as wide as certain orthodox Brechtians (and the corresponding orthodox anti-Brechtians) would have us believe! Early twenty-first century theatre will overcome such divisions. It already started to mix Brecht and Beckett in 2006,

5.
Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'*Détachement*. On Acting
in Jan Lauwers' Work'
in Stalpaert, Christel,
Frederik Le Roy,
Sigrid Bousset (eds.),
*No Beauty For Me Where
Human Life Is Rare.*
*On Jan Lauwers' Work
with Needcompany.*
Academia Press
and International
Theatre & Film Books,
Amsterdam 2007,
pp. 70–80.

6.
See the memoirs
of his co-worker
Elisabeth Hauptmann
in 'Notizen über Brechts
Arbeit' in Hubert
Witt (ed.), *erinnerungen
an brecht*. Reclam,
Leipzig 1964, p. 52.

7.
Robert Weimann.
*Shakespeare and
the Popular Theater
Tradition: A Study
in the Social Impact
of Dramatic Form
and Function*,
The Johns Hopkins
University Press,
Baltimore Berlin 1987.

8.

Hans-Thies Lehmann et al., 'Brecht & Beckett in theatre 1', in Antony Tatlow (ed.), *Where Extremes Meet: Rereading Brecht and Beckett, The Brecht Yearbook*, vol. 27. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 2002, pp. 43–64.

9.

Samuel Beckett. *Waiting for Godot*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1971, p. 162.

10.

Roland Barthes. 'Ich habe das Theater immer sehr geliebt, und dennoch gehe ich fast nie mehr hin' in *Schriften zum Theater*, Jean-Loup Rivière (ed.), Alexander-Verlag, Berlin 2001.

11.

Einar Schleef. *Droge Faust Parsifal*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1998.

12.

Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Theater und Mythos. Die Konstitution des Subjekts im Diskurs der antiken Tragödie*. Metzler, Stuttgart 1991, p. 2.

13.

Hans-Thies Lehmann. 'Der andere Brecht', in Lehmann. *Das Politische Schreiben*, Theater der Zeit, Berlin 2002, pp. 207–281. See especially 'Fabel-Haft', pp. 219–237.

14.

Bertolt Brecht. *Über experimentelles Theater*, Werke, vol. 22.1, *Schriften* 2, pt. 1, Suhrkamp und Aufbau, Berlin and Frankfurt 1993, pp. 540–557.

the year constellations collided: Beckett's 100th birthday and Brecht's 50th deathday – *where extremes meet*, the shortest formula of theatre in the postdramatic condition.⁸ 'There is no lack of void', Vladimir says to Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*.⁹

In the 1920s, Brecht undermined the norms of drama by emancipating his pieces from the interaction of character / action / situation on stage, by treating *theatre as a situation*, as a place of communication and interaction with the visitors. No longer interested in 'characters', Brecht was looking for 'historical types' such as Lenin or the deserter Johann Fatzer. His best plays of the 1920s, for example *Mann ist Mann*, demonstrate the destruction of normal individuality. But at the same time he also uses dramatic characters like Schiller's Joan of Arc to tell a tale about the international slaughterhouse market and the wheat exchange. BB considered the drama usable; it had good 'material value'. It is not Joan Dark's heroic failure that is of interest, but her sacrifice, the process of being sacrificed and victimised (*Opfer* covers both meanings). Accordingly the audience should not mourn with Mother Courage, but learn the lesson that she does not: war is the extension of business, but only of big business, not of small business. It has often been remarked that Brecht failed in this endeavour, because his most famous piece became a modern-day tragedy. When it was performed in East Berlin in 1948 the audience was deeply moved, *erschüttert*, shaken to the core. The 1954 Paris tour of the Berlin Ensemble with *Mother Courage* likewise had a major impact on the French intellectual scene. Guy Debord felt inspired to write his analysis of the *society of spectacle* and Roland Barthes refused to watch any form of theatre that lacked the clarity of Brecht: 'I used to love go to the theatre, but nowadays I hardly ever go there.'¹⁰ The two revolutionary elements are connected: *the showing of the showing* and the activation of the audience. These impulses remain vital to this day. Other elements of Brecht's theory have turned into a new dogma of 'realistic theatre'. According to Szondi, Brecht revolutionised the dramatic form; according to Lehmann he rescued it. Einar Schleef called it an attempt to 'reform' – in contrast to his own work, which tried to reach back to the Ancient chorus, the tragedies before Shakespeare.¹¹ As Lehmann stated in his book about the discourse of Ancient Greek theatre, there is more than *Wahlverwandschaft* (affinity of choice) between pre-dramatic tragedy and postdramatic forms of theatre.¹² The dominance of European drama was a 400-year-long interruption: exit drama, re-enter tragedy....

IV

Postdramatic theatre is also post-epic: in his studies on 'the other Brecht' Lehmann shows how Brecht manages a last-minute rescue of the dramatic form.¹³ Brecht's project of a non-Aristotelian dramaturgy remained Aristotelian in its insistence on the *fable*, the plot, as 'the soul of the play' as Brecht quoted from Aristotle's 'excellent' *Poetics*.¹⁴ Ultimately, the old authorial *logos* took hold in BB's production. But put to practice, texts get the chance to break free, are liberated from the haunting ghost of the author: Heiner Müller called his last piece *Germania 3: Gespenster am toten Mann* (*Ghosts around dead man*). Dead man walking: BB at the BE (Berliner Ensemble). Today, ten years after his death, there are hundreds of 'Heiners' on stage. In Germany, the 'death of the author' (Barthes) still means the experience of the loss of a master writer, not the call to deconstruct the national canon. The dream of a national theatre

THEATRE (10)
LEHMANN (07)
BERLIN (05)
BECKETT (04)
AUDIENCE (03)
DRAMATIC (03)
FORM (03)
FRANKFURT (03)
HANS-THIES LEHMANN (03)
POSTDRAMATIC (03)
TRAGEDY (03)
AUTHOR (02)
CHARACTERS (02)
DEAD MAN (02)
DRAMA (02)
ELEMENTS (02)
ENSEMBLE (02)
MOTHER (02)
SITUATION (02)
STAGE (02)
WAITING (02)
AFFINITY (01)
ANALYSIS (01)
ARISTOTLE (01)
BOOK (01)
CHOICE (01)
COMMUNICATION (01)
CONNECTED (01)
DISCOURSE (01)
DRAMATURGY (01)
EXCHANGE (01)
EXIT (01)
EXPERIENCE (01)
FAILED (01)
FAILURE (01)
FAUST (01)
FORMS OF THEATRE (01)
GERMANY (01)
INSPIRED (01)
INTERESTED (01)
INTERNATIONAL (01)
INTERRUPTION (01)
LOGOS (01)
MATERIAL (01)
PARIS (01)
PLAY (01)
POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
PRACTICE (01)
PRESS (01)
PROCESS (01)
PRODUCTION (01)
REALISTIC THEATRE (01)
SAMUEL BECKETT (01)
SCHILLER (01)
SHAKESPEARE (01)
SOCIETY (01)
TEXTS (01)
THEORY (01)
TIME (01)
TOUR (01)
WORK (01)

(16) THEATRE
(08) DRAMA
(06) TEXTS
(04) NEW YORK
(04) POSTDRAMATIC
(03) DRAMATIC
(03) DRAMATURGY
(03) HAMLET
(03) LANDSCAPE
(03) LEHMANN
(03) POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE
(03) TIME
(02) CHARACTERS
(02) GROUPS
(02) HISTORY
(02) LOGOS
(02) PERFORMANCES
(02) PLAY
(02) SHAKESPEARE
(02) THEORY
(02) TRADITION
(02) WORK
(01) ACTOR
(01) AUTHOR
(01) BELGIUM
(01) BRECHTIAN
(01) CONNECTED
(01) CULTURE
(01) DEVELOPMENT
(01) DIALOGUE
(01) DRAMATIC STRUCTURE
(01) FABRE
(01) FAILED
(01) FLEMISH
(01) FORMALIST
(01) FUNCTION
(01) GENRE
(01) HANS-THIES LEHMANN
(01) JAN FABRE
(01) JAN LAUWERS
(01) LANGUAGE
(01) LAUWERS
(01) LONDON
(01) MATERIAL
(01) MEDIUM
(01) MIME
(01) NEEDCOMPANY
(01) NETHERLANDS
(01) PARIS
(01) PERFORMANCE
(01) PHYSICAL
(01) POLLESCH
(01) PRESS
(01) REPERTOIRE
(01) RESEARCH
(01) SCHILLER
(01) SHIFT
(01) STAGE
(01) STRUCTURE
(01) TASK
(01) TERMINOLOGY

in the tradition of Lessing and Schiller is still strong in a country accustomed to using theatre to compensate for failed revolutions and repressed freedom. So the lack of a tradition of a national theatre implies opportunities: freedom from abusing theatre as *Ersatz* for the revolutionary tribune or the democratic podium as well as freedom to play with the pieces – as the works with German repertoire in Belgium and the Netherlands show. According to Heiner Müller, texts must resist theatre. His writings undermine the logocentric foundation of Brecht's dramaturgy and transgress the boundaries of genre, gender and sense. Texts such as *Bildbeschreibung* (*Description of a Picture*) unfold a wild imagery in one monstrous sentence, which Müller called an 'explosion of a memory in a dead dramatic structure'. More recent texts by Elfriede Jelinek, Rainald Goetz, Werner Schwab and René Pollesch can only be described as 'no longer dramatic texts' (Gerda Poschmann). Postdramatic texts mark the shift from *logos* – not just from the word, but from the idea of causal logic, hierarchical order, *telos* – to a textual landscape.¹⁵ These new pieces are no longer dramas, they are written as scenographies rather than scripts, material not for role-play, but for a theatre beyond individual characters. By refusing to function in the medium of speech and counter-speech, the texts negate the fundamental feature of drama according to Szondi: 'Drama is possible only when dialogue is possible.'¹⁶ So Szondi's neo-Hegelian theory must be used to go beyond Brecht: Heiner Müller explains the development of a post-Brechtian theatre by exploring the technical problem of formulating dialogues in that time. *Die Hamletmaschine* (1977) can be read as the author's farewell to the Brechtian idea of 'learning plays'. When the actor playing Hamlet says that he is no longer playing a role, this means he wants to stop acting, but also that his fate as Hamlet has become irrelevant. Müller was using Shakespeare's irregular dramaturgy as an antidote to Brecht's overly calculated later plays. Hamlet's monologues become the expression of the dawn of an era whose beginning they witnessed in Elizabethan England at the end of the sixteenth century: 'The time is out of joint' (I, v, 196) refers to both historical and dramatic time. The end of speaking characters on stage does not mark the 'end of history' as proclaimed in the 1980s, but the end of the prehistory of the modern global capitalist system. There is no postdramatic theatre without post-colonial theatre, as demonstrated in Müller's *Der Auftrag* (*The Task*). When history no longer develops dialectically, drama is no longer possible – the drama of white Western culture. Modern European drama is the drama of modern Europe, of its colonial adventures on the way to global EMPIRE (Negri & Hardt). The first act of *The Hamletmachine* describes the landscape of the postdramatic theatre 'Im Rücken die Ruinen von Europa' ('Behind me the ruins of Europe.').

BRECHTBLOCK: the drama of drama ends with Brecht, but besides Brecht there is another line of theatre connected to Artaud, Kantor, Grotowsky & Co., which is blocked or blinded by Brecht's authority, contends Lehmann.¹⁷ Groups such as the Living Theatre, other New York avant-garde groups including the Wooster Group, Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, the early performances of Robert Wilson¹⁸ and the Flemish wave (Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers and the Needcompany) cannot be described using the terminology of Brecht's dramaturgy of *Grundgestus* (fundamental gesture). For this we need the radical language of Artaud and his call for a 'theatre of cruelty', physical rather than psychological theatre. In their didactic intentions, the sensual, formalist performances of Carmelo Bene's Shakespeare pieces in Paris, as described by Gilles Deleuze,¹⁹ contrast with Brecht's work. Bene's work was

15.
Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'From logos to landscape', in
Performance Research,
vol. 2 (1), Routledge,
London and New York
1997, pp. 55–60.

16.
*Theory of the Modern
Drama*, p. 10.

17.
Lehmann, Hans-Thies.
'Brechtblock', in
The Drama Review 43,
4 (T164), MIT Press,
New York 1999, pp. 50–52.

18.
For a description
of the more recent
New York theatre scene,
see the introduction
by Karen Jürs-Munby
of *Postdramatic Theatre*,
pp. 1–15.

19.
Gilles Deleuze.
'One Less Manifesto'
in Timothy Murray
(ed.), *Mimesis,
Masochism & Mime.
The Politics
of Theatricality
in Contemporary French
Thought*, Ann Arbor,
The University of
Michigan Press 1977,
pp. 239–257.

20.
Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'Beiträge zu einer
materialistischen
Theorie der Literatur',
Ullstein, Frankfurt 1977.
See also Hans-Thies
Lehmann. 'How political
is the postdramatic
theatre?' in Lehmann.
Das Politische Schreiben.
Theater der Zeit,
Berlin 2002, pp. 11–21.

21.
Waiting for Godot, p. 182.

not representational, but hybrid and fluid. By destruction and repetition of the original text the figures start to change, transmute into perverse polymorphous rites instead of embodying a character or representing a type. While French intellectuals such as Lacan and Deleuze celebrated Bene, the enemies of the stage from the right to the (dogmatic) left condemned its decadence and decay. Postdramatic theatre appears highly formalist, cosmopolitan, absurd and surreal *as-you-like-it* postmodernism; it is the theatre after the debate about realism, which was dominated by categories of content, message, *Aussage*.²⁰ Instead, the term *Anrede*, addressing, has inspired development towards a theatre of performers rather than actors, of theatre as a gathering, instead of a representation of reality. Performances are presentations of heterogeneous elements such as bodies, gestures, sounds, words and lights, thus radicalising Brecht's central idea of the 'separation of elements'. Postdramatic theatre is a theatre of pleasures, the 'pleasures of the text' (Roland Barthes). It should be both decadent and committed to a progressive course, lyrical and epic, distant, but also exquisite, no longer fable-based, but deeply connected to texts, absolutely formalistic and entirely unpretentious at the same time. Instead of illusion, mimesis and action (*dran*), postdramatic theatre follows the logic of a dream. It endeavours to liberate the body from prescribed roles – it sees the stage as a place to dance outside time and space: 'impossible theatre'. There is no Act v in the drama of drama, no final failure, but only the process of failing and trying, again and again, like in theatre; not a scene filled with blood and slain corpses, rather a collective polysexual organism as in the performances of the Living Theatre. 'Pick up the bodies', as Fortinbras said after arriving on the horrific scene in Helsingör at the end of *Hamlet*; 'Make Love Not War' practiced publicly on stage and in the streets by the Living Theatre – Apocalypse or Paradise Now? 'There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go. Quick!' *Vladimir pushes Estragon towards auditorium*.²¹

After V – Coming soon to a theatre near you ...

The caesura of the 'post' prefix described in Lehmann's study came between 1970 and 1980 when theatre productions became more performance-like, and were organised on a project basis as a theatrical process rather than as an execution of a dramaturgical plan. In this respect it implies a radical break with the German model of the *Stadt- und Staatstheater* (municipal or civic/state theatre) in its function of institutionalising dramatic theatre in accordance with the idea of *Werktreue* (loyalty to the canonical work or the intention of the author). In Germany, collective work could only take place outside the traditional apparatus characterised by a fixed hierarchy (from *Intendant* to *Regisseur*). An independent repertory group such as maatschappij discordia could not have developed its work in Germany; it was only possible under the flexible circumstances of production in the Netherlands and Belgium whereby venues and groups are funded (independently from one another) by a four-year *Kunstenplan*. Although discordia has a strong connection with literature and theatre from German-speaking cultures (Heiner Müller, Peter Handke, Botho Strauß, Thomas Bernhard), their working method is completely different from the German or Austrian tradition of ensembles subordinated to a house. The decision to work without directors is more an echo of the working structure of the pre-bourgeois theatre of travelling Comedians in Shakespeare's time than a reaction to the specialised division of labour in the civic/state theatre system. Shakespeare was himself an actor; for the actor to become

(14) THEATRE
(06) PRODUCTION
(05) CULTURE
(04) DIRECTOR
(04) REPRESENTATION
(03) AUTHOR
(03) COLLECTIVE
(03) DRAMATURGY
(03) GROUPS
(02) DRAMATURGE
(02) ENEMIES
(02) FUNCTION
(02) NETHERLANDS
(02) PROCESS
(01) ACTORS
(01) AMSTERDAM
(01) AUDIENCE
(01) BELGIUM
(01) BERLIN
(01) BRUSSELS
(01) COLLABORATION
(01) CONCEPT
(01) CONDITIONS
(01) CONNECTIONS
(01) DIALOGUE
(01) DIFFERENCE
(01) DIRECTOR
(01) DRAMA
(01) ENSEMBLE
(01) EVERYWHERE
(01) FEAR
(01) FORCED ENTERTAINMENT
(01) FORMS OF THEATRE
(01) GENERATION
(01) GERMANY
(01) HISTORY
(01) LONDON
(01) MAKERS
(01) MAKING
(01) NEW FORMS
(01) NEW FORMS OF THEATRE
(01) NEW GENERATION
(01) PERFORMANCE
(01) PERIOD
(01) POLITICAL
(01) PRACTICE
(01) PRODUCERS
(01) REPERTOIRE
(01) SOCIETY
(01) STAGE
(01) STATE THEATRE
(01) STORY
(01) TERMS
(01) THEATERSCHRIFT
(01) THEATRICAL
(01) TOMATOES
(01) WORK
(01) TRANSGRESS
(01) WOOSTER GROUP

emancipated from the author (and thus from the director in his role as author's mediator) another action is required, such as the *Actie Tomaat* in the Netherlands in 1969 when members of the audience threw rotten tomatoes at the stage during a performance of the Hollandse Comedie. Theatre, according to Brecht, is collective process *pur sang*, a model of cooperation & collaboration. Instead of using the author as icon, the script corpus as a closed entity, groups such as discordia experiment with a collective dramaturgy opposed to the function of the dramaturge as the director's intermediary: 'Dramaturgy is about connections. In his most authoritarian guise the director is usually seen as a general. The dramaturge is then the 'liaison officer' with contacts everywhere, including the secret services.'²² This allusion to the military in Jan Joris Lamers' description is echoed in discordia's tactic of operating like a mobile guerrilla squad on theatre's rough terrain, always redeploying forces, forming new alliances with other groups; with Stan and Dito Dito in the temporary group De Vere or with special events such as De Republiek. By practice, the model of collective dramaturgy abolishes the whole system of mediations, and opens the way for a living theatre beyond the culture of representation. In a unique way, independent producers and their self-determined working methods have created a new generation of theatre makers in the Netherlands and Belgium (Johan Simons and the now defunct group zT Hollandia, and Stan, Dood Paard, t Barre Land and De Rovers) that work with flexible repertoire and a mix of genres. The basic difference between the *Stadttheaterbetrieb* and the Belgian-Dutch model of independent production is the extent to which actors (and sometimes directors) can choose one another. As the story of discordia & Co. shows, it is the working conditions, the circumstances of production, that bring forth or obstruct new forms of theatre! The German *Stadttheater* represents the culture of representation, while groups like discordia, The Living Theatre and Forced Entertainment present a counter-example of a culture of production. Politics of production means fighting for your means, according to Brecht, and this is as true as ever in times such as these when a pioneering group like discordia is kicked out of the *Kunstenplan* by the cultural bureaucracy.

In the seventeenth century the municipality of London closed the theatres, ending the most fruitful period of drama production, of flowering private theatrical enterprises, known in modern history. To paraphrase the feelings Goethe expressed when he finally resigned as director in Weimar: in the end, the enemies of the theatre will always win! The concept of 'state theatre' is a contradiction in terms. For although the political system of representative democracy will always need theatre as a fixed location for and of representation, bureaucrats fear the free production process of independent theatre making, because it leads to active anticipation of a cooperative culture that opposes competitive corporate culture. This manifested itself as communism in the case of Brecht, Benjamin and Tretjakov, and love & anarchy in the case of The Living Theatre. Brecht saw in East and West only the agents of anti-production; the enemies of free labour. The struggle of literature had become murderous during his time in exile (Brecht's friend and translator Sergej Tretjakov was killed in the Soviet Union under Stalin, as was the world-famous Wsewolod Meyerhold). After Brecht's return to East Germany, his Berlin Ensemble became an *Ersatz* for a socialist national theatre, not an institute for scientific scandalisation, as he had hoped. Only when we strive for theatre freed from the function of representation will we have a living theatre. The system of civic /state theatres is part of the *society of spectacle*, a factory

22.
'A continuing dialogue', an interview with Jan Joris Lamers conducted by Marianne Van Kerkhoven and Elske van de Hulst on 22 September 1993 in Amsterdam, published in *Theaterschrift*, 5–6, Brussels 1994, p. 284.

23.

Theresia Birkenhauer.
*Schauplatz der Sprache –
das Theater als Ort
der Literatur*, Vorwerk 8,
Berlin 2005.

24.

Alexander Karschnia,
Nicola Nord & Co.
'BRECHTBEATZ', in
Primavesi, Patrick and
Olaf Schmitt (eds.),
*AufBrüche. Theater
zwischen Text
und Situation*. Theater
der Zeit, Berlin 2004,
pp. 208–214.

25.

Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'Shakespeare's grin.
Remarks on world
theatre with Forced
Entertainment',
in Judith Helmer and
Florian Malzacher (eds.),
'Not Even a Game
Anymore' *The Theatre
of Forced Entertainment*,
Alexander-Verlag,
Berlin 2004, pp. 103–120.

26.

Academy of the Arts
archive, Berlin, Heiner
Müller estate, 3899 / 11.
Inspired by this,
andcompany&Co. turned
The Hamletmachine
into a game show:
PLAYTIME! 'end of drama,
begin of game' (as part
of the hib program:
'Hamlet in Berlin,
Hamlet in Budapest',
Bipolar deutsch-
ungarische Kultur-
projekte 2007).

27.

Mike Pearson.
'Bubbling Tom' in
Adrian Heathfield (ed.),
*Small Acts: Performance,
the Millenium and
the Marking of Time*,
Black Dog, London
2002, p. 175.

producing for the cultural industry. This system's greatest illusion is that theatre is always possible. But theatre is the exception, not the rule; a strike, not the fulfilment of a labour task. *Stop!*

VI – Forwards, back to the theatre!

The emancipation of theatre from drama must be seen as an opening, not an ending. Although postdramatic forms of theatre want to liberate theatre from literature and science, they are not hostile towards texts; they become a 'scene of language – theatre as site of literature' (Theresia Birkenhauer). This is demonstrated by the work of Heiner Müller who, as a director, was convinced that the time for text in theatre was yet to come.²³ 'Speak the speech, I pray you,' said Müller in the words of Hamlet, staging *Hamletmachine* at the Deutsche Theater in autumn 1989, 'not as actors, but like robots.' The words had to be spoken as if they were written in a foreign language. Brecht's V-effect becomes a B-effect: alienation in the sense of *Befremdung*, estrangement, rather than *Verfremdung*, changed, unfamiliar appearance – Kafka's world that Brecht tried to ignore. Here the gestures have no clear references, they are alien rather than alienated (Müller). Brecht's pieces could have great 'material value' in the theatre after drama if they could only be torn to pieces to come to life again and be celebrated by ghostly workers, as envisioned by Brecht in his working journals. This potential is exemplified by site-specific durational performances by Josef Szeiler and Angelus Novus, Claudia Bosse and Theaterkombinat in Vienna, and Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Fatzer* project at the IG Farben Haus in Frankfurt.²⁴

Postdramatic theatre is the deconstruction of drama *in practice*.

The Wooster Group dismembers canonical dramatic texts such as Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* in their piece *Brace Up!* And their recent production of *Hamlet* copies the Broadway performance with Richard Burton (1964). See also the six Shakespeare productions by Jan Lauwers' Needcompany or Forced Entertainment's use of traditions such as the Shakespearean world theatre that place the plays and themselves in quotation marks.²⁵ In contrast to the absolute, primary form of classical drama described by Szondi, the hybrid, secondary nature of these plays (their capacity to quote freely from different plays and periods) provides them with the opportunity to simultaneously connect and disconnect texts. It is an unprecedented *theatre of texts*, playing with genres and forms. It is 'play' in the senses of both game and gamble. Accordingly Müller made a note in his transcripts for *The Hamletmachine*: 'End of drama, begin of game.'²⁶

Postdramatic forms of theatre are not less interested in people and stories. On the contrary. In 2000 the performer and archaeologist Mike Pearson left the theatre building to go to the countryside – to return to the landscape of his memory and perform as a storyteller in his Welsh hometown. He developed a performance of storytelling that had no relation to fictional characters. 'For me,' he writes, 'dramas need no longer be restricted to their dialogue. The monologue of a storyteller can exhibit different forms of 'dialogue', a high degree of intertextuality, of dialogue between texts.'²⁷ The dialogue between listener and teller, between place and action, text and landscape, replaces the dialogue between actors on stage. Postdramatic theatre is polylogical, intertextual and transgressive. It is about communication – sometimes even communion – of genres, forms, texts, bodies, voices, lights, sounds....

THEATRE (17)
TEXTS (06)
BERLIN (05)
DIALOGUE (05)
GAME (05)
HAMLET (04)
POSTDRAMATIC (04)
DRAMA (03)
FORCED ENTERTAINMENT (03)
PERFORMANCE (03)
TEXT (03)
ACTORS (02)
FORMS OF THEATRE (02)
HANS-THIES LEHMANN (02)
LANDSCAPE (02)
LANGUAGE (02)
LEHMANN (02)
MIKE PEARSON (02)
PEARSON (02)
POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (02)
SHAKESPEARE (02)
WORDS (02)
ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA (01)
ANGELUS NOVUS (01)
ARCHIVE (01)
ART (01)
ARTS (01)
CHARACTERS (01)
CLASSICAL (01)
COMMUNICATION (01)
CONNECT (01)
DECONSTRUCTION (01)
DIRECTOR (01)
DRAMATIC (01)
EXCEPTION (01)
FICTIONAL (01)
FRANKFURT (01)
HYBRID (01)
ILLUSION (01)
INSPIRED (01)
INTERESTED (01)
JAN LAUWERS (01)
KAFKA (01)
KARSCHNIA (01)
LAUWERS (01)
LONDON (01)
MATERIAL (01)
NEEDCOMPANY (01)
PERFORMANCES (01)
PERFORMER (01)
PLAY (01)
PRACTICE (01)
PRODUCING (01)
PRODUCTION (01)
PRODUCTIONS (01)
REFERENCES (01)
SIMULTANEOUSLY (01)
SITE (01)
SITE-SPECIFIC (01)
SITUATION (01)
SMALL ACTS (01)

(03) THEATRE
 (05) POLLESCH
 (04) FORCED ENTERTAINMENT
 (04) TAT
 (03) BERLIN
 (03) FRANKFURT
 (02) FORMALIST
 (02) GIessen
 (02) INTERNATIONAL
 (02) JAN LAUWERS
 (02) LAUWERS
 (02) LEHMANN
 (02) MICKERY
 (02) OUTSIDE
 (02) PERFORMANCE
 (02) POLITICAL
 (02) TIME
 (02) WORDS
 (01) ABSURD
 (01) ACT
 (01) ACTOR
 (01) ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA
 (01) AMSTERDAM
 (01) ARTICULATION
 (01) BRUSSELS
 (01) CITY
 (01) CLASSICAL
 (01) CO-PRODUCERS
 (01) COLLABORATION
 (01) CONSEQUENCE
 (01) CONTEXT
 (01) DEBATE
 (01) DIALOGUE
 (01) DRAMATIC
 (01) EXIST
 (01) EXIT
 (01) FABRE
 (01) FAILURE
 (01) FILM
 (01) FORMS OF THEATRE
 (01) FRAGMENTS
 (01) FUNCTION
 (01) GAME
 (01) GOB SQUAD
 (01) GROUPS
 (01) HANS-THIES LEHMANN
 (01) INSPIRED
 (01) JAN FABRE
 (01) JESURUN
 (01) JOHN JESURUN
 (01) KAITHEATER
 (01) KARSCHNIA
 (01) MAKING
 (01) MECHANISMS
 (01) MEDIA
 (01) NETWORK
 (01) NOW
 (01) PARIS
 (01) PERFORMANCE ART
 (01) PERFORMANCES
 (01) PERFORMERS

Rollbacks happen all the time. 'Progress doesn't mean *having* progressed,' said Brecht, 'but *progressing*'. In Avignon 2004 Jan Lauwers felt that the postdramatic avant-garde occupied the big stages, while the fringe had turned into a site for traditional theatre. The division between indie underground and established theatre has never aided the debate: works by Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, The Wooster Group et al. could only be realised in an international network formed by co-producers like Mickery (Amsterdam), Kaaithheater (Brussels), Hebbel (Berlin) and TAT (Theater am Turm, Frankfurt) which had financial resources comparable to a large *Stadttheater*. At the same time, the TAT provided newcomers like Stefan Pucher & René Pollesch with a separate stage at the OFF-TAT. Post-postdramatic forms do exist, see for example how the formalism of the 1980s was challenged in the 1990s by pop-culture-conscious and discourse-based forms of theatre that developed outside acting and directing schools, in the context of the universities such as the Institute of Applied Theatre-Science in Giessen that Lehmann built up with Andrzej Wirth in the 1980s and later at the Institute of Theatre, Film and Media Science at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. Stefan Pucher's early pop pieces and René Pollesch's serials (*Heidi Hoh*, *World Wide Slums* and *City as Booty* to name but a few),²⁸ which are inspired by Andy Warhol and John Jesurun rather than by Frisch and Dürrenmatt, have a hidden formalist agenda. Neither performance art nor well-made plays, these productions function outside of the dichotomies of epic vs. dramatic, formalist vs. realist, absurd vs. political. It is a new game now. And rather than presenting the world's problems as solvable, as the older Brecht demanded, these works follow along the lines of the young Brecht's insight that it is the act of representation itself that has become problematic – and it shows. As a member of Forced Entertainment said: 'Somewhere after Marx, Brecht, and Structuralism, performance has often strapped its conception and articulation of politics to the exposure and examination of exactly these traces – labour, attempt, failure, versions – all of which are presented side by side or in dialogue with the 'image' conjured in a work. Certainly, many Forced Entertainment performances are built on the interplay between an image or a text on the one hand and the exposure of the (rhetorical, theatrical, linguistic) mechanisms necessary for producing it, on the other. Labour and process here remain, quite deliberately, in view – undeleted.'²⁹ Pollesch developed his unique de-subjugated speech style with those fellow students who wanted to make theatre without putting themselves through the classical actor's training. Others formed groups such as Gob Squad, She She Pop, Showcase Beat le Mot from Giessen and frankfurter küche (FK), andcompany&Co. and red park from Frankfurt. They see theatre as an opportunity to do something together.³⁰ As Tim Etchells said about the beginnings of Forced Entertainment in Exeter in 1984: 'We were a group of friends who somehow convinced ourselves that we would be able to make some things together. (...) It was an idea or an inclination that we could perhaps make something together.'³¹ In a culture of specialised labour, this naive wish is a radical political statement. It is about the cooperation & collaboration of performers, DJs, musicians, technicians – and 'certain fragments' of sounds, lights, words....

THEATERTOD (death of theatre): Ritsaert ten Cate closed down the Mickery Theatre on 31 July 1991 to have an honourable conclusion to its 25 years as one of the most important international production units, but when the TAT finally died on 31 May 2004 it was the consequence of a long and painful illness – LAST EXIT TAT.³² My group andcompany&Co. were in residency for the TAT's

28.
 Alexander Karschnia.
 'Stadttheater als
 Beute: René Pollesch
 Resistenz-pop.
 Spoken Words', in
 Hajo Kurzenberger and
 Annemarie Matzke
 (eds.), *TheorieTheater-
 Praxis*, Theater der Zeit,
 Berlin 2004, pp. 183–191.
 See also the interview
 with René Pollesch
 by Florian Malzacher,
 'Wir sind ja oft so
 glücklich, wenn wir
 überhaupt Reaktionen
 bekommen' in Leonore
 Blievernich (ed.),
*ZELTSAGA René Polleschs
 Theater 2003 / 2004*,
 Synwolt, Berlin 2004,
 pp. 180–187.

29.
 Interview with members
 of Forced Entertainment
 in *Variant*, vol. 5, 1998.
[www.variant.random
 state.org/5texts/
 Michelle_McGuire.html](http://www.variant.randomstate.org/5texts/Michelle_McGuire.html)

30.
 Nicola Nord.
 'Making theatre is
 a promise to do some-
 thing together'.
[www.dasarts.nl/
 dodge / dasarts_digital
 dodge25.pdf](http://www.dasarts.nl/dodge/dasarts_digitaldodge25.pdf), p. 16–17.

31.
[http:// new-](http://new-)

33.

Patrick Primavesi.
 'Orte und Strategien
 postdramatischer
 Theaterformen'
 in Heinz Ludwig Arnold
 (ed.), *TEXT + KRITIK:
 Theater fürs 21. Jahr-
 hundert*, Sonderband,
 München 2004, p. 825.

34.

www.livingtheatre.org
 See also *RESIST!*
 Dirk Szuszi (dir.),
 Best European
 Documentary Film at
 the 2003 Europa Cinema
 Festival.
www.karinkaper.com

35.

Mike Pearson.
 'Where is the theatre?,'
 in Patrick Primavesi
 and Olaf A. Schmitt
 (eds.), *AufBrüche.
 Theater zwischen Text
 und Situation*, Theater
 der Zeit, Berlin 2004.

36.

Alexander Karschnia.
 'Theat:Re:Search,'
 in Maaïke Bleeker et al.
 (eds.), *Theater Topics 2:
 De Theatremaker als
 onderzoeker*. Amsterdam
 University Press,
 Amsterdam 2006,
 pp. 145–146.

37.

Interview with
 Forced Entertainment
 in *Variant*.

38.

Judith Butler. *Gender
 Trouble*, Routledge,
 London and
 New York 1990.

final season under the title *Why only now?* And we were thus able to witness the sinking ship at the moment it went down. 'Das TAT ist tot – lang lebe das TAT!' (The TAT is dead – long live the TAT!) As an act of protest we put a black flag with white quotation marks on the roof, transforming the TAT into the ZITAT, quote theatre unquote. Because what is put in quotes is waiting, waiting for revenge....

If politicians continue to close theatres, the time will come again for us to return from the off-spaces to the theatres, to squat them like Julian Beck & Judith Malina in Paris in May 1968, to defend them against neo-liberal deregulation. Today, high culture is no longer a protected resort, so it is time to re-enter the houses like the ghost in the first act of *Hamlet*. The urge to move forward did not die with the old idea of an avant-garde, but it is a movement back and forth, out of and back to the houses, just like the Living Theatre did.³³ After the authorities had closed all the Living Theatre's venues the group became a nomadic touring ensemble until its return to the theatre in the 1980s. And on 27 April 2007 they finally opened a new home in New York City, and in so doing they fulfil their mission to 'move from the theatres to the street' and from the street to the theatre.³⁴

Another interesting example is *Carrying Lyn* (2001) by Mike Brookes & Mike Pearson, in which a group of men carried the disabled, transsexual performer Lyn Levett across the centre of the city – twice – rendering the city uncanny. A question arises: where is the theatre? 'Is it the practice of performance or of documentation or the presentation of the documentation of the performance?'³⁵ The distinction between 'pre-' and 'post-' phenomena becomes blurred in this work, just as performance itself has become a set of deterritorialised practices. This also highlights the fact that the reason theatre is changing so rapidly is not only the onset of the information society at the end of the 1970s, but also the shift from a Fordist to a Postfordist regime of production.³⁶ The luxury of working solely as an artist, actor or director, is being undermined by changes in the economy. The necessity for most practitioners to make a living with side jobs is a flawed solution to the old problem that artists work in splendid isolation from the rest of society. 'The theatre of the future will only begin when this separation has come to an end,' said Brecht, 'and artists do their work among many other things.' Today, most practitioners of postdramatic forms of theatre experience this situation as dystopic, as the bare necessities for survival in the late capitalist period. But it is also an anticipation of another culture of work, a self-determined culture of cooperation & collaboration, described by Robin Arthur of Forced Entertainment as a 'pragmatic socialism' that derives from the work – and the working process – itself: 'The work always dictates its own politics rather than politics dictating the work.'³⁷ Here, the 'post' prefix formulates a connection similar to that described by the post-feminism of Judith Butler, which does not seek to abolish other forms of feminist activities, but rather to correct a course by 'pointing at the fundamentalist foundation of the practical discourse, shifting and subverting its structuring dichotomies instead of destroying them.'³⁸ Accordingly, it is not about site-specific performance vs. rehearsed acting, state/civic theatre vs. 'free scene', nor the destruction of the boundary between performer and visitor, stage and auditorium, but it is about the undermining of these distinctions: theatre after the end of drama, history, humanism, the Western canon, the Gutenberg-galaxy and colonial occidental phallogocentric civilisation – progression as transgression, making the petrified conditions dance: TRANS-THEATRE EXPRESS.

THEATRE AFTER THEATRE

Mirror, Mirror, Fourth Wall!

by Hans-Thies Lehmann

1

1.

Hans-Thies Lehmann.
Postdramatic Theatre,
translated and
with an introduction
by Karen Jürs-Munb,
Routledge, New York
2006, pp. 181–182.

2.

Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'Just a word on a page
and there is the drama.
Anmerkungen zum
Text im postdramati-
schen Theater', in Heinz
Ludwig Arnold, (ed.),
TEXT + KRITIK, special
issue, *Theater fürs*
21. Jahrhundert, Metzler,
Munich 2004, pp. 26–53.

Problems of theatre aesthetics are problems of culture in general. At least, they deserve to be discussed in this light. In what ways are the individual and the socio-political dimensions of life envisaged? By analysing theatre, we can find answers to this question. The epilogue of *Postdramatic Theatre* states, 'In present society, almost any form has come to seem more suitable for articulating reality than the action of a causal logic, with its inherent attribution of events to the decisions of individuals. Drama and society cannot come together. If dramatic theatre is losing ground so 'dramatically', however, this may indicate that the form of experience that corresponds to this art form is retreating in reality itself. Within the scope of this study we cannot tackle, never mind solve, the question as to the reasons for the retreat of dramatic imagination, or the fact that it is no longer taken for granted.'¹ But the observation is clear: even those situations created by the most acute of conflicts will no longer appear as drama. Apart, that is, from a pleasure we take in certain melodramatic illusions that may lead us to see a dramatic form – for example a fight between powerful rulers. But deep down we know better, we understand that the real decisions in life are made in what Hegel called the 'prose of civic life'. They are made in structures, power clusters, economic dynamics and political movements beyond the grasp of individual protagonists, even if they are presidents. This point needs to be recalled at a time when *unheimlich* ('unsettling', or 'uncanny', in Heidegger's and Freud's terms) conflicts between religious rage and principles of enlightenment can easily seduce us into spontaneously re-dramatising social and political conflicts. This might lead us to define too quickly the identity of protagonists, especially of enemies – against and in spite of our better insight.

Drama has increasingly become the core of more or less banal mass entertainment and illusionary perception, while tending to disappear from more complex forms of innovative theatre. There is doubtless a certain desire for drama, but outdated dramaturgical models can no longer guarantee the fulfilment of that desire. It is drama that tends to disappear, not text; postdramatic theatre is by no means theatre without text.² The question remains whether the dwindling of the dramatic impulse might – inadvertently and only half-consciously – mirror a society deluding itself into believing it is simply moving beyond dramatic, even tragic, conflict. On one level perhaps, the love for the postdramatic mood might be reflecting a society that is creating unceasingly false and misleading dramatisations of social and political realities. On a deeper level, however, it reflects the conscious need for forms that adequately articulate the reality of social and political life.

Already in everyday life we experience our world as episodic rather than dramatic, more as discontinuous jobs than as continuous work; in terms of an 'optional' society, in which body, face and feeling are increasingly subject to scientific and medical manipulation, and decreasingly marks of dramatic or tragic 'fate'. It seems unavoidable that a given society's theatre is, to a degree, shaped in the image of the world it is called upon to mirror. Even artistic practice taking critical distance from the world is necessarily part of this world. A dialectical approach is therefore necessary in order to understand the

THEATRE (11)
DRAMATIC (07)
SOCIETY (06)
FORM (04)
MIRROR (04)
POLITICAL (04)
POSTDRAMATIC (04)
TEXT (04)
HANS-THIES LEHMANN (03)
LEHMANN (03)
POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (03)
QUESTION (03)
REALITY (03)
ART (02)
DESIRE (02)
DRAMA (02)
EXPERIENCE (02)
PROBLEMS (02)
TERMS (02)
AESTHETICS (01)
APPROACH (01)
ARTICULATE (01)
ARTISTIC (01)
ARTISTIC PRACTICE (01)
BANAL (01)
BODY (01)
CONFLICT (01)
CREATING (01)
CRITICAL (01)
CULTURE (01)
DISTANCE (01)
DRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
DYNAMICS (01)
ENEMIES (01)
HEGEL (01)
INDIVIDUALS (01)
ISSUE (01)
LOGIC (01)
MANIPULATION (01)
MASS (01)
MELODRAMATIC (01)
NEW YORK (01)
OBSERVATION (01)
PRACTICE (01)
PRESENT (01)
PRINCIPLES (01)
REAL (01)
REFLECTING (01)
RETREAT (01)
STRUCTURES (01)
SUBJECT (01)
TIME (01)
WORK (01)

complex reality of a theatre which seemingly often gets along perfectly well without drama: theatre between the arts, theatre close to performance, theatre in the context of social and political networking, theatre beyond mere aesthetic practice.

2

On the one hand, theatre has a critical value, the value of taking a critical stance to life surrounding it: to manners, behaviour, practice and politics. It is a process of 'thinking the world' in terms of theatre, even if this notion is hereby considerably magnified. On the other hand theatre has value as a mirror: it is a place and a practice which is, and holds up, a mirror to nature. It is thus, to paraphrase Shakespeare, a mirror image of the world. Both aspects – thinking and mirroring – converge in the notion of theatre as *reflection*.

Many discussions about theatre cannot advance because those involved stick to one or other preconceived idea and ideal of reflection. There are those who, in essence, demand to recognise the world (as they see it) on the stage (mirrored, perhaps a little distorted and re-arranged but ultimately easily recognisable) to identify something and themselves in, and by means of, the representation. We have an undeniable desire for a mirror, and it plays a major part in the pleasure we experience in theatre (Aristotle defined it precisely through this pleasure in the act of recognition). We want to see and recognise the way, the idea, the ideology in which we exist. We feel ourselves elevated and acknowledged; acknowledged in the act of identifying the reality in the mimetic mirror.

Of course, reflection, in both senses of the word, has always been part of great theatre. Ancient tragedy mirrored the impressive culture of the polis of Athens, the pride of an extremely modern and daring experimental society. It mirrored the ritual, the *Agon*,³ the importance of political gathering and dispute, and it mirrored belief in the religious universe of myth. But at the same time it reflected *on* these realities, put them to the test, questioned and shattered them. More often than not it subverted and shattered the civic pride of the audience, and cast doubt on faith in the gods. The theatre was on one level (and on one level only) a demonstration of the glory and greatness of Athens' supposed democracy. Behind this affirmation however lurked the shadow of a deep and uncanny questioning of its basic beliefs, practices, and ways of thinking. And it is this problematising that kept Ancient tragic theatre alive.⁴ In the course of events, however, the two readings of 'reflection' have become increasingly separate and antagonistic.

Those who demand that theatre contribute to thought (awareness, analysis, exploration and experimentation) have always contradicted the concept of the pleasurable mirror', because they consider this mirror inadequate or, worse, treacherous. In their opinion, and to use Louis Althusser's metaphor, it is a 'broken mirror'.⁵ There is no theatre, then, without this mirror effect, but also obviously no good theatre without a crack in the mirror. A mirror is never a simple thing. Jacques Lacan had good reason to coin the *bon mot*, 'The mirror had better reflect a moment before it throws back our image.' The problem is that we have a tendency to forget, a tendency not to acknowledge, that the mirror is always carefully placed and constructed. And thus it obediently reproduces our ruling prejudices and questionable habits of thought. Drama's very form functions as such a construction: it mirrors real life and its

3.

From the Ancient Greek, meaning both a gladiatorial contest for a prize and a verbal contest between two characters on stage.

4.

Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Theater und Mythos. Die Konstitution des Subjekts im Diskurs der antiken Tragödie*, Metzler, Stuttgart 1991.

5.

Louis Althusser. 'The "Piccolo Teatro": Bertalozzi and Brecht – notes on a materialist theater', in Timothy Murray (ed.), *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 199–215.

conflicts by shaping them into very specific patterns. We seem only to identify a world reproduced mimetically, but in truth we are confronted with an artful double, a particular model of it: we dramatisé, and thus we poeticise realities written in the most basic prose of interests, power and money. This is not the place to elaborate on the manifold features of dramatic theatre that use and reinforce specific ways of depicting reality. We need only to better understand the reason that many contemporary theatre artists avoid the worn-out mechanisms of reproducing a mimetic mirror, and understand their conviction that the dramatic approach usually fails to capture what is really going on in the world. But because experimentation and research focusing on finding new ways to articulate reality often take centre stage in new theatre work, it can often seem utterly formalistic. At the other extreme – and because the concentration on the search for new forms always implies the danger of losing the very substance, the concreteness, of social reality – we find that a number of artists have the contrasting tendency only to display, expose and *document*, to present and exhibit the stuff of which not only our dreams, but also our lives are made, without shaping it as a dramatic narrative. Such an approach can result in efforts that appear ‘artless’. In art, no experimentation is possible without these risks and we should welcome even the failures – whether formalistic or naturalistic – as long as we sense an honest attempt to find a way beyond established forms that lack the power of conviction. No general answer, no general judgement is possible. Everything depends on the quality, the scope, the depth and the honesty (an aesthetic criterion) of the individual practice. But the space in which these explorations take place is exactly what must be (and as we all know is not sufficiently) defended by society.

But nobody can deny with conviction that a large part of established conventional theatre has become more or less a branch of an entertainment industry characterised by insignificant serial ‘events’, largely devoid of intellectual appeal, at which the pleasure of the mirror-reflection prevails and it is rare to experience the pleasure of reflection as a shattering of thinking modes or views of social reality. This theatre often does no more than try to adapt, clumsily, to a powerful media world that is far more capable of satisfying the needs for illusion, entertainment and ‘drama’. 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 – intertwined, of course, with the pleasure of recognition offered by the mirror image.

3

The preceding general observations are intended to prepare the way for some theoretical remarks and questions with which the concept of postdramatic theatre will now be put in perspective. The term ‘postdramatic’ describes a concept that attempts to articulate or construct a particular logic or a particular problematic. The term obviously covers a whole range of aesthetic approaches in theatre practice and a number of analytical descriptions, notions and categories. Nevertheless it is not intended to be a mere umbrella term, but rather it should make evident a state of coherence, a *unity*, and indicate a common denominator. Not a minimum common aesthetic denominator, however, not a prescript. The unity of the common denominator is instead a common problem. This problem is the limited nature of dramatic representation, the limits of a theatre centred on the notion of *mimesis praxeon*, imitation

THEATRE (09)
 DRAMATIC (04)
 REALITY (04)
 SPECIFIC (03)
 TERM (03)
 APPROACH (02)
 ARTICULATE (02)
 ARTISTS (02)
 CONCEPT (02)
 MIRROR (02)
 POSTDRAMATIC (02)
 PRACTICE (02)
 REFLECTION (02)
 UNITY (02)
 ART (01)
 COHERENCE (01)
 CULTURE (01)
 DANGER (01)
 DOCUMENT (01)
 DRAMA (01)
 DRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
 EXPERIENCE (01)
 HONESTY (01)
 ILLUSION (01)
 LIMITED (01)
 LIMITS (01)
 LIVE ART (01)
 LOGIC (01)
 MECHANISMS (01)
 MEDIA (01)
 MONEY (01)
 NARRATIVE (01)
 NEW FORMS (01)
 NOTION (01)
 NOW (01)
 PERSPECTIVE (01)
 POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
 PROBLEMATIC (01)
 QUESTIONS (01)
 REALISE (01)
 RECOGNITION (01)
 REPRESENTATION (01)
 REPRODUCING (01)
 RESEARCH (01)
 SOCIETY (01)
 SPACE (01)
 STAGE (01)
 TENDENCY (01)
 THEATRE ARTISTS (01)
 THEORETICAL (01)
 THINKING (01)
 UMBRELLA (01)
 WELCOME (01)
 WORK (01)

(20) THEATRE
(11) DRAMATIC
(07) POSTDRAMATIC
(05) DRAMATIC THEATRE
(05) SITUATION
(04) REALITY
(04) THEATRICAL
(04) TIME
(03) POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE
(03) STRUCTURE
(02) CONCRETE
(02) DRAMA
(02) ELEMENTS
(02) EXPERIENCE
(02) GAME
(02) HISTORY
(02) ILLUSION
(02) TENSION
(02) TERM
(01) ABSTRACT
(01) ACTIONS
(01) AUDIENCE
(01) AUDIENCES
(01) CHANGE
(01) COHERENCE
(01) CONCEPT
(01) CONTEXT
(01) DEFINITION
(01) DIRECTORS
(01) DRAMATIC STRUCTURE
(01) FICTION
(01) FORMS OF THEATRE
(01) HEGEL
(01) INTERESTED
(01) ISSUES
(01) LIVE ART
(01) LOGIC
(01) MEDIA
(01) NEW FORMS
(01) NOTION
(01) NOW
(01) PARADIGM
(01) PARIS
(01) PERIOD
(01) PERSPECTIVE
(01) PHOTOGRAPHY
(01) POSSIBILITIES
(01) PRACTICE
(01) PRESENCE
(01) PROCESS
(01) PRODUCING
(01) QUESTION
(01) REPRESENTATION
(01) RESPONSE
(01) RETREAT
(01) SHIFT
(01) SPACE
(01) SPECIFIC
(01) SPECTATORS
(01) STAGE
(01) TERMS

of actions, which is usually (but not always) associated with the predominance of textual structure and coherence. (In this context, ‘text’ can also mean the texture of, for example, a danced narration, and is thus not intended to denote an exclusively linguistic reality.) In order to understand the ways in which the problem of the inner limitations of dramatic representation is dealt with in new forms of postdramatic theatre, it is useful to activate and focus upon the age-old tension between the distinct elements of ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’ in the notion of dramatic theatre. We need to understand, in all its implications, that this tension or duality can even be read as a *contradictio in adjecto*; the terms of the game of theatre change profoundly once the autonomy of the theatrical process (characterised by openness and a responsiveness to situation and *event*, in the Heideggerian sense of *Ereignis*) is freed from dramatic structure (characterised by closure, logic and order). Thus, postdramatic theatre is not a collection of some directors’ whims and oddities; it constitutes a manifold response to a single general problem. Therefore, the term ‘postdramatic’ must absolutely not be interpreted as what Hegel calls an ‘abstract negation’ of drama – just saying ‘no’ to drama – but rather as a concrete negation (*konkrete* or *bestimmte Negation*), producing a new wealth of possibilities, each in itself concrete and unique.

In addition to this systematic or categorical aspect to the term ‘postdramatic’, there is a historical aspect that should be pointed out. Biet and Triau propose using the category ‘postdramatic’ but put it in a historical perspective.⁶ They correctly affirm the presence of the non-dramatic throughout the history of theatre. Obviously, alongside dramatic theatre, other kinds of spectacle, other forms of theatre, were born and flourished. Many theatrical forms effectively negated the dividing line between the time of the dramatic fiction and the time of the theatrical situation. In the history of dramatic theatre, audiences have perhaps been less interested than practitioners in the basic features of the theory of the dramatic (the separation of stage and audience, the effects of the fourth wall, the idea of illusion, the absolute drama, the closure of the fictive universe). The concept of enjoying a principally mimetic illusion was often superseded by the experience, of practitioners and spectators alike, that the central reality of theatre is the complex game of seeing and being seen, a time passed in some kind of communal atmosphere.

With notions of postdramatic theatre such as the predominance of the *theatron* axis (emphasis on the shaping of a situation) and *Ereignis* (an *event*, rather than a work), the reality of passing a specific and active period together in a particular space enters into the very definition of the theatrical practice. The social and the communicative, the communal, have always been part of theatre, but, and this is crucial, they have generally been neglected, being viewed as secondary aesthetic and theoretical issues. On the other hand, dramatic imagination was demonstrably in tune with a number of social realities. Now the situation has changed. In a world of media-shaped perception, the activity, the face-to-face experience, the situation, the event of theatre, becomes the dominant reality. With this dual shift (the retreat of the dramatic mode of perception and the emphasis on ‘live art’ in theatre – contrasting it to the media) traditional theatre comes into question and the components and features of dramatic theatre tradition are drastically reordered.

A useful visual metaphor for the postdramatic condition of theatre might be a photograph taken some time after the explosion of a huge celestial object, an object that was once dramatic theatre. This object, a model or paradigm of theatre, was a rich totality of elements forming a unified structure.

6.
Christian Biet and
Christophe Triau.
Qu'est-ce que le theatre?,
Éditions Gallimard,
Paris 2006.

Now, in the photograph, we detect the exploded individual elements and particles at various distances from the source of the explosion, isolated – here the space, there the time, here the gesture, there the *fabula*, here the role, there the voice and so on. Each feature is of interest of itself, but already they are entering into new *agencements* (Deleuze), connections and relations. The new is interpretable as a rearrangement of the old. However, similar and even identical features assume completely different significances in different contexts. Therefore, the affirmation that postdramatic theatre existed ‘from the beginning’, as it were, and the affirmation that it defines a specific moment of theatre after drama, are not mutually exclusive: they coexist.

4

Let us underpin the obvious but often neglected fact that theatre is not only art. Great inventors and thinkers of modern theatre, such as Witkiewicz and Edward Gordon Craig, were convinced that theatre is and must remain an ‘impure’ form of art, that it can never attain the aesthetic purity and perfection of arts such as painting or sculpture. These thinkers understood that something about theatre prevents it being comprehended in purely aesthetic terms. Ultimately the responsibility for this impurity lies in the fact that it is, in modern terminology, ‘live art’; that it is a mixture of heterogeneous practices, which gives rise to its truly protean quality. Theatre initially grew out of ritual practice. This was followed by centuries in the service of religion. It was then an instrument of moral didactics, and later of political instruction, and so forth. And it remained all the while a practical, material, non-aesthetic and authentic activity of the people.

Therefore, it is not acceptable to acknowledge both the ephemeral and processual qualities of theatre and then subject it to exclusively aesthetic criteria of categorisation and judgement. Postdramatic theatre is a response to the institution of predominantly dramatic theatre – it revives the non-aesthetic dimension of theatre, reaffirms, even exaggerates it. It demands concrete interaction and exchange, upon the specific quality of situational communication and audience participation: it is the prevailing of the *theatron* axis (between performers and spectators) over the scenic axis (dramatic tension between dramatic agents). We must bear in mind more distinctly that theatre and performance practice in general occupy a much larger field than can be revealed by an exclusive focus on theatrical institutions, let alone on text production. The crossing of borders between theatre and other arts (especially nomadic ways of connecting and producing, new communities formed for a specific time span and all manner of other postdramatic theatrical projects) changes what the word ‘theatre’ describes. It turns what was once theatre’s absolute centre into only a passing phase, a part of a much wider process now called ‘theatre’. These practices can bring into play all the possibilities of the ‘aesthetics of the performative’ (Erika Fischer-Lichte). But with the emphasis placed on the live aspect of theatre, on the opportunity to create new situations and spaces for potential experience, we arrive at a concept of theatre and theatrical practice which transcends the categories of art (and thus of the aesthetic sphere) altogether, by considering the social, personal, political activities associated with it as intrinsic to theatre proper, and not just as conditions of its coming into existence as an aesthetic work. Such theatre might be called ‘theatre after theatre’, or post-theatrical theatre. I have the impression that this is becoming an interesting category

(12) THEATRE
(03) AUDIENCE
(02) OBJECTS
(02) PERFORMANCE
(02) POLITICAL
(02) POSTDRAMATIC
(02) PRACTICE
(02) PROCESS
(02) REALITY
(02) RESEARCH
(02) SITUATION
(02) STOCK MARKET
(02) SUBJECT
(02) THEATRICAL
(01) ARTIST
(01) ARTISTIC
(01) ARTISTS
(01) BERLIN
(01) CITY
(01) CO-PRODUCERS
(01) CONCEPT
(01) CONCRETE
(01) CONVERSATION
(01) DISTANCE
(01) EXPERIENCE
(01) FIELD
(01) FILM
(01) FRAMEWORK
(01) HANNOVER
(01) HOME
(01) HOUSES
(01) INSTITUTIONS
(01) ISSUES
(01) MEDIA
(01) MEDIUM
(01) MIKE PEARSON
(01) MONEY
(01) NETWORKS
(01) NEXT
(01) OBSERVATION
(01) ONLINE
(01) PEARSON
(01) PERFORMANCES
(01) PERFORMER
(01) PERFORMERS
(01) PHYSICAL
(01) PLAY
(01) POSITION
(01) POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE
(01) PRODUCING
(01) PROJECTS
(01) PURE ART
(01) SIMULTANEOUSLY
(01) SITE-SPECIFIC
(01) SPECTATORS
(01) SPONTANEOUS
(01) STORY
(01) STUDENTS
(01) TERM
(01) TOUR
(01) VIDEO

of postdramatic theatre that reaches beyond the older concept of site-specific theatre or theatre-on-location. It can take on a great variety of forms. For example, in *Deutschland 2* (Rimini Protokoll, 2002) amateurs are asked to reproduce the speeches from the German Parliament in its former home in the Bundestag in Bonn, or in a backyard area artists invite the people in the surrounding houses to hand over to them objects they intend to dispose of anyway, and to say something about what these objects once meant to them – thus, the visitors become co-producers of the show. In the project *x-Wohnungen* (*x-Apartments*) one never knows what is through the next door: visitors are invited to stroll into private apartments that have been artistically transformed.⁷ Or a group of theatre visitors is led through certain parts of a city, witnessing performances placed in everyday surroundings (*Metropolitan Motions* by Mike Pearson with students of the Institute of Theatre, Film and Media Science, 2002). The most important aspect of these projects, it seems to me, is the organised suspension of aesthetic distance. The authentic and the fake, show and reality, are difficult to distinguish here, but the ‘aesthetic’ mode of especially concentrated observation connects with the observer being placed in a situation where he is simultaneously being observed. Here, the physical and mental experience of being involved can become the medium for articulating political and social issues, which in turn deals with involvement in political and social reality. The process of concrete research, the fascination with the micro-structures of everyday life, of regional, urban and private histories, merges effectively into a practice of theatre in which the *artistic* aspect (in the narrow sense of the word) is only part of a process that is in new ways both less and more than pure art.

Voyeurism is another aspect of theatre that is often an explicit subject in performance. An example is *Sonde Hannover* (Rimini Protokoll, 2003), in which the audience became observers of a marketplace from high up on the tenth floor of a warehouse: using field glasses and listening to conversations initiated by the performers in the streets below they followed a story about a supermarket detective. Although at one point it became embarrassing when people looked up from the street and guessed they were being observed, here the visitors were less exposed to others than to themselves: their position made them feel uneasy and somewhat guilty.

In the cases described above we are dealing with theatre as project and research. It is a theatre after theatre, post-theatrical theatre. But some theatrical institutions are prepared to associate with these practices so new hybrids can emerge from collaborations and networks, generating new styles of producing and of spectating and witnessing.

Even where postdramatic practice does not explicitly break down the traditional framework of theatre, it nonetheless transforms the theatrical situation itself in a number of ways. In one piece the audience is taken on a tour through the theatre building. Audience members are invited to call a friend on their mobile phone and then the performer (Emil Hrvatin) enters into spontaneous conversation with that friend. A show can also have the stock market as its subject: *Dead Cat Bounce*, by a group working with video artist Chris Kondek, was a very special kind of interactive didactic play – even in the sense Brecht gave to the term. During the performance, the entrance fee paid by the visitors was invested – in financially insignificant sums, of course – in online stock market speculation. Spectators thus became participants as they followed the ups and downs of the market, feared for their tiny sum of money, and learned

7.
Arved Schultze and Steffi Wurster (eds.), *x-Wohnungen. Duisburg. Theater in privaten Räumen*, Alexander-Verlag, Berlin 2003.

a lot about the reality of the stock market and the *freies Spiel*, or free play, of its forces. And they became aware that they were made happy by a small gain of their shareholder value, even when it was explained that the good ‘performance’ of their investment was due, for example, to a policy of sacking workers. In a discussion about the project it was argued that such a procedure would make the spectators identify with the cynical capitalist logic of the market more than innocently playing a game of capitalist *Monopoly* at home; it is precisely the public nature of personal involvement in the theatrical situation that provides the opportunity to momentarily interrupt conscious behaviour. People catch themselves playing a game they detest.

5

The German word *Spiel* – like the French word *jeu* – encompasses the two notions of ‘play’ and ‘game’ in English. The preceding example shows it might be of interest to think again about theatrical practice, but now in new ways: in terms of the venerable concept of play, game, *jeu*, *Spiel*. Manifold aspects converge here, because play is a social reality and it also defines the aesthetic sphere that contrasts with the seriousness of work and practice in general. (Basically, participation in an aesthetic process, as distinct from a ‘real’ situation, has no consequences). Theatre is a game of criticism, a game of figuration, a game of interaction. It is even analogous in that non-place, that empty space, that the wheels of any machinery (including social machinery) need in order to function properly; in German, the word *Spiel* is also used for this void, this tiny, empty space in between. Furthermore, while the term *Spiel* covers a wide range of those aspects emphasised in *Postdramatic Theatre*, I think we must advance our thinking on the various facets of play/game/*Spiel* if we want to create a historical dimension and gain a clear perspective on, and understanding of, what may come – ‘after postdramatic theatre’ or other versions of postdramatic theatre. In this context, I feel that a redefinition of theatre is taking place. Examples are works by andcompany&Co. and redpark, Mike Pearson’s projects, *x-Wohnungen*, *anschlaege.de*, research projects in theatre pedagogy and performances by Volker Lösch, Hans-Werner Kroesinger, Stefanie Lorey and others.

One could safely bet on the growing importance of the notion and the real practice of game, even gambling, in the near future of theatre. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, remember that in dramatic theatre the game of ‘intrigue’, as it is known, has always been a means of achieving a curious kind of internal duality of the theatre. Intrigue nearly always implies some sort of ‘play within a play’, the risk of one ‘game’ or other being played with the audience. In comedy as in tragedy, masquerade or role-playing is a constant factor. Hamlet’s famous ‘mousetrap’ constituted a reflection of the theatre in itself, an inner folding of the scene of the theatre. Why not assume that in this sense some kind of double-play is necessary for all theatrical practice, so that even a ‘theatre after theatre’ must look for those moments when certainty is shaken. Is it real? Is it fake? Is it a performance? What kind of game am I getting involved in? *Spiel* is also an interesting theatre-related notion because it straddles on the borderline between the comic and the tragic, between serious practice and inconsequential illusion. *Spiel* is, in itself, between art and non-art, and therefore it offers the opportunity to conceptualise a huge variety of possibilities in theatrical practice.

Obviously, in any attempt to regain the notion of *Spiel* for the theory of theatre one must be conscious of the weight of this concept's idealist tradition, from Schiller to Gadamer. This is most certainly not a search for a notion of *Spiel* intended as a reformulation of the idealist notion of artistic autonomy as described by Gadamer.⁸ On the contrary, one must not forget that *Spiel* is both firmly rooted in real practice and placed at a certain distance from it. For this reason we should not hesitate to also include the notion of game in new ways. Can we not think of theatre on all levels as a game, starting with the basic structure of competition and rivalry that is at the heart of so many dramatic narratives?

Perhaps we grasp closer to the deepest roots of theatre when we consider the cult that translated forms of agonistic competition into theatrical dispute, dialogue, play, games and hazard games. And is the situation of theatre in itself not also a game between the 'offering' performers and the 'receiving' audience? And is there not also an element of aggression in this game? 'Play' and 'game' are notions relating to a degree of transformation or translation of reality. *Spiel* uses elements of real life, it engages the players in a real activity, in an *Agon* perhaps (even if not in an *Agon* with irrevocable consequences like the gladiators' contest where – fatefully – theatre, play and game met). Other than deadly competition as theatre, theatre as a game is incompatible with life-and-death decisions. It is compatible only with a minimal possibility of doing or suffering harm, and with a negligible likelihood of wounding oneself or others. However, it must and does imply a minimum engagement of body and mind.

And so the question must again be asked: can we really continue to draw a sharp dividing line between theatre as purely aesthetic play, on the one hand, and the more or less real and practical activity of game, on the other?

Thus, employing the genius of language to unite in one word the concepts of playing, role-playing, acting (in real and in theatre life), pretending and playing games – hazard games – let us rethink *Spiel* as a key category for 'theatre after theatre'. And in this light we would be well-advised to systematically reread the theories put forward by writers such as Johan Huizinga (see his *Homo Ludens*) and relate the categories of *Spiel* to those practices between and across the borders of different arts and social practices we witness today. Especially because we can observe how, in more or less problematic ways, game and play is becoming increasingly important in so-called 'serious practice' – in business, money trade, economy, politics, personal behaviour and so forth. Theatre's response to the invasion of play into the serious world is to re-invest 'real' games into theatre.

To conclude these outline remarks – which are intended to point to new practical and theoretical investigations into 'play' and 'game' – it should be added that some contemporary critics, such as Jacques Rancière, take a contradictory view. They tend, in the wake of Schiller's notion of play, to revive the notion of the aesthetic sphere as a domain of 'free play' that is a tool of social awareness.⁹ One should remain sceptical of the idealist tradition stemming from this notion. Adorno was convinced that he who understands Brecht only in an artistic way misunderstands him – also artistically. Instead of again promoting beauty as a saviour power it would be better to think of a theatre that takes a step away from the realm of artistic shape and towards the game...

8.

Hans-Georg Gadamer. 'Spiel als Leitfaden der ontologischen Explikation' in *Hermeneutik 1 Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, vol. 2, *Die Ontologie des Kunstwerkes und ihre hermeneutische Bedeutung*, Mohr, Tübingen 1990, pp. 107ff.

9.

Schiller's theoretical work about tragic art, beauty, elegance and dignity dwells on the notion of a 'freies Spiel der Einbildungskräfte', or 'free play of the forces of imagination'.

Walter Benjamin.
'Was ist episches
Theater? Eine Studie
zu Brecht', in
Rolf Tiedemann and
Hermann Schweppen-
häuser (eds.)
Aufsätze Essays Vorträge,
Collected Works,
vol. II.2, Frankfurt 1991,
pp. 519–539.

Samuel Weber.
*Theatricality
as Medium*, Fordham
University Press,
New York 2004, p. 114.

Theresia Birkenhauer.
*Legende und Dichtung:
der Tod des Philosophen
und Hölderlin
Empedokles*, Vorwerk 8,
Berlin 1996.

Walter Benjamin.
'What is Epic Theatre?',
in *Understanding Brecht*,
Analytical Psychology
Club of San Francisco,
San Francisco 1973.
Quoted from *Theatrica -
lity as Medium*, p. 115.

Hans-Thies Lehmann.
'Theater als Möglichkeits-
raum', in *Das Politische
Schreiben*, Theater
der Zeit, Berlin 2002,
pp. 366–380.

Judith Helmer and
Florian Malzacher
(eds.), *Not Even a Game
Anymore. The Theatre
of Forced Entertainment*,
Alexander-Verlag,
Berlin 2004.

... but not without hesitation and caesura. The subject of my closing remarks is the key word *interruption*. What would be a contemporary approach to an interpretation, or re-interpretation, of the important notion of interruption, which Walter Benjamin saw as central to Brecht's theatre and connected to the poet-thinker Hölderlin's 'caesura'?¹⁰ Caesura can be understood to signify a decisive interruption and limitation of exaltation, sublimity and, in particular, what Hölderlin calls the 'tragic transport'.¹¹ The sequence, the dynamic rhythm of *Vorstellungen* (representations) that constitute the tragedy stops at a certain moment (in fact it repeatedly stops, structurally), creating a break that makes, or creates, *Spiel* (space) for the appearance of the *Vorstellung selbst* (representation itself). In these moments we are not in rapture, but there occurs, to put it briefly, a kind of understanding and consciousness of the process of representation. It is important to remember that these reflections of Hölderlin's concern tragedy, the potential for tragedy which Hölderlin was unable to dissociate from the *dramatic* mode of representation. Thus, it is in fact the dramatic rhythm of tragedy which needs the caesura. It has been shown by Theresia Birkenhauer how the 'failure' of Hölderlin to write a tragedy about Empedokles is largely due to his historical position between an old, dramatic model of tragedy and something radical and new which did not fit into the dramatic framework.¹²

I go along with Christoph Menke and Samuel Weber who hold that Hölderlin's idea can be understood in this way: the theatre itself, the *Vorstellung*, the show, the theatricality, is foregrounded in these moments, and thus the process of dramatic representation is interrupted, and the theatre is inscribed into the drama.

In the context of his analysis of the epic theatre of Brecht, Benjamin writes: 'Epic Theatre resists the dramatic *Gesamtkunstwerk* by becoming a dramatic laboratory. It returns in a new way to that great and venerable theatrical resource: its facility for exposing those present (*die Exponierung des Anwesenden*). At the core of its experiments (*Versuche*) stands man in crisis.'¹³ Samuel Weber holds that Benjamin's formulation '*Exponierung des Anwesenden*' is here meant to signify 'putting at risk the claim to self-presentness in the human being'. While perhaps not all aspects of Weber's reading are convincing on the literal level, it certainly strikes at the core of Benjamin's thinking and of what is considered the best opportunity available to contemporary theatre: the opportunity to shatter the notion of, and the semi- or entirely unconscious claim of the subject to a state of self-identity, of personal, sexual, familial, national and religious identity. Interruption – the 'exposing' of those present – remains that essential quality in theatre of 'those present' – performers and audience alike – being not posed, but exposed; affirmed, or re-affirmed, not in what they are, but rather in what they are not – what they could, perhaps, be. Theatre is the place *par excellence* of potentiality, a 'space of possibility'.¹⁴ Potentiality in this sense subverts and interrupts any claim to self-identity by *exposing* that, to quote Macbeth, 'Nothing is / but what is not' (I, III). Thus, it is a game and, perhaps, as Tim Etchells put it, 'not even a game any more'.¹⁵

THEATRE (10)
DRAMATIC (07)
TRAGEDY (06)
INTERRUPTION (04)
REPRESENTATION (04)
BERLIN (03)
GAME (03)
MEDIUM (02)
MOMENTS (02)
NOTION (02)
POTENTIALITY (02)
PROCESS (02)
SPACE (02)
SUBJECT (02)
1996 (01)
ANALYSIS (01)
APPROACH (01)
AUDIENCE (01)
CONNECTED (01)
CONSCIOUSNESS (01)
CONTEXT (01)
CREATING (01)
CRISIS (01)
DRAMA (01)
DYNAMIC (01)
FAILURE (01)
FRAMEWORK (01)
FRANKFURT (01)
HANS-THIES LEHMANN (01)
INTERPRETATION (01)
LABORATORY (01)
LEHMANN (01)
MOMENT (01)
NEW YORK (01)
NOT EVEN A GAME ANY MORE (01)
PERFORMERS (01)
PERSONAL (01)
POSITION (01)
PRESENT (01)
PRESS (01)
REFLECTIONS (01)
RISK (01)
THEATRICAL (01)
THINKING (01)
UNCONSCIOUS (01)
WORK (01)

<ANARCHIV/>

A Non-Hierarchical Representation of the Conference

<Anarchiv/> is a real-time database developed by Niels Schrader and Louise Moana Kolff for the international conference NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE? initiated by the research group Art Practice and Development at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. The database consists of 2421 words spoken at the conference on 17 and 18 February 2006. These were recorded and subsequently entered into the database. With the help of programmer Pascal de Man, it was rendered into multi-coloured diagrams that were screened at the concluding public presentation at the Theater Gasthuis.

The project is inspired by key aspects of Hans-Thies Lehmann's book *Postdramatisches Theater*. 'If there is theatre without drama,' Lehmann asks, 'could there be speech without hierarchy?' <Anarchiv/> experiments with the deconstruction of the hierarchy of words by breaking down the linearity of spoken language into fragments, allowing current theatre discourse to be archived, qualified and visualised.

In practice, <Anarchiv/> operated as follows: keywords from each speaker's address were noted and entered into an expanding <Anarchiv/> database; in order to structure the data and prepare it for processing, attributes such as 'time of recording', 'text length' or 'first letter' were generated automatically, and information such as 'name of speaker', 'language' or 'tense' (of the sentence) were added manually. This writing performance appeared as a projection, a live contribution to the conference.

After the conference, a computer program scanned the database and generated statistics based on selected keywords. Using various parameters, these statistics were visualised as colourful dynamic 'barcode' diagrams that animated in response to the changing data.

The final result of this performative database is a non-hierarchical representation of the conference and the current state of (the discussion of) postdramatic theatre that will hopefully stimulate further reflection. <Anarchiv/> is an unfinished work and will continue to be updated.

The following pages contain images produced for <Anarchiv/> as they were first presented at the concluding session of the conference on 19 February 2007.

THEATRE (04)
CURRENT (02)
KEYWORDS (02)
LANGUAGE (02)
LEHMANN (02)
PRACTICE (02)
REPRESENTATION (02)
WORDS (02)
ADDRESS (01)
AMSTERDAM (01)
ART (01)
ART PRACTICE (01)
ARTS (01)
BOOK (01)
DECONSTRUCTION (01)
DEVELOPMENT (01)
DISCOURSE (01)
DISCUSSION (01)
DYNAMIC (01)
FRAGMENTS (01)
GASTHUIS (01)
HANS-THIES LEHMANN (01)
IMAGES (01)
INSPIRED (01)
INTERNATIONAL (01)
LETTER (01)
PERFORMANCE (01)
POSTDRAMATIC (01)
POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE (01)
PRESENTATION (01)
PRESENTED (01)
PROGRAMMER (01)
PUBLIC (01)
REAL-TIME (01)
REFLECTION (01)
RESEARCH (01)
RESPONSE (01)
STRUCTURE (01)
TEXT (01)
TIME (01)
WORK (01)
WRITING (01)

KEYWORDS





KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS





KEYWORDS

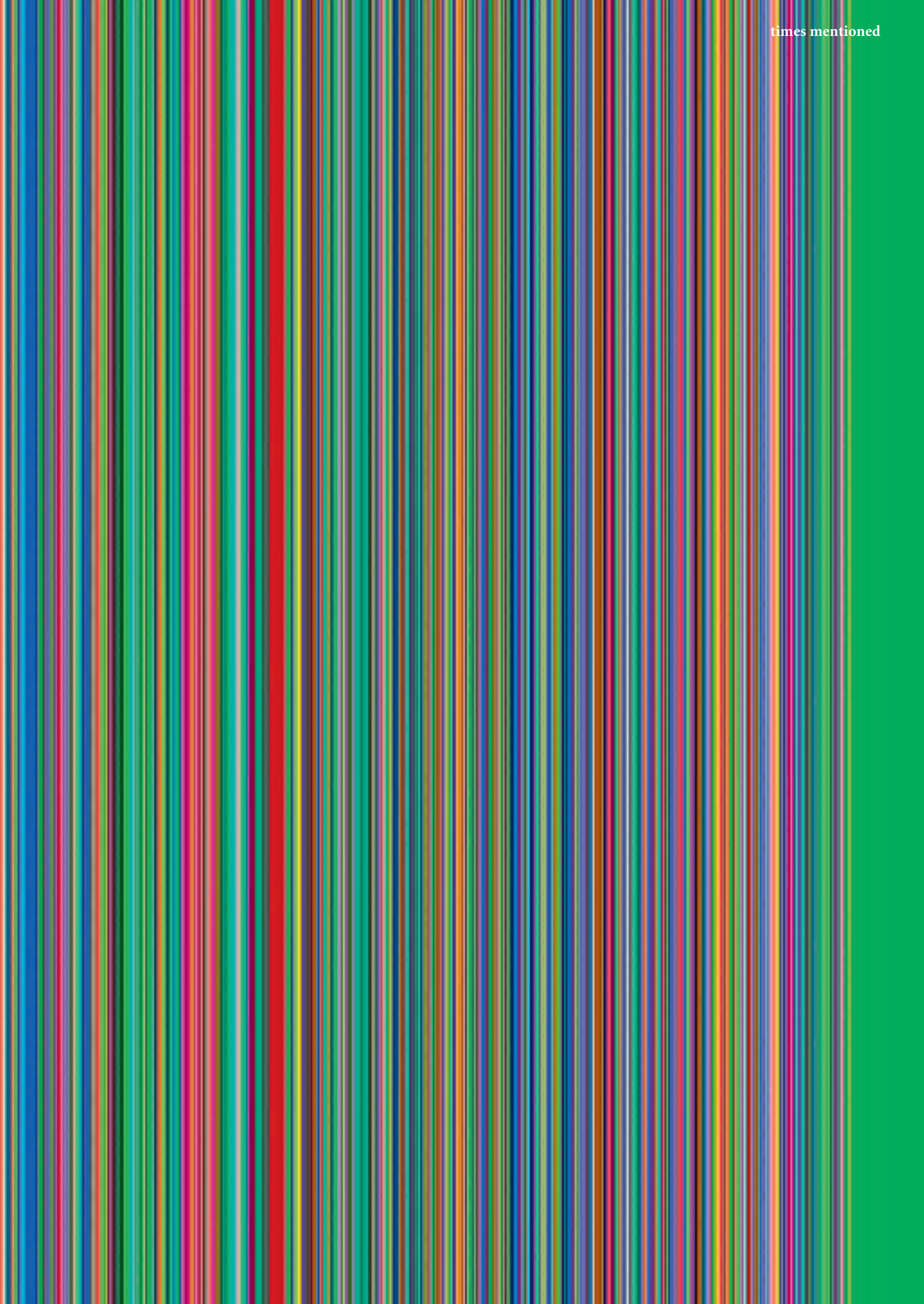
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utterance	tense	frequency	percentage	total	percentage	total	percentage	total
1	present	1	100	1	100	1	100	1
2	past	1	100	1	100	1	100	1

KEYWORDS



KEYWORDS



SCORES

Keywords' Attributes

Sorted using the following criteria

First letter

P (342), S (245), T (235), C (234), A (203), D (149), R (145), M (140), F (102), I (85), E (81),
B (72), L (64), G (49), H (48), N (47), O (35), V (33), W (31), K (27), U (26), Q (8), Y (7),
I (4), 8 (4), J (3), 9 (1), Z (1)

Language

ENGLISH (2239), GERMAN (73), DUTCH (53), FLEMISH (38), FRENCH (6), GREEK (4),
LATIN (2), CZECH (1), DANISH (1), HUNGARIAN (1), RUSSIAN (1), SERBIAN (1), SPANISH (1)

Speaker

MIKE PEARSON (300), HANS-THIES LEHMANN (266), BILL AITCHISON (225), MARIANNE
VAN KERKHOVEN (224), KATHRIN TIEDEMANN (149), MARIJKE HOOGENBOOM (136),
RITSAERT TEN CATE (128), TOM STROMBERG (113), IGOR DOBRICIC (102), IVANA
MÜLLER (100), HEIKE ROMS (98), LOTTE VAN DEN BERG (75), ALEXANDER KARSCHNIA (72),
CHIEL KATTENBELT (62), FLORIAN MALZACHER (47), EDIT KALDOR (46), MARK
TIMMER (39), BARBARA VAN LINDT (36), JETSE BATELAAN (32), NICOLA UNGER (27),
PETRA ARDAI (26), JULIE THÉRON (20), MAAIKE BLEEKER (16), IBRAHIM QURAISHI (15),
DAVID WEBER-KREBS (15), LUC VAN LOO (13), ANDREA BOZIC (11), HELENE
VAROPOULOU (10), NICOLA NORD (8), ANJA KRANS (2), BOUKJE SCHWEIGMAN (2),
PETER ECKERSALL (1), ALEXANDRA KOCH (1), JUDITH WENDEL (1)

Speaker's homebase (city)

AMSTERDAM (775), CARDIFF (397), FRANKFURT (277), BRUSSELS (260),
LONDON (225), DÜSSELDORF (149), STRECKENTHIN/PRITZWAIK (113), ANTWERP (75),
UTRECHT (62), GRAZ (45), ROTTERDAM (27), NEW YORK (15), MELBOURNE (1)

Tense

PRESENT (1318), PAST (937), FUTURE (166)

Length

7 CHARACTERS (277), 8 CHARACTERS (274), 10 CHARACTERS (229), 11 CHARACTERS (187),
9 CHARACTERS (186), 6 CHARACTERS (155), 12 CHARACTERS (153), 5 CHARACTERS (120),
13 CHARACTERS (115), 4 CHARACTERS (96), 14 CHARACTERS (91), 16 CHARACTERS (83),
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19 CHARACTERS (52), 23 CHARACTERS (23), 3 CHARACTERS (21), 21 CHARACTERS (20),
22 CHARACTERS (17), 25 CHARACTERS (13), 24 CHARACTERS (9), 26 CHARACTERS (7),
29 CHARACTERS (3), 30 CHARACTERS (3), 33 CHARACTERS (3), 34 CHARACTERS (3),
2 CHARACTERS (2), 27 CHARACTERS (2), 32 CHARACTERS (2)

Times mentioned (most frequent only)

ACTORS (9), PERFORMANCES (9), MICKERY THEATER (8), PROCESS (8), SPACE (8), ARTISTIC
RESEARCH (7), CARRYING LYN (7), CONTENT (7), DRAMATIC (7), GASTHUIS (7), RULES
OF THE GAME (7), SITE-SPECIFIC (7), STORY (7), TIME (7), AMSTERDAM (6), BIG THEATRES (6),
CCTV (6), DISTANCE (6), DOCUMENTATION (6), EMOTIONS (6), EXPERIENCE (6),
FRANKFURT (6), GERMANY (6), LEHMANN, HANS-THIES (6), MAKERS (6), MATERIAL (6),
PROGRAMME (6), PUBLIC SPACE (6), SPECTATORS (6), SURVEILLANCE (6), TRANSGRESSION (6),
CITY (5), HOLLAND (5), LANGUAGE (5), NOMADIC (5), SUCCESS (5), VIDEO (5)

Speaker's nationality (no image)

GERMANY (784), UNITED KINGDOM (525), NETHERLANDS (506), BELGIUM (260),
CROATIA (111), SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO (102), HUNGARY (72), FRANCE (20),
LUXEMBOURG (15), PAKISTAN (15), GREECE (10), AUSTRALIA (1)

CHRONOLOGY

Postdramatic

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

2006-02-18

[illegible]











20:00:26



21:54:41



20:27:07



21:51:26



21:15:16



20:44:03



20:51:59



20:06:21



20:31:27



20:10:04



20:12:33



21:41:56



21:17:00



20:47:57



20:30:24



21:47:25











12:14:40 STRATEGY



11:07:16 SUBCONSCIOUSNESS



11:49:24 MIRROR SITUATION



12:10:10 PERFORMANCE



12:40:13 PREFERENCE



10:53:15 SCENOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS



12:44:31 MANIPULATING



12:54:23 PERFORMANCE



12:15:07 STRATEGY



11:55:08 DISCIPLINES



11:31:38 HOMELESS MAN



13:05:00 LUNCH BREAK



12:02:38 TIME



11:40:30 VIDEO



12:15:07 STRATEGY



12:19:53 SENSORY DEPRIVATION











11:12:07 RISK



11:00:15 PHENOMENON



12:30:52 RULES



11:03:37 PROJECTION SCREENS



11:02:30 RULES OF THE GAME



11:10:13 VIDEO



11:42:05 QUESTION



11:40:56 CCTV



11:15:57 CREATING



12:30:48 CONVENTIONS



11:34:41 SENSATIONS



10:51:08 PERFORMANCE



10:48:51 HISTORICAL DIMENSION



11:07:16 SUBCONSCIOUSNESS



11:41:43 PERFORMANCE



11:12:20 BLACK AND WHITE POLAROID

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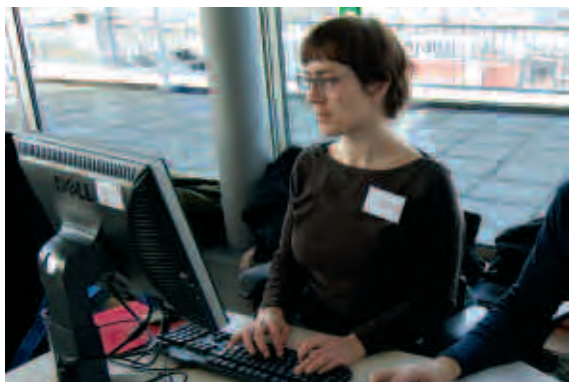
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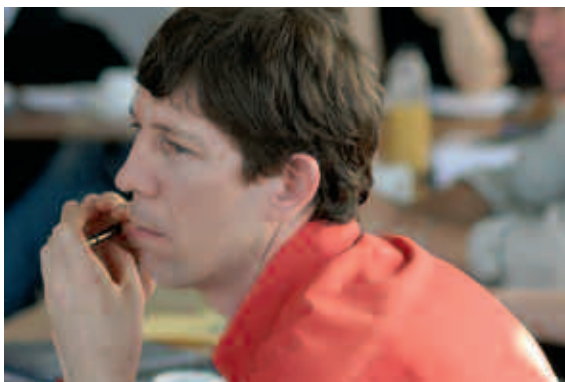
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11:27:17 DISABILITY



11:40:34 PLAYWRIGHT



11:55:54 GALLERY



12:20:25 TENSION



12:08:02 TERM



12:44:12 STRONG EMOTION



11:50:39 EXPECTATION



12:40:29 PREFERENCE



13:04:43 LUNCH BREAK



11:28:32 BODY



11:32:21 SURVEILLANCE CAMERA



12:52:28 CONCEPTUAL ART



12:21:27 GRAVITY



11:50:29 EXPECTATION



11:33:23 EXPECTATION



12:23:47 THEORY











19:14:38



18:42:27



19:15:53



19:55:33



19:43:27



19:54:07



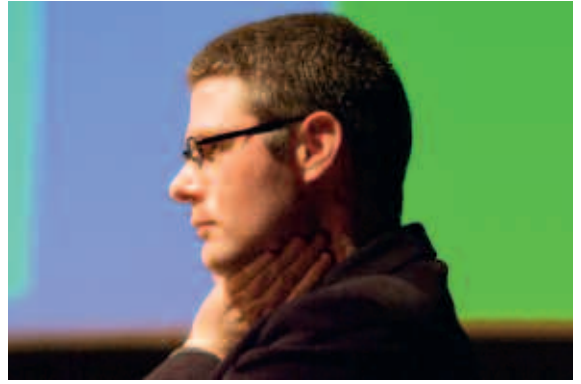
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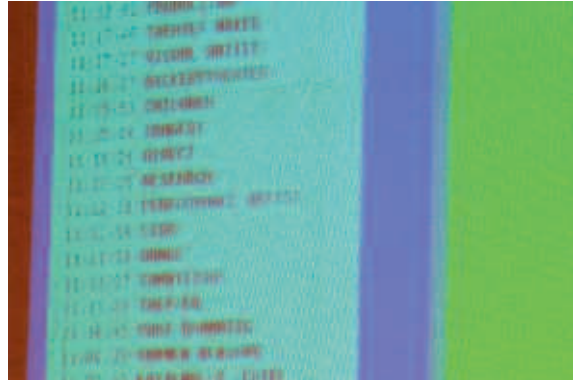
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19:39:51



19:30:59



19:20:29





11:40:34
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11:40:25 PERFORMANCE
11:40:00 NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT
11:39:27 CCTV
11:39:19 RESPONSE
11:39:13 VIDEO
11:39:02 PLAYWRIGHT
11:38:53 CONCENTRATING
11:38:40 PUBLIC DOMAIN
11:38:32 PLACES
11:38:28 EYES CLOSED
11:38:19 CONCENTRATING
11:38:07 ACTOR
11:38:04 PROJECTIONS
11:37:59 PERFORMANCES
11:37:47 DVD
11:37:42 TECHNOLOGY
11:37:35 TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
11:37:21 SURVEILLANCE
11:37:14 FOOTAGE
11:37:00 PERFORMANCE
11:36:44 TEXTS
11:36:40 PLAYWRIGHT
11:36:30 AUDIENCE
11:36:21 FRAGMENTS
11:36:12 PERFORMANCE
11:36:00 PERFORMANCE
11:35:30 SCHWITTERS, KURT
11:35:15 NOT PERFORMING
11:35:09 SURVEILLANCE
11:35:01 INTERVENTION
11:34:53 MOVIE
11:34:38 MUSIC
11:34:29 STEHEN AUF DER STRASSE
OHNE GRUND
DER STRASSE





20:04:02



19:22:36



19:31:25



19:13:55



19:09:45



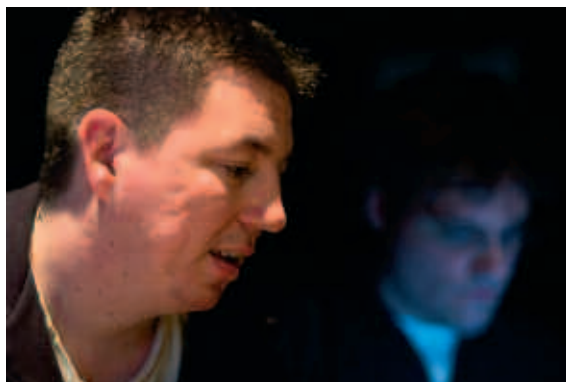
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19:53:08



19:16:02



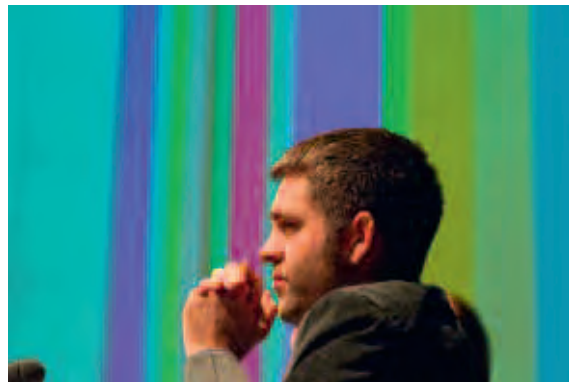
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19:51:19



19:30:06



19:14:24



20:14:00



Frascati, Amsterdam, March 2007

With Matthias de Koning, Annet Kouwenhoven,
Jorn Heijdenrijk, Miranda Prein and Jan Joris Lamers

‘Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed audience, the maatschappij discordia association presents to you its newest performance, bearing the title *katalogus*, in which an overview will be rendered of the association’s plans, wishes, pieces, selected repertoire, etcetera, for the coming 50 years.’



WAR, SILENCE...

Reflections on Tragedy, Politics and Theatre¹

by Marianne Van Kerkhoven

Ah, what an age it is
When to speak of trees is almost a crime
For it is a kind of silence about injustice!
— Bertolt Brecht in 'To Those Born Later'

1. Prologue

How I would love to write today about silence, musicality, emotionality..., the themes from those articles by Tom Blokdijk I have been asked to extrapolate into the present – or confront with the present.²

And how difficult I find it to write about silence, musicality, emotionality..., because the search for a form of theatre 'that forces one to look at reality in a particular manner' – Tom Blokdijk's dream as he described it in his text '*Het theater van de blik*' ('The theatre of expression') seems in my opinion to have been irrevocably supplanted by 'The attempt to decipher a reality that somehow compels one to look at theatre in a certain way.'

The texts by Tom Blokdijk that I was asked to respond to date from the second half of the 1990s, and it is astonishing to realise how much difference there is between the world one senses lies behind Tom's reflections on theatre of that period, and the world we live in now. This conclusion is of course no more than a statement of the blindingly obvious, and it behooves me therefore to transcend this cliché by more accurately pinpointing the changes that have taken place in the last ten years and, primarily, their consequences for the future of theatre.

2. Questions

Where to begin? Where is that loose thread we can grasp to unsnarl that tangle? Is it the conclusion (arrived at by Peter Sloterdijk and other philosophers) that the most important mental shift in twentieth-century Western civilisation seems to be from the primacy of the past to the primacy of the future?

Is it (in addition to the end of history) the end of the nation-state? The fact that the trinity of state/nation/territory is splintering, according to the analysis of Giorgio Agamben and others? The fact that we live in a world where millions of inhabitants, including those of the 'civilised' democratic West, have no rights at all (we call them, bluntly, 'illegals'), the only proof of their human existence being their own physical frame?

Is it the fact that these masses of assorted exiles, refugees, asylum seekers and homelandless individuals are, as Hannah Arendt contended so many years ago, the people's avant-garde?

Or is that loose thread the insight that our sense of time and space has been turned on its head by dizzying technological developments – especially when it comes to communication? That in our lives, the 'here and now' has been replaced by the 'now and everywhere'? That, as Paul Virilio wrote, 'Humanity no longer lives in the present, but rather in the tele-presence of the world'? That the speed with which we communicate has escalated

1.

The author was commissioned to write this article for *Het Blokboek* (*The Blok Book*), a publication on the Dutch dramaturg Tom Blokdijk. It is part of a special edition in which the critical and reflective works on theatre and theatre policy that Blokdijk has written over a period of more than thirty years are collected and serve as inspiration for new essays. In addition to Marianne Van Kerkhoven, Daphne Richter, Sophie Kassies, Luc van den Dries, Anna van der Plas and Ellen Walraven also contributed to the publication. *Het Blokboek* was published by Theater Instituut Nederland in autumn 2007. See www.tin.nl

2.

For more than sixteen years, Tom Blokdijk was the dramaturg of Theatergroep Hollandia, one of the most influential Dutch theatre companies during the 1980s and 1990s. In collaboration with artistic directors Johan Simons and Paul Koek, he translated and edited many plays, wrote new ones and was involved in most of the company's productions (often music theatre or site-specific performances) until it disbanded in 2004.

to such an extent that the communication forfeits its information and becomes an end in itself? That images too are achieving independence? That representation is more important than what they represent, whereby virtuality prevails over reality?

Or is it the fact that in this hurried pursuit that is our life, no time remains for reflection? And that without the investment of effort (and thus also time) into attempting to discern the structure of the world, democracy is, as Richard Sennett noted, non-viable? Or is it that making art is impossible without time, effort, commitment and unselfishness? Or should we instead concern ourselves with the assertion by many scientists, including Martin Rees, that humanity might well have just embarked on its final century? Not only because of what we have done to the natural world, but also because, almost imperceptibly, we have stepped into the trans-human era when technology and robots can take over from us, an era in which mankind is no longer able to measure up to the forces he has himself unleashed. And so on.

It is only through posing these and many other questions that we can set off towards questions concerning the point, or pointlessness, of our activity in theatre.

3. Reading the world

If ‘An artwork is the result of a type of behaviour,’ as Rutger Kopland once wrote, it seems to me that our relationship with the world, our reactions to the great changes taking place, are more important determining factors than ever with respect to the way we can and wish to approach our art, our practice.

In this context I am not concerned with overly rapid, and thus overly simplified, ‘politically correct’ behaviour, but rather with the attempt to read today’s world at a far deeper level. We must remain totally focused, make efforts to understand what is going on, so we do not end up like Meister Anton at the end of Hebbel’s tragedy *Maria Magdalena* saying, in despair and despondency, ‘I simply don’t get the world anymore.’ In my opinion, it is only after a thorough reading of the contemporary world that one can ask whether theatre can and/or wants to survive as an art form. Will it be a theatre of the future, or a theatre of the Apocalypse?

4. Good news

Let us tackle these questions relating to the world of today with the themes Tom Blokdiijk brought up ten years ago. Let us take as our departure point his article on the performance *Perzen (Persians)* by Hollandia theatre company; it is a piece about ‘losers’, an account of a war, a tragedy.

It seems to me that in the contemporary Western world, the very concept of tragedy will likely be crushed between two contradictory forces: on the one hand a societal tendency to deny, or even proscribe, tragedy; and on the other the power of increasingly grave catastrophes occurring in the real world, and their attendant tragedy.

Peter Sloterdijk wrote that, ‘The modern world as a project can only proceed as long as the principle of sufficient good news continues to apply.’ Television and consumption, the cornerstones of both politics and our ethical understanding of the world, can persist only through the continual dissemination

of cheerful messages. On the screen, everything is fun, comfortable and easy. Advertising slogans promise ever-greater wonders in our lives if we purchase products x, y or z. We wander through a world consisting exclusively of superlatives, a landscape of mountain peaks – no valleys or chasms. But fundamental to tragedy is contrast; tension between heights and depths. In Western daily life this contrast is levelled out, erased.

Perhaps this was the greatest shock caused by 9 / 11: the abrupt disruption of the almost continual gush of good news that the American population had become accustomed to – even addicted to. Perhaps the shock is only explicable in the context of the American people's total incomprehension (or childlike astonishment) when forced to conclude there were people who did not love them. This was a response of spoiled children; they had not experienced hostilities on their own territory since the war of independence halfway through the nineteenth century. The events of 9 / 11 suddenly made evident on a macro-social level the tragedy of 'war', of aggression. Until then, Americans had only experienced it on the micro-social level, in the form of personal grief, when the black body bags containing the remains of husbands, sons, fathers and brothers were repatriated (as they are again at the time of writing, due to the war with Iraq).

Intermezzo on imagination

In his article 'Over ontroering' ('About emotionality') Tom Blokdijk discusses his discovery that he has never been emotionally moved in theatre as a result of his own submission, but rather by seeing how others submitted. By way of response, today I would like to propose 'a different behaviour': I would like to substitute the term 'emotionally moved' with 'touched'. To be touched is a process which occurs not only on the surface of one's emotional life, but also in the more rational layers of our human existence – actually throughout our entire being. But that is not all. I also envisage a form of behaviour (in both life and theatre) whereby I do not place myself outside events, but am co-accountable, co-responsible, for them. It is a willingness to show one can be touched and to react accordingly. A willingness to actively imagine how another person lives, how he or she might be (as distinct from identifying with that person) is an indispensable fundamental attitude for making possible not only theatre, but also coexistence in society. One should not hold the self out of range, but maintain involvement in each judgement, in each criticism.

End of intermezzo.

5. And what about us?

We too, here in Western Europe, are like spoiled children when it comes to war. Rwanda, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon... and even former Yugoslavia, are all distant concerns. The reality of the experience, the experience of these kinds of events, eludes us.

How can we relate then, in the here and now, to that great social tragedy called war, and how do we give it substance on our stages? In the realisation that it is perhaps one of the tasks of today's theatre to show that the ring of good fortune and success that encircles us is a wheel of illusion that we ourselves keep turning.

Two examples:

SS (2002), which addressed the ongoing processing of the Second World War – the most recent war trauma in this region. Josse De Pauw and Tom Jansen based the performance on the book *De ss'ers* by Hans Sleutelaar and Armando, a collection of eight long interviews with former ss officers.

Rwanda 94 (1999–2004), a six-hour performance by the theatre collective Groupov, from Liege in Belgium, in which Belgian and Rwandan artists together sought a form that would render the Rwandan genocide discussible in a theatrical context.

6. SS

Is ss, like *Perzen*, a piece about the vanquished by and for the victors? When the book by Hans Sleutelaar and Armando appeared in 1967 it provoked uproar and disapproval. The compilers were accused of an absence of moral values, since the book lacks any clear condemnation of the deeds and words of 'the enemy'. De Pauw and Jansen's performance sheds light on the processing of this war trauma, which is ongoing, particularly in Flemish Belgium. Four monologues were drawn from the book in which three Dutch men and one Dutch woman, all anonymous, explain their motives for choosing the side of the Germans during the Second World War. In the auditorium sat not only victors and their descendants, but also people (and their descendants) who had sat on the fence or had 'made bad choices' during the war. After the performance some audience members felt the enemy had been treated too mildly, that especially in the light of the swing to the political right at the time it was reprehensible, even dangerous, to give them a platform. Others expressed relief that after so many years it was possible to speak openly on stage about the problematic issue of wartime collaboration. It was, then, a divided, but very engaged, audience. This performance sowed doubt in the minds of spectators because it established that the logic, the thought processes, of 'the bad guys' often did not differ greatly from that of 'the good guys', and that the reasoning behind the 'wrong' choices was far more credible when placed in historical context. Is it not understandable, for example, that the unemployed of the Netherlands in the 1930s were attracted by the model espoused in Germany, a country whose crisis and unemployment problems had apparently been solved? And can one refute the opinion that President Truman would not have got off so easily if he had had to appear before a Japanese court, or that the vanquished nation is populated only by war criminals, and the victorious one by heroes? But what if an apparent National Socialist makes such assertions? Then the spectator enters into a disorienting, but dynamic, relationship with the characters on stage. Aversion alternates with a desire for reconciliation. Good and evil are no longer absolutes. In these times when the West is in conflict with 'Evil', any performance that takes a subtle, inquisitive approach to matters of stigmatisation and idealisation fulfils an important political function; let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

7. Rwanda 94

The first version of *Rwanda 94* was shown at the Avignon Theatre Festival in 1999. A tour through parts of the Western world culminated in 2004 with a series of impressive and moving performances in Rwanda itself on

the 10th anniversary of the genocide. It is impossible to talk in terms of winners or losers when it comes to the conflict in Rwanda, only of the dead and the bereaved. *Rwanda 94* is actually a monumental tribute to the almost one million Rwandans who died: a remembrance, in all senses of the word, a *witnessing* – in order that the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century (their skulls and bones still lying unburied and nameless on the hills of Bisesero) are at least recognised and remembered on the theatre stage. Bear witness and recall. Reflect once more and pose the questions: Who is good? Who is bad? Who is Hutu? Who is Tutsi?

Five authors contributed to *Rwanda 94*, Marie-France Collard, Yolanda Mukagasana, Jean-Marie Piemme, Mathias Simons and Jacques Delcuvelier. The performance begins with a long testimony by Yolande Mukagasana who saw her husband and three children murdered before her very eyes; it is an authentic autobiographical story from one of the survivors who found the courage to tell it from the stage, time after time. Elsewhere in the performance fictional and documentary elements are interwoven. There are enacted scenes with characters. There is a lengthy ‘lecture’ that allows the spectator to place the facts surrounding the genocide in their political-historical context: the speaker just sits at a table without any form of theatricality. And most of all there are the interventions of ‘the spirits’, the voices of the dead, concluding in an extended musical epilogue, the Cantata of Bisesero.

Both *ss* and *Rwanda 94* thus contain documentary elements in the form of authentic testimonies. In both performances there is a chorus that employs a poetic-musical idiom. Furthermore, in *ss* dancers use the language of movement to express the unspeakable. What is most striking however is the utterly restrained manner in which both productions handle projected, authentic images. Despite the connecting theme of *Rwanda 94* being a television journalist preparing a broadcast about the genocide, the horror of war is barely depicted. In *ss* the visual material is, for the most part, generated on stage: a man with a video camera (a reporter?) moves among the other ‘characters’ on stage, occasionally displaying on a large screen the images he makes.

8. Individualise

Tom Blokdijk’s remark that theatre can only express and process suffering by individualising it, points to one of the fundamental paradoxes of political theatre: how can one give substance to a *social* theme when it must be represented on stage by characters/actors, i.e. 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’? Throughout history, political theatre has grappled with this paradox. When Büchner put Danton, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins or Saint Just on stage, were they simply individuals or rather ‘standpoints’, or was he creating a representation of ‘the’ French Revolution? Did Heijermans’ character Mathijs De Sterke in *De Opgaande Zon* (*The Rising Sun*) primarily represent the middle class, or was he in all things an inalienable individual? Just as political theatre of the 1970s could often not avoid its characters becoming abstractions or clichés (‘the worker’, ‘the capitalist’) today’s society-oriented theatre often struggles with nonviable prototypes such as

‘the immigrant’, ‘the asylum seeker’ and ‘the juvenile delinquent’. But schematic characters can lead audiences to take only schematic positions. Constructs such as ‘black or white’, ‘good or bad’, ‘right or wrong’ make their entrance once more. Theatre that seeks a political effect intended to set its audience thinking, requires differentiation, requires critical distance; only then can the true nature of good and evil be explored. The power to prevent easy identification – an overly comfortable choice *for* one and *against* the other – lies not only in the hands of the writer of the work but also of the actor interpreting it. Bertolt Brecht was exceedingly aware that ‘alienation’ must take place on two levels: in the writing and in the performance.

The question is, however, whether the fundamental principle that ‘theatre can only give substance to social problems by individualising them’ should not be fleshed out in an entirely different way than in preceding decennia and centuries. Let us take as our example of a social issue war and the suffering it causes. The fact that television confronts us on a daily basis with both the theme and authentic images of it inevitably forces theatre to deal with it in a different way. The sheer volume of the continual flow of images onto the screen forces us to take distance despite their very real nature, and makes us unwilling to become involved or to be touched. We literally create abstraction from the horrors taking place elsewhere. Furthermore, but for the oldest among us, we no longer have comparable experiences at our disposal that might either trigger or feed our awareness of that horror. How is it possible to combine ‘multiplicity’, which is necessary to explore the social aspect of a problem, with the apparently required theatrical element of ‘individualisation’? Is it really necessary to select one, two or three ‘representatives’ of a social group, such as war victims, and present them as realistic characters? In *Rwanda 94* such scenes were the least convincing. Another option (one more closely corresponding with the world we live in) might be to work with a mosaic of hundreds of small, concretely individualised authentic (documentary) stories and/or people so we could envisage the victims, so we could imagine them as actual beings.

9. Documenting

The primary motive for making *Rwanda 94* was to give names and faces to the anonymous victims. At one point in ss articles of clothing are shown on the screen: one by one, jackets, skirts and trousers appear before us that real people once wore. One by one the cameraman-reporter on stage films the necks of the chorus-members standing in a row, their faces turned to the wall. All those tiny variations in hair structure, neck vertebrae, ears and collars produces an image of individualised multiplicity. In the second part of *Anathème* (the performance that director Jacques Delcuvellerie made with Grouptov after *Rwanda 94*), 25 people of all ages and colours disrobe one by one on the stage; the anonymous ones, the nameless ones, get not only a face, but also a body. Without shame they allow us to view the differences in their arms, legs, noses, ears, genitals... We cannot escape their absolute uniqueness. In Alexander Kluge’s prose text *Schlachtbeschreibung* (*Description of a Battle*), in which he documented the battle for Stalingrad, he built ‘A circular structure, a ring of tales (...) a theatre of news items,’ populated by hundreds of victims and executioners. In a similar way, in *Het Geuzenboek* (*The Book of Beggars*, 1979) Louis Paul Boon uses short, authentic stories or details to bring to life hundreds, nay thousands, of heretic wild beggars

THEATRE (04)
CHARACTERS (02)
DISTANCE (02)
IMAGES (02)
PERFORMANCE (02)
REAL (02)
STAGE (02)
STORIES (02)
STRUCTURE (02)
WORK (02)
ACT (01)
ACTOR (01)
AUDIENCE (01)
AUDIENCES (01)
AWARE (01)
BODY (01)
BOOK (01)
CHOICE (01)
CRITICAL (01)
DIRECTOR (01)
EXPERIENCES (01)
ISSUE (01)
MAKING (01)
POLITICAL (01)
PRINCIPLE (01)
PROBLEMS (01)
QUESTION (01)
SHAME (01)
TELEVISION (01)
TEXT (01)
THEATRICAL (01)
THEME (01)
THINKING (01)
UNIQUENESS (01)
VIEW (01)
WRITING (01)

and sea beggars who were burnt at the stake in the sixteenth century. The English war correspondent Robert Fisk employs a similar method in his masterly eyewitness account of thirty years of bloody developments in the Middle East *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*.

Intermezzo on experience

It is not only the escalating amount of images we see every day that makes us lose our connection with reality. The pace of life also contributes to this process. If one tears along at high speed one can no longer know the landscape. One who cannot pause and take notice of things can no longer allow an experience to permeate him, and can also no longer reflect on it. The GPS system, for example, excludes us from any conscious experience of a route: we transform ourselves into machines following instructions. With a laptop under our arm we no longer need to store knowledge or memories in our heads. We are already on our way to becoming trans-humans who literally carry their brains under their arms. Until something goes wrong: an unexpected obstacle along the way, a snag in the laptop charger's cable, a war breaking out. Then we are back to what we always have been; a / the failing human.

10. The messenger

Heiner Müller wrote, 'In a post-nihilistic culture the documentation of the lives of anonymous persons is the central subject of art.' And indeed the documentary seems to be one of the most effective 'artistic' instruments employed in today's theatre performances focusing on tragedy in the social arena. It is indeed difficult for the contemporary television-watching theatregoer to find extra value in a story of fictional characters acting out scenes from, for example, a life during wartime. Few authors, after all, have sufficient vision, and mastery of the language, to match the power of reality. The documentary is essentially epic in nature. It shows things as they are – or were. 'Look, there, the man at the streetcorner! He is showing how the accident happened,' wrote Brecht in *On Everyday Theatre*. It is the tale of someone who had seen and heard how an event took place, or is asking an eyewitness to explain what he has seen and heard. The documentary finds its form, its expression in the character of the reporter, the correspondent, the witness seeking the truth. The documentary storyteller in contemporary theatre is, in a sense, the direct descendant of the messenger from classical tragedy, or that person who steps onto the stage to describe how the battle proceeded, and who takes the time to allow those events to get through to his audience.

11. The poetry / the chorus

Imre Kertész wrote, 'We can only make a veracious representation of the Holocaust with the aid of the aesthetic imagination.' The battle was so terrible that the messenger's 'objective', factual account is unable to adequately communicate the experience of the events. To achieve that, we need an alternative, poetic language, a language that can touch us on a more general, more abstract level. Only through poetic language are we able to project that experience beyond one's own personal, actual suffering, onto a societal level. This is an abstraction that decreases rather than increases the sense of distance. In 1993, Ademin Kenovic, a documentary maker from the besieged city of Sarajevo,

had this to say in an interview: ‘It is astonishing to what extent poetry can still enable us to see things as they truly are.’ To express the unutterable after all, to allow the inconceivable to be imagined and thereby initiate an experience: this can only be achieved through the poetic function. Just as the documentary narrator in contemporary theatre is the successor to the messenger of classical tragedy, it is quite possible that the poetic-abstract function in contemporary theatre can only be fulfilled by the creation of a successor to the chorus from classical tragedy; the chorus representing the multiplicity, the community – and the undescribable essence.

12. Silence

Just as the composer Dick Raaijmakers compared Western music to ‘composed silence’ in *Theaterschrift 4: The Inner Side of Silence*, so too will the music of the chorus contain silence and standstill to enable reflection. Together, the messenger and the chorus are the new inquirers, those who break the flow of good news, those who reflect, those who can slow time, those who can also be silent, those who can create open places in which thoughts can arise, those who can express compassion for blundering humankind.

CLASSICAL (02)
EXPRESS (02)
FUNCTION (02)
MUSIC (02)
THEATRE (02)
TRAGEDY (02)
ACT (01)
COMPASSION (01)
CULTURE (01)
ESSENCE (01)
EXPERIENCE (01)
INSPIRATION (01)
PLACES (01)
REFLECT (01)
REFLECTION (01)
SILENT (01)
THEATERSCHRIFT (01)
TIME (01)

13. Coda

‘The frontline itself isn’t bad. It’s eighty percent noise. Eighty percent noise, five percent dead people and then the rest wounded. If you can deal with noise you’re fine. Eighty percent noise, that’s what the frontline is.’ (Extract from ss)

If violence is rash action, and the frontline is noise, then perhaps silence and standstill is the counterpart of war.

Sources of inspiration included *Media Time* and *The Cristal Palace* by Peter Sloterdijk, *Moyens sans fins* by Giorgio Agamben, *We Refugees* by Hannah Arendt, *Desert Screen* by Paul Virilio, *The Culture of New Capitalism* by Richard Sennett and *Our Final Century* by Martin Rees.

ARTISTS' STATEMENTS

Silent **Revolution**¹

by Lotte van den Berg

I ask myself the **question**.
Is there something I am resisting?
Is there something I should resist?

Should I resist the established order?

No.

I must remain true to myself
not allow myself to be trampled on
and negotiate.

But I don't have to smash anything
there's no need.

In fact
I'm welcomed with open arms

There is a need for new plans.
Young and **talented**, one hears that just a little too often I'd say.

We are pampered.
Am I allowed to say that?

I am pampered.

When **tomatoes** were thrown, my father left **stage** school. He felt he was only taught to forget things there. He could do it better his own way. He built a puppet **theatre**, and travelled the countryside with a horse and cart. Thirty years later I was at the **theatre school**, studying directing. I never felt the urge to run away from school. On the contrary. I got the chance to **develop** my own **language**. Was allowed to be **personal**. Had to be **personal**.

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?

No.

I've taken on responsibility in everything I've done and made. Responsibility for myself, the **performance**, the **performers**, the **audience**. I take the **profession** incredibly seriously. **Theatre making** must not be taken for granted. And if the circumstances are, then you must be self-critical and curb yourself.

I choose to **work** in situations in which I make it difficult for myself.

Last year I made a **performance** in the prison in **Antwerp**. Every day I had to struggle to get rehearsal **space** and guards. The need for **theatre** was constantly brought into **question**. A strike was **threatened** by staff. One **actor** was released and could no longer participate. Another **actor's** child was in hospital and he was not allowed

1.
Written as an introduction to 'Yearning for the days of revolution', a **debate** organised by **Frascati Theatre**, **Amsterdam**, on the occasion of the Nieuw West **performance Love**, in October 2005. The full, original **text** can be read at www.toneelhuis.be

to visit. **Reality** overtakes you and the **performance** becomes totally focused. Never before had I felt it was so important to make **theatre**.

A while ago *Het Blauwe Uur* (*The Blue Hour*) was being performed in **Amsterdam**. *Het Blauwe Uur* is a **performance** that takes place at sunrise in a very ordinary road somewhere in the **city**. In **Amsterdam** we performed in Sporenburg, a new district near the KNSM Island.

We had never before had so many **problems** with the local residents. They were for the most part intellectual, artistically minded, but obviously suffering from cultural exhaustion. I was most surprised by the **children** who came to watch. A class of young Amsterdammers. They were cynical. Nine-year-old **children** putting everything into **perspective** and squeezing the life out of it. It broke my heart. It was only in the final **performance** that we **managed** to tune in to this youthful force, and then we **managed** to enchant **Amsterdam** just a little, too.

I like working on location very much: I can't allow myself to remain caught up in my own thoughts there. I must constantly relate to events, to the people around me. For the **past** month I've been working for the largest **theatre** company in **Belgium**; a business. I had misgivings for a long **time**. Big means corrupt. **Money** is dirty. That's what I learned. I'm a child of the revolution.

I dream of a **small theatre** company in an old **farmhouse** in a meadow. That's what I know. That's the way my father did it.

But I'm still going to **work** for a big company. If I **think** I've got something to say, why stay in the fringe? I will infiltrate, learn the systems and exert influence. I have great plans.

A **director** friend calls himself a chameleon.

I take pleasure in adapting.
That doesn't mean I like to disappear, to be swallowed up.
Not that. Absolutely not.
I will always let myself be known.
It's a **challenge** to me
to get to know and to fathom
situations, **structures** and people I don't understand.
Not to knock them down
but to place something in opposition to them.
To break them open.
To make some room.

Het Blauwe Uur is performed
early in the morning, in a very ordinary road, somewhere in the **city**.
At a quarter to seven in the morning, at the end of the **performance**,
the brass band plays.
Softly, but loud enough to wake you.

The well-ordered, hard-working, new housing estate
of identical **houses**, in which each person seeks his own happiness,
is disturbed by **children** laughing and whooping loudly in the morning.

In the prison, an indifferent and rigidly hierarchical **environment**, I get the men to **dance**. I try to relate something of the hope they too still have. Some of them are in for life.

Next month I'll be starting **rehearsals** with Josse De Pauw for a **performance** called *Volk*. A plaza in the large **auditorium**. People walk **past** each other. An assortment of people, an assortment of **stories**. A bomb explodes. Silence. Two days later. The same plaza. People walking.

That's how it is. That's how it goes.

In the **performance** we make no pronouncement about the perpetrator, the victim, the cause, the **consequences**.

I have no need for **words**. As far as I'm concerned, there's too much **talk**. So many opinions, viewpoints and outlooks. They perpetuate one another. Everything that can be spoken against can be brought into dispute. Who knows what is good or bad?

A world gone mad.

In the supermarket, hundreds of different kinds of milk, yoghurt and cheese. What should I eat? What should I buy? The less significant the **choice**, the more difficult it is to choose.

Freedom **rules**.

Television screams.

Bombs explode **everywhere**.

These times have no need for commotion. No need for tumult.

These times have no need for a revolution.

These times need peace and quiet.

I yearn.

Not for a revolution, but for **home**.

I'm five years old.

I have my jacket on and I'm walking into the garden.

I go and sit on the grass. The grass is high. There's a tree. It's been there a long **time**.

I was small then. Now I'm big. Bigger. I look at the world around me as a **spectator**. I give **words** to everything. I evaluate and judge. Everything is categorised and defined. My days have compartments. Lines run through everything and doors close, and open and close again. I would like so much to walk into the garden without knowing what I was going to do; neither efficient nor planned; to look at the world around me without restrictions or intentions.

I make **theatre** and repeatedly ask myself the same **question**. How can I create a **space** in which one can look without **words** and **rules**, a **space** in which the **spectator** becomes a participant, experiencing the **performance** without **expectations**?

A human is small and has doubts. 'How should I live?' he asks of someone who just

wanted to ask the same **question**. Nobody knows. The **questions** are immense. We hope to find peace in an answer. But it is peaceful where there are no **questions**.

I'm sitting on the grass. The clouds race **past**. There's a tree. It's been there a long **time**.

There is a **knowledge** without **words**. True **knowledge**. A **knowledge** without understanding. A sure **knowledge** too huge and too simple for our **thinking**. We **subject** the world to **inquiry** because we do not dare to know it. We hope for perfect answers and impressive outcomes. We are unable to see things as they truly are.

We **form** an image of the perfect world. We dream of times to come. In times to come everything will be better. We resist. We resist that which is. How difficult is it to accept that things happen the way they do? A leaf falls from the tree, flutters groundwards and stays lying there. A human is small and insignificant. If you bash him on the head really hard he dies. The mountains are eternal. We aren't. We run and swarm. We die and are born.

If I walk around town and look around me, seeing people walking, stumbling, falling, running.... When I walk around town, watching people, I could cry all the **time**. Because it's so moving. There's nothing better than surreptitiously watching how someone ties his shoe lace, eats an ice cream. So much is evident from so little. You imagine you can know someone if you see how he walks, removes a stone from his shoe and sits down. You imagine you know someone, but all the same, you don't. A person cannot be grasped. But all the same, you see the way he walks, sits, eats an orange, and you understand.

I make **theatre**, I try to create frameworks from which **reality** can be viewed. I hope to **challenge** myself and the **spectator** to watch without judgement. I have no need to criticise. I make **theatre**. I organise meetings. Meetings between myself and an **audience**, between **actors** and big thoughts. Humans are small. Life is big. We search and stray. We panic and calm down once more. Everything is in continual flux. Everything is always in motion. This is how I want to create **work**. This is what I want to create **work** about.

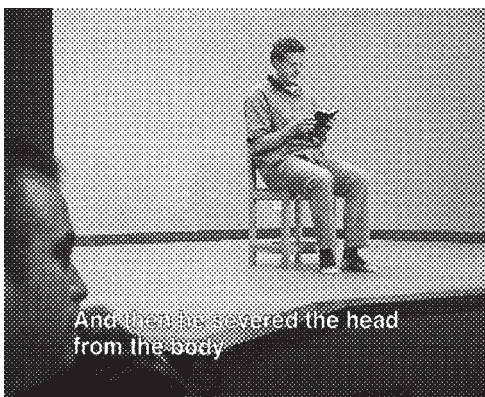
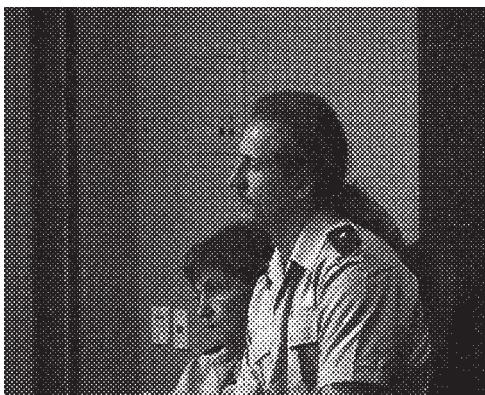
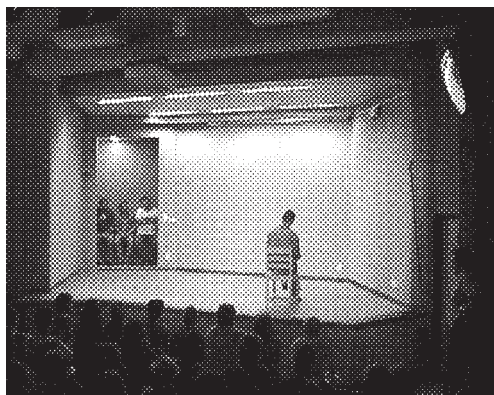
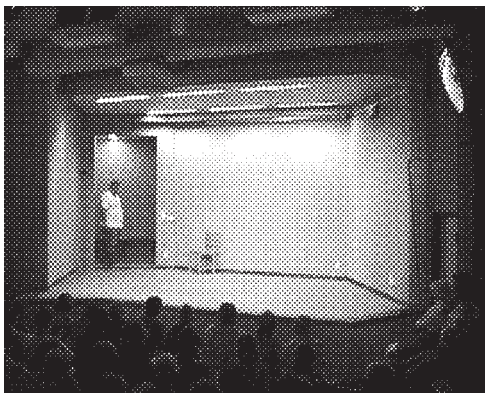
In a world whose aspirations are control and perfection, I try to soften the paving. In a hurried life of ever-more and ever-higher, I hope to create **space** between the bones, the **houses** and the people.

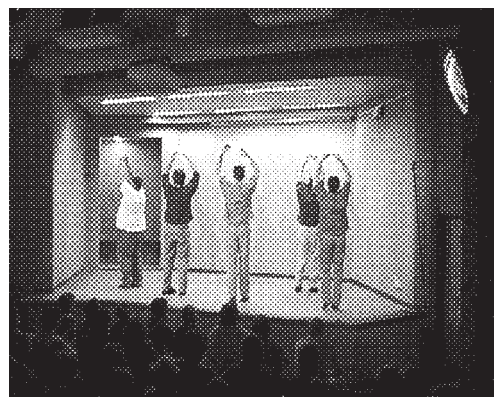
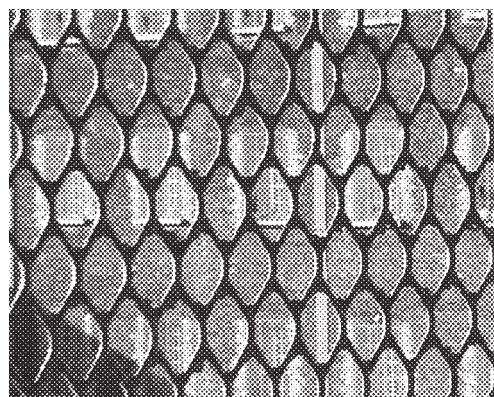
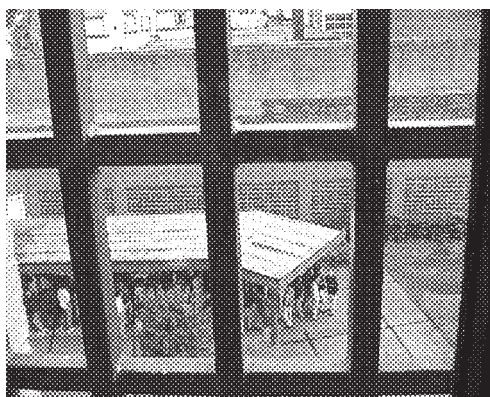
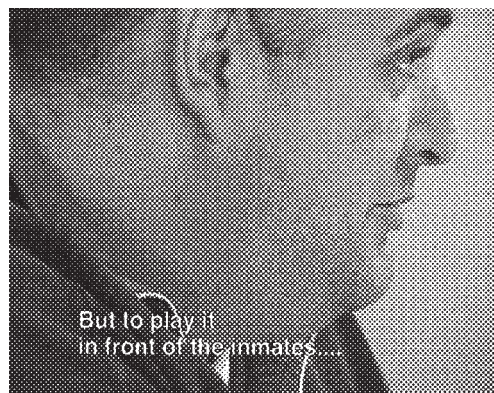
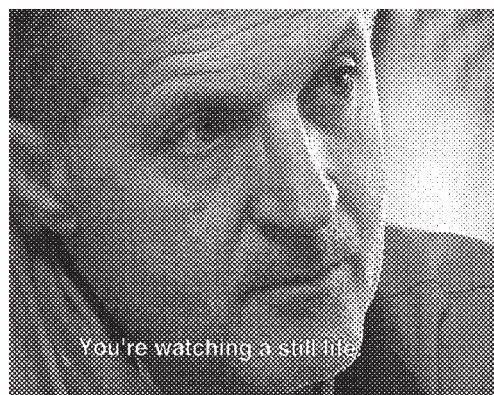
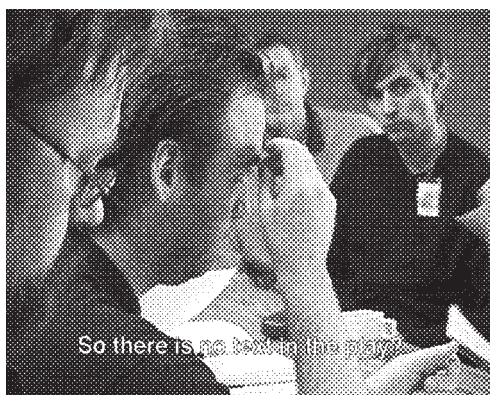
It would be nice if it were possible to **change** the world. I have the peculiar arrogance to **think** I know how it could be different and better. Listen to me and everything will be alright.

The more certain you are that you are right, the more dangerous it gets. It's a good thing I'm keeping myself calm.

JE SUIS TOUJOURS PAS ICI

Stills from the documentary *Je suis toujours pas ici* by **film maker** Nell Donkers. It captures the **making** of *Begijnenstraat 42*, a **theatre performance** realised by **Dutch director** Lotte van den Berg at an **Antwerp prison** in the summer of 2004. For two months, she worked together with nine inmates, four guards, three **actors** affiliated to the **Toneelhuis** and five people working behind the scenes.





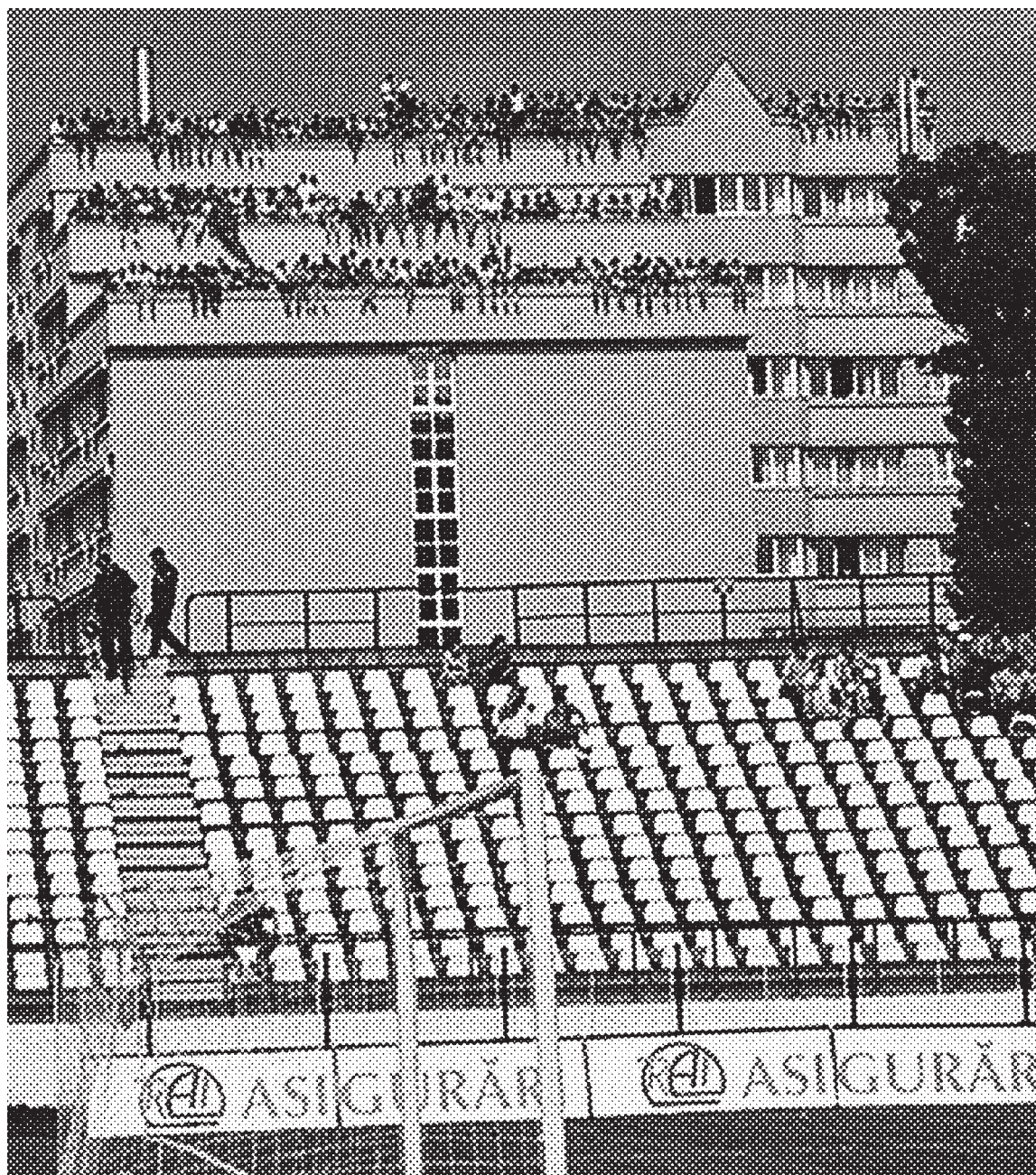
WHY I CRY TEARS OF JOY WHEN CAROLINE PETERS ROARS, 'SHIT WATER BOTTLE!' ON POLLESCH'S STAGE

January 2007 – After a month's **theatre**-going in **Berlin**, I can't avoid the **impression** that **Pollesch** is still the most radical and exciting thing that German **theatre** presently has to offer. Since **Pollesch**'s initial great successes (the two series *Heidi Hoh* and *World Wide Web-Slums*, 1999–2001), one could hear fault-finders assert that he actually does the same thing over and over. These voices have been proven wrong: **Pollesch**'s **theatre** *has* changed, most recently after his taking over as **artistic director** of the Prater **Theatre**, the auxiliary **venue** of the **Volksbühne**. Since 2001, **Pollesch** has encountered great **actors**, continued old collaborations, and had all those with whom he has worked slip into the role of actor-as-commodity. In so doing, he has invented a kind of Marxism for the **theatre**: 'I'd like to be like **money**, able to transform myself into anything I wish, but my **body** is simply no longer able to fit into Iphigenie – god damn it!' In *Cappuccetto Rosso*, **Pollesch** has Sophie Rois search the **stage** for her magic, after having just lost it whilst shooting *Der Untergang* with Volker Spengler, alias Bernd Eichinger; in *L'affaire Martin! Occupe-toi de Sophie! Par la fenêtre, Caroline! Le mariage de Spengler. Christine est en avance*, he has Volker Spengler conjure up in his mind's eye the Donnersmarck steel works in Silesia, and has Caroline Peters **play** the role of the President of the Expelled, who is happy to be addressing the **audience** as President of the Expelled and 'not as some leftist faggot!' In the **process**, **Pollesch** attains one thing above all: great **theatre**. It is **theatre** that always refers to the **theatre** itself as its location, holding a **mirror** up to it, for example when Sophie Rois, as Henckel von Donnersmarck, tries for an entire evening to find a **theme** for the **film** *The Life of the Others*. As she can neither make a **film** about her own borrowed life as a character on the **stage** (as someone who has been expelled from Upper Silesia), nor relate a salvific **history** – she can only make a **film** about the life of the others. But, 'What is that actually, the life of the others?' asks Sophie Rois as Henckel von Donnersmarck, 'What could that *be*?' In this way, **Pollesch** homes in on the blind spot of contemporary **theatre**: everyone talks about the *others*, but no one is **interested** in talking about themselves, or taking any kind of responsibility.

Why is **Pollesch** able to make the ‘split’ that he makes by **simultaneously** speaking about himself, the **theatre** and ‘the others’, without a trace of pretension and without ever being **unpolitical**? Because there is one thing above all that **Pollesch** is not: a theatre sculptor! Quite simply, he is not from the control-freak school of **directors**, chiselling at the ‘actress block’ until great **art** emerges. He prefers to put up with the mess that chiselling brings with it, as long as they can produce that one, pure, beautiful statue, *the moment*. In the still dictatorial, **classical director’s** theatre, the actresses stand there, petrified, speaking an **artificial form** of German that no one is **interested** in hearing any longer: the cotton wool wall is raised and eerily dams everything in. This kind of **director’s** theatre, where the **director** stands before his actress **material** and models it, gives me, as **spectator**, reflexive stomach cramps; everything feels so weirdly false; a strange **process** of retardation is taking place; all **development** is arrested, at a standstill. It has remained all too nineteenth-century and terribly German in **Germany**, without this being addressed or interacted with on the **stage**: ‘The man who comes on **stage** is always “man”; the woman, however, is always “the woman”; **Romeo and Juliet** are always heterosexual, and if you are black you always have a problem.’ (**Pollesch** in *Talk: Radwechsel der Geschichte*). This leaves no room for the actresses or the women in the **audience**; everything is written in stone and repeated over and over, and at best one manages to get a ‘taste’ of a morsel of **text** – mmm! Perhaps **Pollesch** should be regarded as a kind of First **Collective Director**, a kind of theatre-Marx, yes, the Anti-Sculptor, for on his **stage**, the actresses have room, lots of room, to **play** with his **language**, to try the widest possible range of postures. And he does not push and squeeze them into the figure of Iphigenie, but rather has their bodies **talk**, as commodities about commodities, and they do this so poetically, sexily and credibly that I simply have to cry tears of joy when Caroline Peters roars ‘shit water bottle!’ on **Pollesch’s stage**.

YVONNE RAINER
DESCRIBES THE SPECTATOR
OF HER DREAMS
AS ONE WHO HAS *GIVEN*
EQUAL ATTENTION
TO THE FICTIONS AND
THE PRODUCTION
OF THESE FICTIONS.

Quote from Yvonne Rainer's
A Woman Who... Essays, Interviews, Scripts
The Johns Hopkins University Press,
Baltimore & London 1999, pp. 211–212.



Performance text by David Weber-Krebs,
first performed in October 2004 at Plateaux,
New Positions in **International Performing Arts**.

This **performance** is about to start
This **performance** is about to have an introduction
This **performance** is about to display a living **body**
This **performance** is about to activate a **process**
This **performance** is about to tell a **story**
This **performance** is about to explain a **situation**
This **performance** is about to make statements
This **performance** is about to give a message
This **performance** is about to have a **discourse**
This **performance** is about to catch **attention**
This **performance** is about to try something out
This **performance** is about to establish a code
This **performance** is about to build a **context**
This **performance** is about to claim originality
This **performance** is about to **provoke** animosities
This **performance** is about to create **expectations**

This **performance** is about to raise
This **performance** is about to ask **questions**
This **performance** is about to **develop** an understanding
This **performance** is about to relate to the **outside** world
This **performance** is about to react randomly to impulses
This **performance** is about to have raw aspirations
This **performance** is about to have determination
This **performance** is about to have basic needs
This **performance** is about to evolve gradually towards more autonomy
This **performance** is about to learn
This **performance** is about to get faster
This **performance** is about to take **space**
This **performance** is about to blossom
This **performance** is about to have ambition
This **performance** is about to ask for more
This **performance** is about to mature without awareness
This **performance** is about to gather strength
This **performance** is about to seek harmony by acceptance
This **performance** is about to make agreements
This **performance** is about to have friends
This **performance** is about to reject the remains
This **performance** is about to raise intensity
This **performance** is about to climb higher
This **performance** is about to relate to authority
This **performance** is about to increase pretensions

This performance is about to be clear
 This performance is about to reach a point
 This performance is about to control
 This performance is about to **desire** power
 This performance is about to cover up technical devices
 This performance is about to consume energy
 This performance is about to feed
 This performance is about to show the **inside**
 This performance is about to eliminate toxins
 This performance is about to influence
 This performance is about to battle for the sake of battle
 This performance is about to absorb reactions
 This performance is about to seek growth
 This performance is about to be ripe, luscious and crunchy
 This performance is about to have a **position**
 This performance is about to affect people gradually
 This performance is about to absorb and reject and absorb and reject and absorb
 This performance is about to be crude
 This performance is about to **change** appearance
 This performance is about to pretend truth and sincerity
 This performance is about to have a master
 This performance is about to create a legend
 This performance is about to praise duality
 This performance is about to have a **moment** of grace

This performance is about to have allies
 This performance is about to assign **tasks**
 This performance is about to tell the good and the bad
 This performance is about to reject casualties
 This performance is about to reduce capacities
 This performance is about to name facts
 This performance is about to **shift attention** from the **outside** to the **inside**
 This performance is about to cover embarrassing details
 This performance is about to honor stability
 This performance is about to locate **enemies**
 This performance is about to lead
 This performance is about to distribute points
 This performance is about to **celebrate** prosperity
 This performance is about to have messianic aspirations
 This performance is about to give love to the world
 This performance is about to make **enemies**
 This performance is about to be in power
 This performance is about to produce fluent **images**
 This performance is about to draw **attention** away from the event
 This performance is about to point out the treacherous
 This performance is about to name the evil
 This performance is about to reject discussions

This performance is about to claim superiority
 This performance is about to pretend to **change** the world
 This performance is about to recalculate risks
 This performance is about to reject the help of others
 This performance is about to eradicate objections
 This performance is about to elevate **random** ethical views
 This performance is about to polarize civilizations
 This performance is about to **develop strategies**
 This performance is about to **change** color
 This performance is about to give the red alert
 This performance is about to gather forces for combat
 This performance is about to rationalize mysteries
 This performance is about to visit the enemy
 This performance is about to apply pro-active defense
 This performance is about to respond significantly to attacks
 This performance is about to discover collateral damage
 This performance is about to break resistances with efforts
 This performance is about to accept excuses
 This performance is about to **change** sides
 This performance is about to crawl backwards
 This performance is about to close the **borders**

 This performance is about to evolve in a closed system
 This performance is about to get infected
 This performance is about to leave a mark on the walls
 This performance is about to **develop strategies**
 This performance is about to break resistances with great effort
 This performance is about to minimize victims
 This performance is about to draw on the reserves
 This performance is about to call for the help of the ancients
 This performance is about to refer to **tradition**
 This performance is about to create a hero
 This performance is about to pray to earlier gods
 This performance is about to get affected by periodical **changes**

 This performance is about to demonstrate individuality
 This performance is about to **communicate**
 This performance is about to look for mates
 This performance is about to be forgotten
 This performance is about to reinvent relationships
 This performance is about to receive no answer
 This performance is about to be **subversive**
 This performance is about to be rejected
 This performance is about to open up hidden side
 This performance is about to **experience** solidarity
 This performance is about to fraternize
 This performance is about to **engage**
 This performance is about to revolt
 This performance is about to demonstrate for more rights
 This performance is about to resist authority
 This performance is about to sweat
 This performance is about to call for revolution

This performance is about to go beyond
 This performance is about to elevate metaphysical **questions**
 This performance is about to divide people in two sides
 This performance is about to call out for more understanding
 This performance is about to **develop** a **language** of **failure**
 This performance is about to increase boredom drastically
 This performance is about to get weaker
 This performance is about to stumble
 This performance is about to react
 This performance is about to try to stop the **process**
 This performance is about to fail
 This performance is about to remember better times
 This performance is about to lie
 This performance is about to accept **limits**
 This performance is about to endure age
 This performance is about to attempt to seduce death
 This performance is about to read the gospels
 This performance is about to help lost souls
 This performance is about to elevate **compassion** to unknown fields

This performance is about to **move** slowly towards perdition
 This performance is about to yowl for more **attention**
 This performance is about to **change**
 This performance is about to get hurt
 This performance is about to get torn into pieces
 This performance is about to burst in particles
 This performance is about to explode in thousand **fragments**

This performance is about to burn out
 This performance is about to level all things
 This performance is about to stop **time**
 This performance is about to vanish
 This performance is about to flow inconsiderately
 This performance is about to fall from grace
 This performance is about to be reduced to nothing
 This performance is about to keep on vanishing
 This performance is about to ask for mercy
 This performance is about to putrefy insensitively
 This performance is about to praise redemption
 This performance is about to receive **compassion**
 This performance is about to remember
 This performance is about to die
 This performance is about to fade out
 This performance is about to end

**NOW THAT
THE POLITICAL ARENA
HAS BECOME THE
ARENA OF SPECTACLE
AND SHOWBUSINESS,**

**SHOULDN'T
THEATRE, MORE
THAN EVER,
BE A POLITICAL
PLACE?**

My **performances** thrive upon the **uncertainty** of the **moment**; they are at their best when they are in **real danger** of falling apart.

My **performances** are un-replicable situations: I am in charge but not in control. I am not the centre of a regulated world but merely one agent in a larger, ungoverned universe.

My **performances** use living **spaces** not sterilised environments, they weave levels of complicity between **performer**, **spectator** and wider **public**.

My **performances** explicitly require the active participation of their **audience** in the creation of **meaning**. There is no core message, **emotion** or point to be grasped; they are constructed upon a **network** of polarities that resist closure. They give form to and affirm the ambiguity of **experience**.

My **performances** are journeys, sometimes figurative, sometimes **real**. They gravitate to the margins of the **city**, to where official representations fall apart and, like weeds, my **performances** grow in these cracks.

My **performances** are a way to understand and **communicate** my **experience** of the world. They are perpetually in **process**. I place myself within the **frame** of the **work** and, **play** upon the fault lines of the **personal** and the **public**, of art and everyday life.

My **performances** have a **home** crowd. That crowd, like the shows, is unholy. They don't respect **culture** that takes its importance for granted but demand that it affirms its significance afresh each night.

My **performances** can be ragged like pub rock and slick like a business presentation. They can be both at the same time.

My **performances** don't lift the **spectator** out of their life but **connect** their **experience** to everyday life.

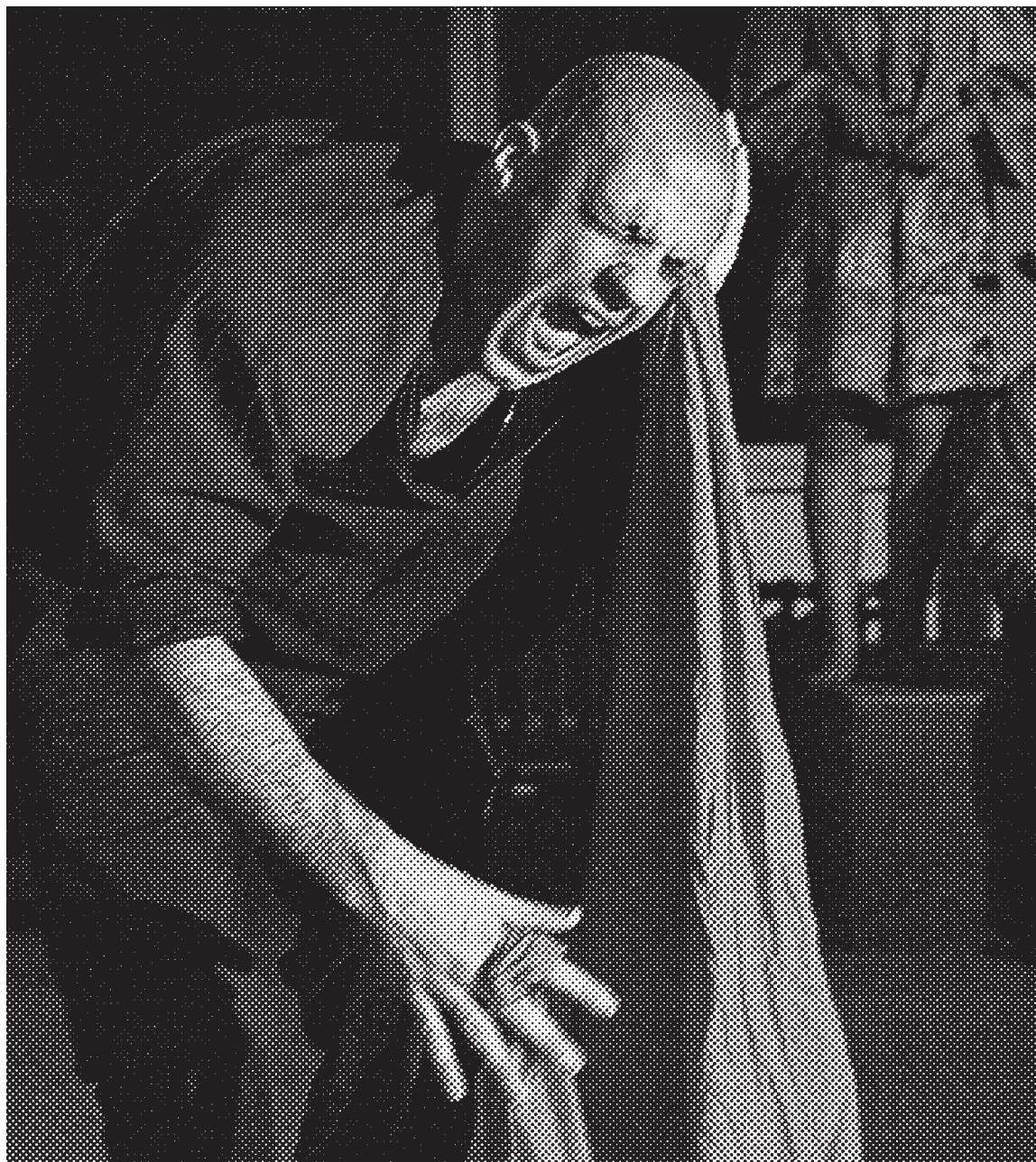
My **performances** have been compared to **waiting** for a nightbus.

My **performances** and **practice** has a hole at its centre. It is decentred in **terms** of its **production**, its **dramaturgy** and in particular, in how the self is **presented**. Authenticity is seen as yet another mask; though the **desire** for it, acknowledged as **real**.



Zones II-VI, 2005

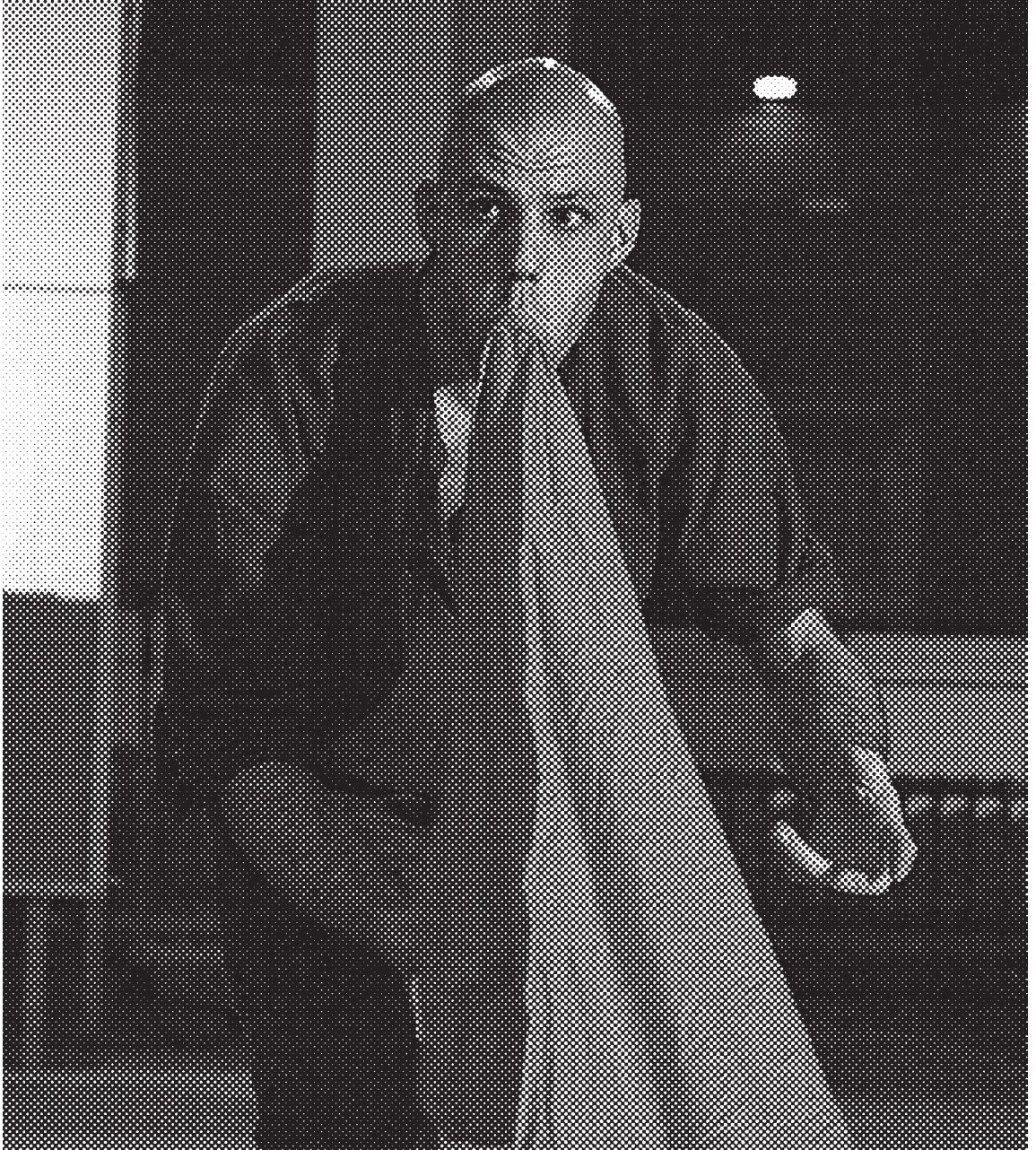
I BELIEVE IDENTITY IS
A **CONSTRUCTION** YOU CAN
PROJECT ONTO SOMEONE.¹



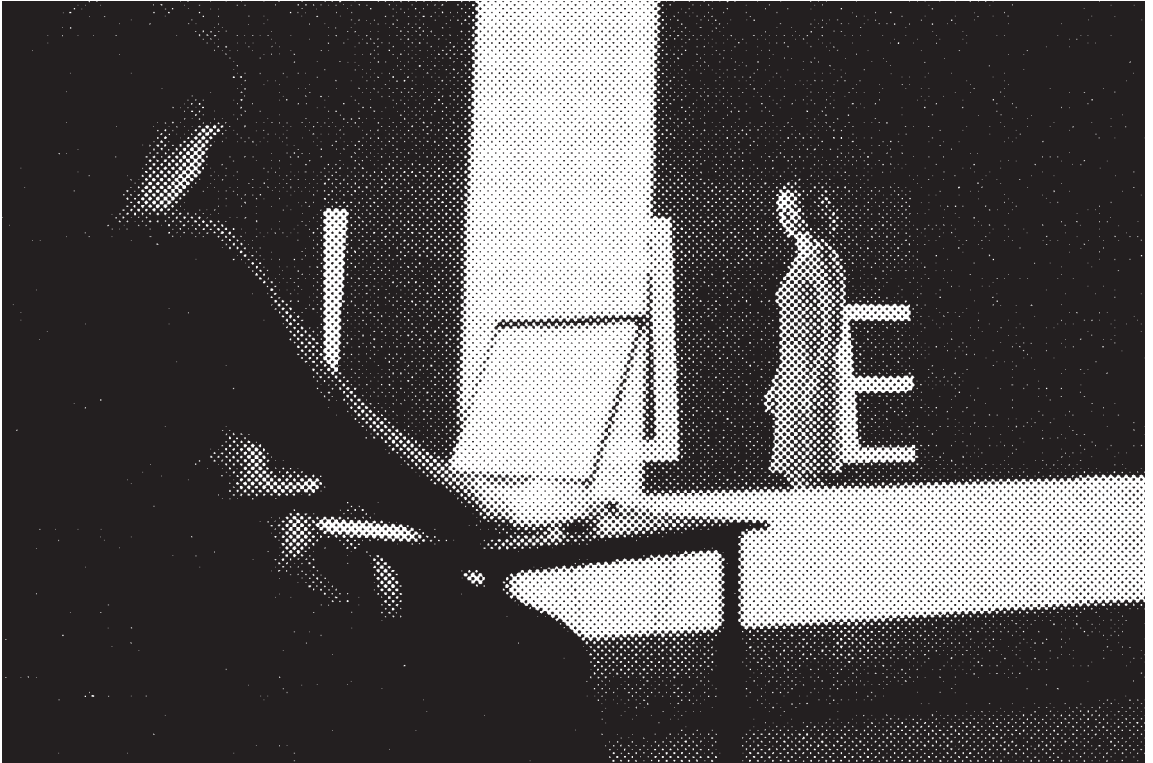
Vincent van Gogh: Leven en Werk
(*Vincent van Gogh: Life and Work*), 2006

1. From Simone Hogendijk. *De vele fascinaties van Joachim Robbrecht* (*Joachim Robbrecht's many fascinations*), тм (Theatermaker), no. 8, November 2006, p. 52.

‘IT SEEMS ONLY **LOGICAL**
TO ME THAT [QUEEN] BEATRIX
CAN INITIALLY RELATE BETTER
TO THE **DUTCH** CANON THAN
SOMEONE OF MOROCCAN ORIGIN.’
— FRITS VAN OOSTROM²



2. Frits van Oostrom is the president of the Royal **Netherlands** Academy of **Arts** and Sciences (KNAW) and was the chairman of the Committee for the **Development** of the **Dutch** Canon.



^ *New **Game***, 2004

New **game** exists only in a demo version.
You may **experience random** crashes and lock-ups.

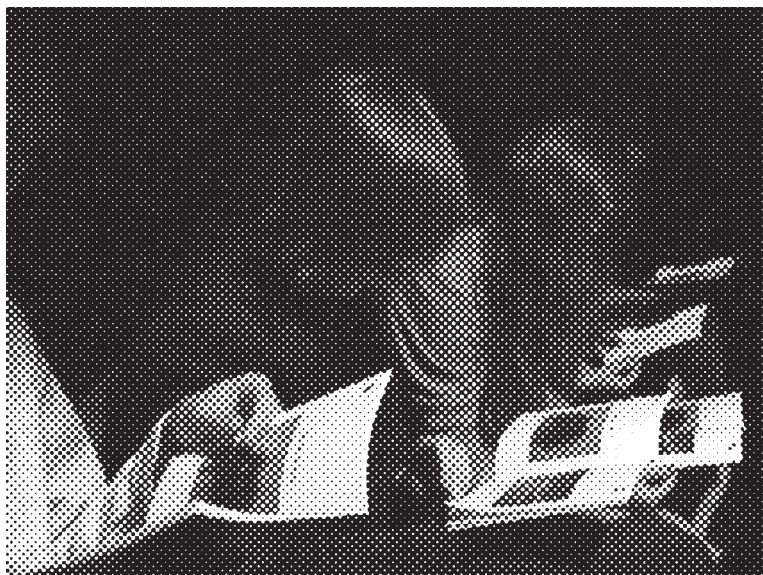
The **rules of the game** are unfair but strict.

Number of **players**: 2
(default setting: 1 female, 1 male).

The object of the **game** is to obtain
the 'unnamed target of perpetual yearning'
before **time** runs out.

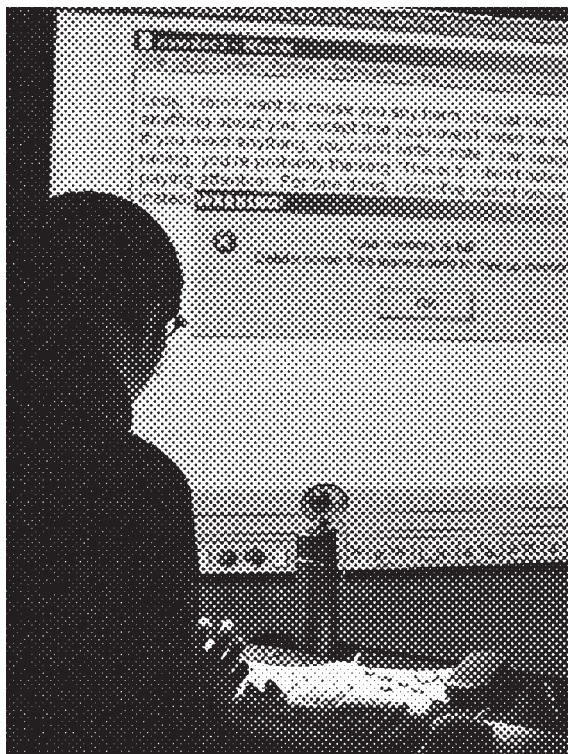
Primary **mission**: to keep going.

Manual: N/A.



^ *Drama*, 2005

‘As I **approach** the microphone the lights get brighter. My legs are slightly trembling. I’m not sure if anyone can notice. It is very hot here. I can feel my heart pounding heavily just behind my ears. The tightness in my head is becoming painful. The **music** begins. I try to take a deep breath. The oxygen does not reach my lungs. I gasp for more air. I gasp again. I start to choke. This is **now** definitely **visible** for everyone. I hope I’m not scaring them. The **music** speeds up. I watch myself as I automatically take another step forward. A sudden heat wave shoots up my spine and into my head. My nose starts bleeding. My bladder gives in. I’m coming unglued. I hear my voice say: **Welcome.**’



< *Or Press Escape*, 2002

‘When the first team of morons started approaching rhythmically from the sidelines, I clicked Retry. They marched on. **Cancel** didn’t **work** either. As last resort, there was still **ok**. I hesitated.’

Select all. Cut.

HET BELANG
VAN EEN KEELKLANK /
THE IMPORTANCE
OF A GUTTURAL SOUND

aaaah of aooh
diep van achteren, gevolgd door een zucht
een geluid dat ons overkomt
zonder het te merken hebben we ons verplaatst
heel even waren we de ander

after **theatre** gaan we weer naar huis
maar tijdens verplaatsen we ons
we herkennen ons in een lichaam dat niet het onze is

in een wereld vol identiteiten
zo zorgzaam opgebouwd dat het zonde zou zijn ze door te prikken
zijn we ze ten slotte maar gaan geloven
we verschillen, denken we nu

hoeveel schoons is er
voor diegene die ons laat voelen
dat we eigenlijk hetzelfde zijn

ik wil me herkennen
ik wil iemand anders dan ik, die het ook niet kan
en het liefst een vreemd publiek dat hetzelfde heeft

aaaah or aooh
from far behind, followed by a sigh
a sound that sweeps through us
without noticing, we have moved
for a **moment**, we were the other

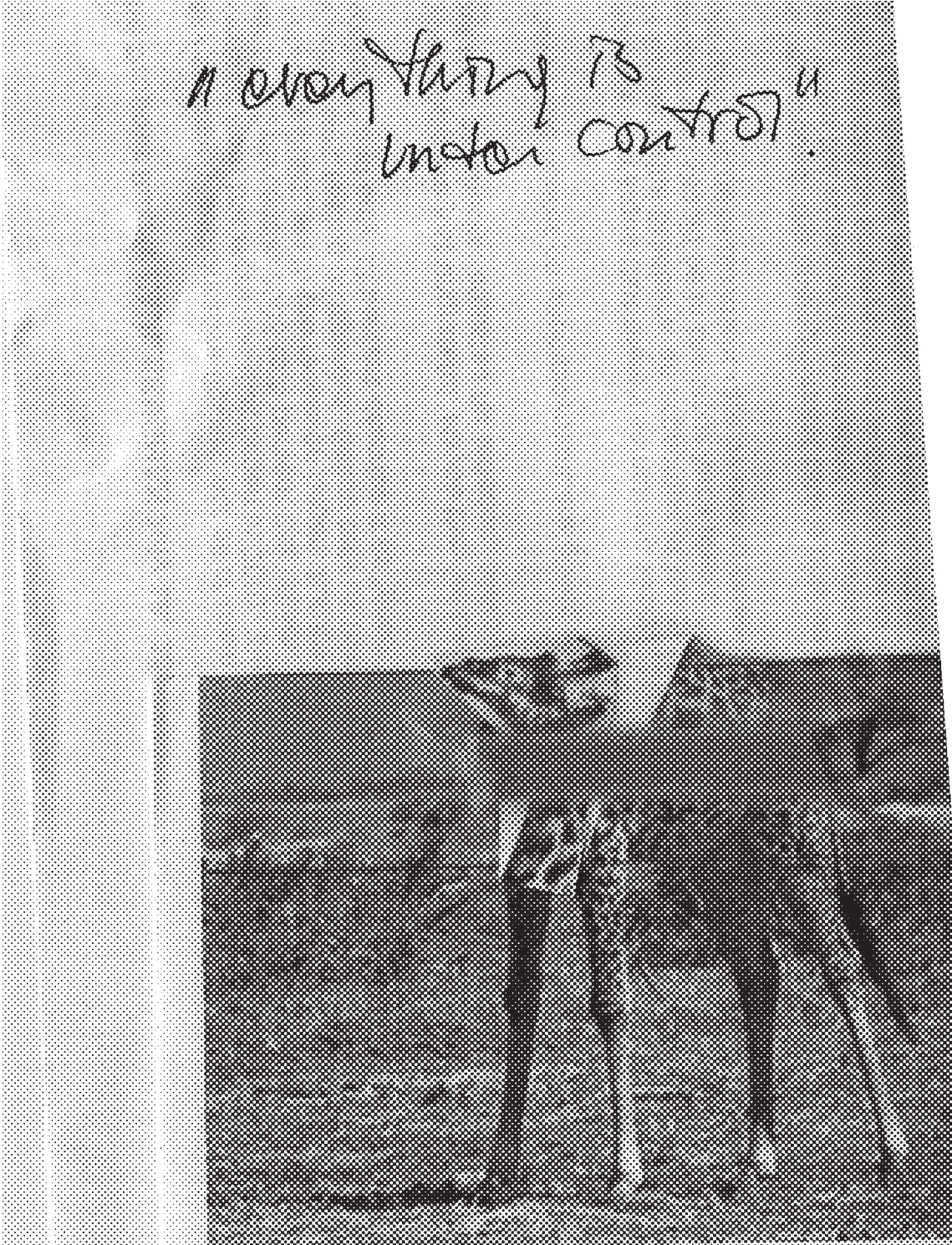
after **theatre** we go **home** once more
but during, we **shift**
we recognise ourselves in a **body** that is not our own

in a world crammed with identities
constructed with such care it would be a sin to shatter them
we have come to believe them after all
we differ, we **think now**

how much beauty is there
for the one who lets us feel
that we are in fact the same

I want to recognise myself
I want someone other than myself, who also cannot manage
and preferably an unfamiliar **audience** that feels the same

EVERYTHING
IS UNDER CONTROL



PARTICIPANTS

NA(AR) HET THEATER –
AFTER THEATRE? Conference

Coloured items denote contributors
to this book.

Bill Aitchison

London

Theatre and performance artist, regular collaborator with Apocryphal Theatre and Ivana Müller, performing across Europe and the us. He is completing his practice-based PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London; his thesis is entitled *From A–Z to II–VI: Integrating Corporeal Mime into a Performance Art Practice* (2007). Recent productions include *WRAP-AROUND ACTIVITY*, *Micro-Macro-Scope* (2007) and *24/7/52* (2007).

Petra Ardai and Luc van Loo

Amsterdam

spaceworld.nl
Directors of SPACE theatre company. This group creates exploratory operations and interdisciplinary, theatrical documentaries in which social topics are dissected and the political becomes personal. Recent works in cities such as Amsterdam, Utrecht, Berlin and Budapest are *Design God* (2005), *The Place Where We Belong* (2006), *Back to the Present* (2007).

Jetse Batelaan

Amsterdam

Theatre director, producing at ro Theater, Theater Gasthuis Amsterdam, with youth theatre company Max, and at the site-specific Oerol Festival on the island Terschelling. His radical work has won some of the most prestigious awards the field has to offer. Recent performances include *Toe vader, drink* (*Please father, drink*, 2005), *Voorstelling waarin hopelijk niets gebeurt* (*Performance in which hopefully nothing happens*, 2005), *Broeders* (*Brothers*) and *Kale bomen ruisen niet* (*Bare trees don't rustle*, 2006).

Lotte van den Berg

Antwerp / Amsterdam

toneelhuis.be

Theatre director. One of the core artists at Toneelhuis, Antwerp, where she produces sober, hushed productions about looking and feeling, and frequently about not understanding. Examples include the extraordinary *Begijnenstraat 42* (42, *Begijnen Street*, 2004), which was staged in a prison, the internationally praised *Stillen* (*Soothe*, 2007) and a number of site-specific projects. She is about to create her first play for the large auditorium, entitled *Winterverblijf* (*Winter Sojourn*).

Maaïke Bleeker

Utrecht

anatomicaltheatre revisited.com
uu.nl

Dramaturge, writer and Professor of Theatre and Dance Studies at the University of Utrecht, curator of the conference *Anatomical Theatre Revisited*, co-editor of *Theater Topics* and author of *Visuality in the Theatre. The Locus of Looking* (2008).

Andrea Bozic

Amsterdam

Performer, choreographer, multimedia artist. Has produced at Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam; Mousonturm, Frankfurt; as artist in residence at PACT-Zollverein Essen; and elsewhere. Recent performances with video artist Julia Willms and sound designer Robert Pravda include *It's Me But I'm No Longer There* (2005), *Ways to Multiply Yourself* (2005) and *Still Life with Man and Woman* (2006).

Ritsaert ten Cate

Amsterdam

touchtime.nl

Artist and author, founder and former director of Micky where, between 1965 and 1991, he presented, produced and made more than 700 influential international performances. Founder and former director of the post-academic studies programme DasArts. Visual artist operating from his most recent home base Touch Time; 'The space is an example of developments in hybrid enter-prises. A gallery? No. A shop? No. A workspace with opening hours? Again, no. Sorry.'

Nirav Christophe

Utrecht

hku.nl

Playwright for theatre, radio and television, professor at the Utrecht School of the Arts leading the research group *Making Processes in Theatre*, author of 'Writing as a reaction: a postmodern view to writing and the pedagogy of writing', in *Schreiben Lehren, Schreiben Lernen* (*Teaching Writing, Learning Writing*, 2005).

Igor Dobricic

Amsterdam

eurocult.org

almostweb.org

Dramaturge, arts programme officer at the European Cultural Foundation, and initiator of the funding project Almost Real. He also teaches dramaturgy at the School for New Dance Development at the Amsterdam School of the Arts.

Peter Eckersall

Melbourne

notyet.com.au

sca.unimelb.edu.au

Senior lecturer and coordinator of Theatre Studies at the School of Creative Arts, University of Melbourne, dramaturge of the artistic research unit Not Yet It's Difficult and author of *Theorising the Angura Space: avant-garde performance and politics in Japan 1960–2000* (2006).

Jeroen Fabius

Amsterdam
theaterschool.nl

Lecturer, dance researcher, coordinator of the Amsterdam Masters of Choreography (formerly Dance Unlimited) at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. Currently a member of the ARTI group (Artistic Research, Theory and Innovation) and PhD student at the University of Utrecht; thesis entitled *Materially politically body. The role of proprioception and kinesthetics in political subjectivity*.

Eve Hopkins

Rotterdam
ot-rotterdam.nl

Theatre scientist, translator, dramaturge at the Dutch multidisciplinary theatre company Onafhankelijk Toneel.

Edit Kaldor

Amsterdam / Brussels

Theatre director, performer and dramaturge, producing at Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels; wp Zimmer, Antwerp; Productiehuis, Rotterdam; Sophiensaele, Berlin; PS 122, New York; and elsewhere. Her performances often integrate various forms of digital media, as in *Or Press Escape* (2003), *New Game* (2004) or most recently *Point Blank* (2007). She also experiments through a series of 'crashtests', solos inspired by a particular person and his/her performing qualities; *Crashtest 01: Drama* (2005) was presented in STUK, Leuven.

Laura Karreman

Utrecht

Research master Art Studies student majoring in Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam, she also has a bachelors degree in Theatre, Film and Television Studies from Utrecht University. She is a dramaturge at Theater Gasthuis Amsterdam.

Chiel Kattenbelt

Utrecht
uu.nl

Writer and senior lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Utrecht. Former professor of the research group New Theatricality at Zuyd University, Maastricht, and co-editor of *Theater Topics*. He is the author and editor of *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (with Freda Chapple, 2006), *Theater en Technologie* (*Theatre and Technology*, 2007) and *Theater en Openbaarheid* (*Theatre and the Public Sphere*, 2007).

Marianne Van Kerkhoven

Brussels

kaaitheater.be

Writer and dramaturge at Kaaitheater since its founding in 1977. In the 1980s, Kaaitheater was the artistic home of many innovative artists, including Rosas, Jan Fabre, Needcompany, discordia, Jan Ritsema and Jan Decorte. She edited the four-lingual publication *Theaterschrift* and was on the editorial board of the Flemish magazine *Etcetera* for twenty years. More recently she worked with Josse de Pauw, Mark Vanrunxt, Hooman Sharifi and Kris Verdonck, among others. Author of *Van Het Kijken en Van Het Schrijven* (*On Looking and Writing*, 2002).

Vetka Kirillova

Frankfurt

vetka.da.ru

Theatre Studies student at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt, writing her thesis on Vladimir Sorokin's postdramatic texts. She recently joined andcompany&Co. for the production *Time Republic*.

Alexandra Koch

Amsterdam
hoteldramatik.com

Theatre director, producing at Toneelschuur, Haarlem, and elsewhere. She often collaborates with writers, including Esther Gerritsen, Paul Pourveur and Rob de Graaf. She is also one of the founding editors of Hotel Dramatik, a virtual platform for playwrights, theatre makers and the general public.

Anja Krans

Amsterdam

tin.nl

Theatre scientist, writer and staff member of the Knowledge and Information Department at the Dutch Theatre Institute (TIN). Author of *Vertraagd effect. Hedendaags theater in 1 inleiding en 18 interviews* (*Delayed effect. Contemporary theatre in 1 introduction and 18 interviews*, 2005).

Hans-Thies Lehmann

Frankfurt

tfm.uni-frankfurt.de;

hessische-theaterakademie.de

Professor at the Department for Theatre, Film and Media Studies at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. Prior to taking this position he co-founded the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen together with Professor Andrzej Wirth, and he recently founded a new Dramaturgy MA in collaboration with the Hessische Theaterakademie. He publishes extensively on contemporary theatre practice and is a lecturer and guest professor in France, Lithuania, Poland, the USA and Japan. His books include *Postdramatisches Theater* (*Postdramatic Theatre*, 1999), *Das politische Schreiben. Essays zu Theatertexten* (*Political writing. Essays to theatre texts*, 2002), *Heiner Müller Handbuch* (*Heiner Müller Handbook*, with Patrick Primavesi, 2004).

Barbara van Lindt

Brussels
kunstenfestivaldesarts.be
 Programmer of the
 Kunstenfestivaldesarts, former
 artistic director of wp Zimmer,
 Antwerp, former director of
 Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam,
 and currently advisor at DasArts.

maatschappij discordia

Amsterdam
xs4all.nl/~discordi/
 Repertory company established
 in 1981; members are Jan Joris
 Lamers, Matthias de Koning,
 Annette Kouwenhoven, Miranda
 Prein and Jorn Heijdenrijk.
 The company was once one
 of the most productive actors'
 collectives in the country.
 Its work extends to collabora-
 tions with younger ensembles,
 as with the De Republiek
 (The Republic) initiative and
 more recently with Dertien
 Rijen (Thirteen Rows).

Florian Malzacher

Graz / Frankfurt
unfriendly-takeover.de
steirischerherbst.at
 Programmer of the *steirischer*
herbst festival, Graz, freelance
 journalist, initiator and member
 of the curators' collective
 Unfriendly Takeover, Frankfurt.
 Author and editor of
Not Even a Game Anymore.
The Theatre of Forced Entertain-
ment (with Judith Helmer, 2004)
 and *Experten des Alltags*,
Das Theater von Rimini Protokoll
 (with Miriam Dreyse, 2007).

Ivana Müller

Amsterdam / Paris
associationlisa.com
 Performance artist,
 choreographer, theatre director,
 producing at Theater Gasthuis,
 Amsterdam; Mousonturm,
 Frankfurt; Productiehuis,
 Rotterdam; stuk Leuven;
 Sophiensaele, Berlin; and else -
 where. Co-founder and member
 of the artists' collective LISA:
 'A frame for meeting and
 exchange, for the development
 of different models of
 producing, coexisting and
 engaging.' Recent works include
How Heavy Are My Thoughts
 (2004), *Under My Skin* (2005)
 and *As We Were Holding it*
Together (2006).

Mike Pearson

Aberystwyth
aber.ac.uk
 Theatre director, performer
 and professor of Performance
 Studies at the University
 of Wales at Aberystwyth,
 collaborating with Mike Brookes
 as Pearson / Brookes Company.
 Founder and former director
 of the Welsh performance group
 Brith Gof, author of *Theatre /*
Archeology (2001) and
In Comes I, Performance,
Memory and Landscape (2006).

Ibrahim Quraishi

Amsterdam / New York
faimdesiecle.org
 Conceptual artist, writer and
 artistic director of Compagnie
 Faim de Siecle since 1998,
 who over the last five years has
 created numerous site-specific
 installations and performances
 in festivals and galleries
 throughout Europe, Asia
 and us. Recent work between
 the interaction of visual art
 forms, digital media and live
 performances includes *5 Streams*
 (2005), *SARAY Mozart*
alla Turca (2006) and *AOI:*
Afraid of I / I (2007).

Joachim Robbrecht

Rotterdam
 Theatre director. Frequently
 collaborates with Sarah
 Moeremans, producing at
 Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam,
 and De Veenfabriek, Leiden.
 Recently worked on a series of
 performances about the cultural
 identity of The Netherlands:
Van Gogh: Leven en Werk
 (Van Gogh, *Life and Work*, 2005),
Adam in Ballingschap
 (Adam in Exile, 2006) and
IJs (Ice, 2007).

Heike Roms

Aberystwyth
aber.ac.uk
performance-wales.org
 Performance Studies lecturer
 at the University of Wales,
 Aberystwyth. Coordinator of the
 MA Practising Performance,
 consultant editor of *Performance*
Research, and former board mem-
 ber of psi (Performance Studies
 international). Her research
 project 'What's Welsh for Perfor-
 mance?' uncovers the history
 of performance art in Wales.

Boukje Schweigman

Amsterdam
 Theatre director and performer,
 producing at De Veenfabriek,
 Leiden; Huis a/d Werf, Utrecht;
 hetteem theater, Amsterdam;
 and elsewhere. She collaborates
 with the stage designer Theun
 Mosk, and also with Paul Koek
 and Enrique Vargas. Recent
 award-winning work includes
Klep (Flap, 2003), *Weef* (Weave,
 2005) and *Wervel* (Twirl, 2005).

Arthur Sonnen

Amsterdam
sica.nl
 Collaborates with the Service
 Center for International
 Cultural Activities. Founder and
 former director of the Dutch-
 Flemish Theatre Festival. Former
 theatre programmer of the
 Holland Festival.

Tom Stromberg

Streckenthin / Pritzwalk
tom-stromberg.de
festivalimpulse.de
 Artistic director of the Impulse
 Festival (together with Mathias
 von Hartz). Founder of
 wasihrwollt PRODUCTIONS and
 w.i.w. Academy. Was director
 of Theater am Turm, Frankfurt,
 and executive artistic director
 of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus,
 Hamburg.

Julie Théron

London
aldivina.artofdiversity.net
 Theatre scientist and performer.
 Graduated in Paris in Dutch and
 Flemish Theatre, and is now a
 masters student of Performance
 Making at Goldsmiths,
 University of London.

Kathrin Tiedemann

Düsseldorf
forum-freies-theater.de
 Artistic director of the Forum
 Freies Theater in Düsseldorf,
 one of the most important
 places for independent theatre
 in Germany. She was the
 dramaturge at Kampnagel,
 Hamburg, curator of the *reich*
& berühmt (rich & famous)
 festival in Berlin, and editor and
 theatre critic for *Theater der*
Zeit and *Freitag*. She writes
 and lectures on contemporary
 performance practice in
 Düsseldorf and elsewhere.

Mark Timmer

Amsterdam
theatergasthuis.nl
nesttheaters.nl

Artistic director of Theater Gasthuis / Frascati, Amsterdam, which is one of the biggest independent venues in the Dutch theatre landscape, combining the presentation, production and development of cutting edge work by the most talented new makers. Former artistic director of Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam, and Plaza Futura, Eindhoven.

Nicola Unger

Rotterdam
zeebelt.nl /
DarkSide_Hausbenzin.htm
 Theatre director and media artist. Producing at Kampnagel, Hamburg; Theater Zeebelt, Den Haag; Sophiensaele, Berlin; and elsewhere – often for digital spaces. She has collaborated with Edit Kaldor and Marion Tränkle. Recent productions include *Samtmanns Familien-abend* (*Samtmann's evening at home with the family*, 2005), *Hausbenzin* (*Domestic Fuel*, 2007).

Helene Varopoulou

Athens
 Theatre critic and journalist. Since the 1970s, she has specialised in European cultures and new developments in international theatre; she writes essays and theory-oriented articles on theatre, art and culture. She has translated a series of works by Heiner Müller from German into Greek and is the curator of the Summer Academy of the National Theatre of Athens.

David Weber-Krebs

Amsterdam / Berlin
associationlisa.com
 Theatre director, producing at Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam; Sophiensaele, Berlin; and elsewhere. Co-founder and member of the artists' collective LISA. Recent performances include *this performance* (2004), *fade out* (2006) and *the words Jonathan said* (2007) – a trilogy that reflects on the place of fiction in theatre. He also makes lecture performances to interrogate the practice of his work.

Georg Weinand

Amsterdam
dasarts.nl
 Dramaturge. Presently associated with DasArts, he was part of the Belgian theatre company AGORA and worked as a dramaturg with, among others, Wim Vandekeybus and his group Ultima Vez. He is a co-founder and former member of Les Ballets du Grand Maghreb.

Judith Wendel

Amsterdam
 Dramaturge, teaching theatre theory and dramaturgy at the Theatre School, Amsterdam School of the Arts. Collaborates with Judith de Rijke and others, and used to be the dramaturge of the feminist production unit Atelier D in Amsterdam.

organisers**Marijke Hoogenboom**

Amsterdam
lectoraten.ahk.nl
artpractice.ahk.nl
 Professor of Art Practice and Development at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. Co-founder of DasArts, where she was a dramaturge. She is also a freelance dramaturge, curator and consultant for arts and education in the Netherlands and beyond.

Nicola Nord

Frankfurt / Berlin
andco.de
 Theatre maker and performer. Co-founder and member of andcompany&Co., an artists' collective that produces at Theater Gasthuis, Amsterdam; Forum Freies Theater, Düsseldorf; Kunstenfestival-desarts, Brussels; and elsewhere. Recent productions include *for urbanites – nach den großen Städten* (*for urbanites – after the big cities*, 2004), *europe an alien* (2006), *little red (play): 'herstory'* (2007). The company was 'foreign correspondent' at the Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2007.

Alexander Karschnia

Frankfurt / Berlin
andco.de
 Theatre maker and scientist. Currently writing his PhD thesis on Heiner Müller's *Shakespeare Factory*, under the supervision of Hans-Thies Lehmann. Co-founder and member of andcompany&Co. and author and co-editor of *Zum Zeitvertreib* (*Pastime*, with Oliver Kohns, Stefanie Kreuzer and Christian Spies, 2005).

documentation**Louise Moana Kolff**

Sydney
louisekolff.net
 Graphic designer and visual artist. PhD student at the College of Fine Art (COFA), Sydney, and The National Centre in HIV AIDS Social Research (NCHSR), University of New South Wales, Sydney; her thesis is entitled *The dilemma of visualising taboos in HIV/AIDS campaigns*.

Niels Schrader

Amsterdam
minddesign.info
 Graphic designer. His work focuses on the translation of digital data into physical media and vice versa. Major clients include DasArts, Episode Publishers and Museum De Paviljoens. He currently teaches at the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam.

Sascha Sulimma

Amsterdam
andco.de
 Sound artist and DJ, producing music for performance, theatre, dance and installations. Co-founder and member of andcompany&Co. and founder of &Co.SOUNDSYSTEM.

NA(AR) HET THEATER – AFTER THEATRE?

Conference Programme

Tuesday 14 February

14:00–16:00

Theory training

The drama of drama

by Alexander Karschnia

Location: Theatre School

20:00–21:00

Performance

Who's afraid of representation?

by Rabih Mroué

Location: De Brakke Grond,

Something Raw Festival

Thursday 16 February

19:30–24:00

Opening night and dinner

Deeping ritual for truth & extravagance

by Julie Thérond

Location: DasArts

Friday 17 February

Politics of Production

From co-production to collaboration?

Conference lounge open all day

10:30–13:00

Conversation

***Where were the places and networks
of production for postdramatic theatre,
what choices were made and why?***

With Ritsaert ten Cate, founder
of Mickery and DasArts,
Tom Stromberg, former executive
artistic director of Theater
am Turm (TAT) and the Deutsches
Schauspielhaus, Hamburg,
and Hans-Thies Lehmann.
Location: Theatre School

13:00–14:30

Lunch

14:30–17:00

Discussion

***Where and in what ways is
international co-production taking
place today (both within and beyond
institutional platforms)? What
new modes of artistic collaboration
are there, and what is needed
to make theatre making possible?***

Producers and presenters respond
to the contemporary practice
of younger makers, with a statement
by Kathrin Tiedemann from
the Forum Freies Theater (FFT),
Düsseldorf.

Location: Theatre School,

20:00

Public lecture

Theatre after theatre

by Hans-Thies Lehmann

Location: University Theatre

Saturday 18 February

Practice Theory!

From theatre performance
to performance theatre?

Conference lounge open all day

10:30–13:00

Seminar

FAQs

Hans-Thies Lehmann with special
guests Mike Pearson and Heike Roms
(Aberystwyth, University of Wales).

Location: Theatre School

13:00–14:30

Lunch

14:30–17:00

Dialogue

Where is the theatre?

*How to stage the exchange between
theoretical practice and practice-
based theory? What is the relation-
ship between practice / theory and
theatre / performance?*

With theoreticians, practitioners
and those who are both at the same
time: Mike Pearson, Bill Aitchison
and others.

Location: Theatre School

20:00–21:00

Performance

Cover

by Fin Novembre / Rachid Ouramdane

Location: Frascati,

Something Raw Festival

Sunday 19 February

Text Theatre

From text-based theatre to a theatre
of texts?

13:00–17:00

Staged dialogue

*Brunch with discordia: What
is the role of reading and writing
in theatre today?*

About words on a page: the status
of repertory, text and dramaturgy
in postdramatic theatre.

With maatschappij discordia,
Alexandra Koch (Hotel Dramatik)
and others.

Location: maatschappij discordia

19:00

Presentation

*Between presentation
and representation*

NA(AR) HET THEATER –

AFTER THEATRE? goes public:

presentation of documented material
from the conference. What comes
after postdramatic theatre?

Discussion with Florian Malzacher,
Alexander Karschnia,
Marijke Hoogenboom and others.

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editors

Marijke Hoogenboom
Alexander Karschnia

contributors

Marijke Hoogenboom
Alexander Karschnia
Marianne Van Kerkhoven
Hans-Thies Lehmann
Kathrin Tiedemann

German-English translation

Nicholas Lakides

**Dutch-English translation
and English copy-editing**

Steve Green

publication design

Niels Schrader

database concept and design

Louise Moana Kolff
Niels Schrader

data management

Pascal de Man

photography

Christoph Bolten (page 145)
I. Helen Jilavu (page 19)
Sofie Knijf (pages 146–147)
Reyn van Koolwijk (page 149)
Thomas Lenden (pages 82–105)
Tom Moerel (pages 106–117)
Bert Nienhuis (pages 118–119)
Frank Theys (page 149)
Kirk Woolford (page 148)

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HANS-THIES LEHMANN

In art, no experimentation is possible without risks, and we should welcome even the failures as long as we sense an honest attempt to find a way beyond established forms that lack the power of conviction. No general judgement is possible. Everything depends on the quality, the scope, the depth and the honesty of the individual practice. The space in which these explorations take place must be defended by society.

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