



## **“Cultural Education vs. Artistic Freedom – International Festivals in times of Crisis”**

A conference on 19th and 20th May 2014 in Bochum  
within the framework of FIDENA (Figurentheater der Nationen)

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# Artistic Freedom vs. Cultural Education? International Festivals in times of Crisis

International Symposium, May 2014

**Annette Dabs**



Faizan Peerzada 2003



Roberto Ciulli und Shiva Massoudi 2007

## **First Symposium 2003**

The first global conference of puppet theatre festival directors took place in Bochum in 2003. The idea arose during work in the Unima Festival Commission. The theme of the first symposium was: Is obstinacy required? International Festivals in times of Globalisation. There was an immense need for a platform for professional exchanges and networking. Festival directors travelled to Bochum from 30 different states worldwide. They came from Pakistan, Zambia, Lebanon, the USA, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Israel, Russia, Mexico, Algeria, Ukraine, Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia, Great Britain, Belgium, France, the Czech Republic and Germany. The response was overwhelming. The talks and discussions – simultaneously translated into German, English and French – left a deep impression on us all. We had intensive and at times temperamental discussions about the global market and cultural aesthetics, society and commitment, and regions and identity. At the end we set up the so-called Tucholsky Connection, named after the hotel where all the participants resided. Communications then took place via the Internet and it has now become a true institution.

## **Second Symposium 2007**

Everything cried out for a follow-up, but this did not take place until 2007 because of a lack of funds. Once more around 40 participants gathered in Bochum. The new festival directors came from India, Scotland, Poland, the Congo, Kenya, Iran and Finland. Its theme was: Is responsibility required? International Festivals in times of Globalisation. This time discussions did not centre round aesthetics or a distinctive programme, but festivals with a social aim, festivals in crisis regions and developing countries. But we also talked about demographic factors, about the need to integrate a multicultural audience, and finally about the (then) new movement for so-called green festivals, in other words ecological sustainability.

## **Third Symposium 2014**

After that we were unable to meet up for years and the current total of 84 members in the Tucholsky Connection were desperate for the next symposium: this time on the theme of Artistic Freedom vs. Cultural Education? International Festivals in times of Crisis.

For centuries now art has oscillated between the contradictions of autonomy and social criticism, or autonomy and practical relevance. Currently theatre is tending to concentrate less on artistic conceptions than on political and social practice; and there is once more a great unease about dealing with “purely aesthetic” problems. Why? Because there is a shortage of money for the arts in a time of crisis and a genuine understanding of art is lacking? Here there are loud demands to examine the usefulness of art with regard to the burning questions about the “real” world.

Hence cultural workers (and these include artists and festival makers) are making great efforts to give proof of their awareness of social problems through their social and educational commitment. Arts education work and theatre-in-education work are now taking up more and more space and significance. Purely artistic work is therefore tending to lag behind. Intercultural matters, diversity and the accompanying permanent changes

in audiences due to migration and demographic factors are major challenges that artists have to, indeed want to face.

At the same time there have been a number of different attempts to embrace art as an economic benefit. Cultural workers are supposed to take an example from the creative economy that allegedly can survive without external funding and, furthermore, constitutes a spill-over to a faltering economy. Artists especially are suffering from this current pressure to justify their work. And on top of this we are now faced with the planned arbitration law in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which threatens to destroy at a stroke all the cultural standards and freedoms for which we have struggled. Is it therefore long overdue to make a case for artistic freedom?

We festival directors now find ourselves caught between a huge number of different, and often contradictory responsibilities. How do we deal with this situation? Are we caught in a quandary? If so, perhaps art itself can offer us possible solutions. When all is said and done there exist unusual artistic forms of cultural mediation. For the symposium in 2014 we decided to discuss these questions, some of which were completely polarising.

Forty participants accepted our invitation to attend; and here I would like to express my warmest thanks not only to the speakers but also to our funding bodies and all our helping hands. I hope that this documentation will be able to give you a good idea of the intensive atmosphere in the symposium. I am hugely grateful not only for the fact that we managed to meet up, but also for the huge amount of inspiration and ideas thrown up: not least for the feeling of togetherness amongst committed festival directors who feel duty-bound to take on added responsibility and meet the problems with all the resources available. Long live the Tucholsky Connection!



Gerard Mortier 2003



Yaya Coulibali 2007



Annette Dabs 2014

# Artistic freedom is for everyone

## Notes on a timely debate

Keynote speech



### Oliver Kontny

By putting a versus between artistic freedom and cultural education, Fidenä playfully posited a clear opposition of artistic freedom versus cultural education, in order for us to come and say 'No, actually it's more complex.' They are mutually dependent, they have always already been intertwined, there can be no proper cultural education without artistic freedom and the exercise of artistic freedom hinges on the cultural education of young, prospective audiences.

But we are also invited to talk about 'Festivals in Times of Crisis'. This crisis has already erupted and killed or maimed people we love, prevented us from loving people we could have loved, that has impoverished people materially and mentally so that they cannot come to see the artistic art we wish to present. The civil war in Syria and the atrocities committed by Isis, the potentially global conflict surrounding the Ukraine, the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the horrifying elections in India, the equally horrifying landslide victory of the Front National in France, are aspects of crisis that perfuse our social media and influence the way we see the future. For many of us, these catastrophes have immediate effects on our lives and our work. For even more of us, the neoliberal escalation of global wealth redistribution is posing a threat to our livelihood and of course, to the festivals and performances we are involved in.

I have been working in various walks of life, and I think I have found something unique in theatre. Most theatre people I met have a penchant for crisis. They need crisis. They need to produce crisis and escalate problems in order to go about their daily work. So I am talking to a bunch of people here who know that crisis is a time of immense ambiguity. That kind of ambiguity that can really destroy our lives, but also bears the potential for a radical repositioning, born out of pain and fear and the spirit of defiance. A lot of Reggae songs feature lines attributed to Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican leader: "You're not gonna know yourself until your back is against the wall."

Growing up in Dortmund in the late eighties and early nineties, I simply did not realize that there should be a gap between youth culture, counter culture and high-brow avantgarde. We were out to discover whatever there was to be discovered, and honestly nobody told us that there should be an invisible, but impenetrable threshold between Reggae, Punk, Hip Hop and Joseph Beuys, John Cage and Pina Bausch. For me, Joe Strummer and Theodor Adorno were both allies in a messed up world. Such was my education sentimentale, my eclectic cultural education, and it would be outrageous to say that communal, publicly funded institutions and programmes didn't play an important role in that. I have no idea whether the programmers of these institutions ever felt threatened in their artistic freedom due to the perceived obligation to cater for people like myself.

Today however the future audiences we are looking at are no longer called Oliver but Zeynep and Aissatou and some of them are wearing headscarves. Apparently this is why the question whether programmers and funders should devise cultural education programmes directed at these future audiences can be perceived as a threat to their artistic freedom. A lot of the time we are talking about 'outreach programmes',

cultural education and the inclusion of younger, diverse audience, theatre people who have a distinct artistic language at their disposal express worries that they will be required to give it up in favour of what they perceive as an artistic language those young people will like and understand. My experience tells me that in most cases the problem lies in the warped notions this particular white, middle-class artist will have about younger people of colour and poorer social background, and perhaps in the mistaken idea that only people who have the same skin colour and cultural capital will be able to understand this wonderfully exceptional, distinct artistic language.

This is how the perceived antagonism artistic freedom versus cultural education comes about and I must say this is a very European issue. I cannot imagine an Iranian artist fighting for artistic freedom who thinks that the exercise of this human right could ever be obtained without actively getting other people to understand what she is trying to do, drawing on a rich common heritage that spans from the 9th-century epics of Ferdousi and Nezami to the vibrant postmodernist Iranian cinema of the 1990s. I cannot imagine an Indian playwright who doesn't think of cultural education as a means to achieve artistic freedom rather than a threat to its unfettered exercise. And while I was in Indonesia last year, I had the chance to watch a gripping documentary film about puppet theatre artists from Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, France and Germany who came together in a village in Thailand to work on how existing idioms of puppetry could be used to incorporate contemporary social issues. To them, the search for artistic freedom and the exercise of cultural freedom seemed to have been one and the same thing.

This is where the actuality of the crisis comes in. To put it in most simple terms, we have to engage in projects and institutional rebuilding that will allow all young people, particularly disenfranchised people of colour, irrespectively of their creed or first language to exercise artistic freedom in the way they wish to exercise it, because this right is indivisible. We need to negotiate Alterity. I am sure there are people in this room today who already have rich experiences to this effect to share and I am looking forward to discussing them. If we succeed, we will have a young generation of artists and ardent spectators who will come to our defence the next time a performance by Romeo Castellucci gets busted by a bunch of reactionary Christians. If we fail, we will be all alone and helpless the moment crisis comes to strike us. And this is where Benjamin's reading of the crisis as an epistemological way out comes in. You may know that the German Jewish Marxist Walter Benjamin wrote his theses on the concept of history in 1939 while trying to escape from the Gestapo by crossing the border from France to Spain: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "emergency situation" in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this. Then it will become clear that the task before us is the introduction of a real state of emergency; and our position in the struggle against Fascism will thereby improve."

The term *Ausnahmezustand* (state of emergency, state of exception) may refer to the civil war in Syria and Iraq, the polarisation between militant secularists and supporters of Islamic governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, the mobilization of a Hindu elite against low-caste and Muslim citizens by the future administration of India, etc. and if you follow the disproportionate police crackdown on refugee protests in Hamburg and Berlin, or the hateful comments that users of social media leave in German, Swedish or French internet sites concerning either refugees or Muslim compatriots, you may well get the impression that this is coming to your door. In a way, we are looking at a global state of emergency.



Walter Benjamin posited that “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘emergency situation’ in which we live is the rule.” Artists and activists in most countries all over the world already have a long tradition of working without public funding vis-a-vis often hostile governments and in environments where irritable, easily agitated segments of society can turn against them for having expressed views or used semiotic codes considered unacceptable. This has been part and parcel of the global contemporary experience for a long time, and perhaps the worsening funding situation and dwindling acceptance for liberalism and artistic privilege will allow us in the Western metropolises to connect with international artists in a new way: No longer as the procurers and administrators of funding and the keepers of artistic expertise, but as people who need to learn how to cope with a situation that is getting difficult. International artists and scholars in the postcolonial field have long criticized the paternalism involved in ‘intercultural projects’, and the impending crisis might be a good opportunity to re-think their critique and abandon the habitus of the suave artist reflecting on just how much of the plight of the other people on this earth he can allow into his field of sight without losing the prerogative to produce ineffably artistic art.

A performance situation is an exceptional situation. What we do is to create a new aesthetic and social space that consists in the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, breaks some of the rules of everyday life and creates some others. Performance spaces can function as a heterotopia and perhaps puppet and object theatre are particularly prone to do so, since they always already dislocate the body of the performer. This Ausnahmezustand, this exceptional situation that live performance arts can bring about has often been dubbed a ‘social laboratory’, and the master narrative of the Mad Scientist has it that whenever a terrible crisis is threatening humanity, the Mad Scientist will withdraw into her lab, only to emerge at the right time with an awesome contraption. Let’s do it.

## The eight Utopias for Lecce



### Airan Berg

Airan Berg is the artistic coordinator of Lecce, European Capital of Culture 2019. He lives in Lecce, in the middle of its historic, artistic beauties and especially in the middle of the community. The main slogan of the European Capital is: "To reinvent EUtopia". What does that mean? DEMOCRAtopia is one of the utopias the project is based upon; this utopia describes the heart and the chief aim of this six-year-EU-project: "DEMOCRAtopia is the city that we want to build as the result of the experience and collective knowledge of its citizens. Democracy, here, is a process of dialogues, practiced daily. It is a process that will place the citizen in the centre of development and will give respect to the needs and dreams of the individual. It is a place where everyone has a voice, which is heard. DEMOCRAtopia promotes the change of our political culture." The idea of the European Capital of Culture is: " (...) the chance the city has to reinvent itself and to organize the projects for the next ten years".

In the discussion during the conference Berg refused to use the term 'cultural education'. To him, it's more about 'learning' and the 'creative process'. He points out that art does not automatically educate towards participation. In totalitarian systems it may go in the wrong direction. The following text describes the eight utopias on which the project is based and which Airan Berg presented in his lecture during the congress in Bochum.

### The eight utopias for Lecce 2019

The concept of the programme encompasses the eight different utopias that together make up the Reinventing Eutopia process. The Utopias meet each other to generate a leap to reinvent ourselves in a bottom-up process, which is politically, socially, and geographically defined. It is in the interfaces, where these Utopias connect, that interdisciplinary contamination and innovation can take place.

The year itself will be an opportunity to reflect, analyse, evaluate, and transfer intermediate results into playful and creative formats. We will utilize 2019 as a year of celebration of a six year work process and 2019 will be the springboard for the years to come.

### DEMOCRAtopia

Model for democratic participation, administration & governance

The principle EUTOPIA for the years leading up to 2019 is DEMOCRAtopia. This part of the programme will be fundamental in the creation of a climate of trust, awareness, collaborative spirit, and ownership.

DEMOCRAtopia will identify the topics and will deliberate on the priorities of the Cultural Capital Year. Additionally the transformation of public administrations into creative administrations, able to cooperate across genres and with civil society, will be an important focus for this Utopia.

### POLIStopia

Model for social welfare, inclusion & accessibility

POLIStopia is an urban social model that focuses on inclusion and accessibility, where excluding individuals means a loss of value. Where the participation of all takes place with a minimum of marginalization and a maximum of involvement.

POLIStopia is the city which is open to all, on all occasions, with a cultural responsibility to transform people with special needs into people with special abilities, and where the culture of greed becomes a culture of generosity and solidarity.



An active citizenship will be needed to move towards DEMOCRAtopia and POLIStopia. For an individual to be independent, knowledge and an empowering education are basic conditions. A critical awareness of one-self, of one's cultural background, and of the world is essential in order to transform individual values into collective ones through social interaction.

### **EDUtopia**

Model for knowledge through education revolution

EDUtopia is the model in which places of education become structures with open doors to the city; a model of inclusive values, where people are both teachers and students at the same time, protagonists of their own learning process; a model that recognizes their individual talents so that they be able to fulfill their goals and dreams through our Education Revolution.

### **TALENTopia**

Model for enhancement of human potential & youth;

TALENTopia will focus on the development of human potential. As the world has become preoccupied with the financial and climate crisis, too little attention has been paid to the human resource crisis, in which talent is wasted. Unfortunately we have become experts in wasting human potential, neglecting the experience of the individual and the knowledge of communities.

TALENTopia is the transformation of Lecce and other communities in the territory into a creative ecosystem of Communities of Knowledge, which will grow with the exchanges and the plurality of experiences and social values of all participants, who live with respect towards their own territory, towards their landscape, as well as towards themselves.

### **PROFITopia**

Model for new economic models, job development & co-operation

Economies thrive on talent and knowledge. Human potential is a valuable re-source in our model of PROFItopia, which recognizes the fact that the well-being of individuals does not only depend on the fulfillment of material needs, but also on the fulfilment of social needs, such as trust, friendship, family, and solidarity. It transforms a society built on private profit to a society that is built on profit for all, giving the opportunity to everybody to choose one's own way of living.

### **ECOTopia**

Model for self-sustainability, environment & humanization of medicine

PROFITopia generates an economy that will profit entrepreneurs and employees alike, as well as communities and the environment.

The right use of the environment and our reconciliation with it are the central focuses of ECOTopia.

The lack of sustainable planning, the influx of seasonal tourism, and greed have led to rapid and unbalanced urban developments in our territory.

The cities have lost their former relationship with the rural landscapes.

This has laid bare the problems associated with modern urban development, such as low quality and mono-functional districts in the suburbs.

ECOTopia looks at the transitions within the urban and the rural and their connection with the two seas, giving us the opportunity to rethink blue and narrate ourselves as a civilization of the Mediterranean.

As we reconcile with our environment we must look inward and reconcile with our own bodies as well. ECOTopia is the territory where human needs are well balanced with the needs of nature and the place where the needs of our soul and the needs of our bodies are balanced through the humanisation of medicine, and a state of being in which we rethink our happiness.

## **EXPERIENTopia**

Model for new forms of travel, tourism & interaction

EXPERIENTopia is the sum of all components connecting contemporary culture, cultural heritage, leisure, gastronomy, sports, and new forms of mobility, into the Salento Experience.

This also means: regaining possession of traditional and contemporary knowledge which will allow us to live in harmony with our environment, rediscovering the authentic taste of food, and regaining the manual ability to reconnect with the land, even in urban environments. We, who live here, can 'rediscover' our territory in this process, just as the traveller newly discovers, while experiencing our hospitality, while being welcomed like family, savoring our culture and enriching it at the same time.

## **ARTopia**

Model for artistic creation & role of artists in social innovation

The positive virus that contaminates the Utopias with a creative spirit, thereby generating change, originates in ARTopia. Whether in their role of animators of participation, or as agents for creativity in schools, or as healers of spiritual illnesses, the artists will play many roles in this process. By contaminating the different Utopias they will nourish them with creativity and a playful spirit. While absorbing the needs of the Utopias, the positive virus will adapt itself in respect to their specific realities. By traveling through the Utopias, the 'virus' will allow them to inter-communicate and identify common needs, desires, and cravings, potentially generating new knowledge and thereby creating innovation.

# Cultural Mediation in Québec

Louise Lapointe



My presentation is focussed on cultural mediation in the Québec artistic scene and more specifically in our puppet milieu. It also offers upfront a concrete example of an activity organized by Casteliers and its multifaceted impact on our organization as well as on the public.

## Introduction

Like in most Western countries, cultural mediation is actually on the forefront of many practices in Québec. In 2005, the city of Montreal (Québec, Canada) adopted a Policy for Cultural Development which made cultural mediation the main axis of intervention to facilitate access to culture to all citizens. Since then, hundreds of projects have been developed in every borough of the city, and several of them within the educational institutions.

In May 2014, the results of a large study held over the last six years by sociologists entitled *The impact of cultural mediation: participation, expression, change* (Les effets de la médiation culturelle : participation, expression, changement) were published. They attest to the positive effects of cultural mediation for all: participants, organizations, mediators and artists.

The study stresses that cultural mediation activities have as strong impact on participants as on organizations that organize and promote them, as for the artists who give them and who often are inspired by them later in their own creative practice. They permit real meetings and exchanges between individuals.

It is important to note the main conclusion of the study: we do not need large researches on this thematic any more. What we now need are political decisions to finance the continuation of cultural mediation projects! Last April, many of the same findings were brought up by a group of about twenty puppeteers who attended a meeting organized by the Association québécoise des marionnettistes (AQM), UNIMA-Canada Center (Québec section). The theme was: 'Cultural Education versus Artistic Freedom'. Some positive and negative aspects were then discussed. In the following some highlights from this discussion.

## What is cultural mediation?

The definition itself of the term 'cultural mediation' is still somehow blurry in Québec, mostly because it is a recent expression used more or less adequately. Originally from France, the expression was created with the intention of democratisation, in an effort to bring the suburbs closer to the city, while in the province of Quebec, the term mediation refers

mostly to a negotiation made necessary when two parties oppose. Thus, it sounds completely inadequate for giving access to culture. But we are now getting better acquainted with its use.



While a cultural mediator is a well-known profession in France, it is very new in Québec. Most of the time, the mediator's job is done by the artists themselves, for example in large theatres who employ actors to do such a job, or in most cases, in smaller theatre companies, with modest means, where the artists do everything themselves. In fact, while cultural mediation does not imply the presence of artists, in Québec, they are still the ones who assume the main responsibilities. Cultural mediation is often confused with 'cultural animation', encompassing a vast array of 'public development' activities. However, the terminology is slowly getting more precise as new grant programmes are created and artist's creativity flourishes.

### **Cultural Education versus Artistic Freedom**

The sociological study and the Québec puppeteers attest to these positive impacts of mediation:

- Stimulates the creative process
- Promotes experimentation
- Provokes new practices or new reflections about certain practices
- Has a strong impact on the creative process when a true meeting occurs between artists and participants. Some say it might even help develop new ways to make theatre.

The negative aspects are:

- Mediation is often imposed by producers who confuse it with 'public development'
- Indeed, it is becoming more and more an obligation to which it is important to be able to say 'yes' or 'no'.
- Vigilance is essential regarding this democratisation of art. The danger is real when considering that everyone can be an artist
- Sometimes, activities are developed following the grant programs grants modify creations
- The grants for cultural mediation should be increased, although the situation is less decried than the actual cutting or freezing of creation grants

For the cultural organizations, these are the positive aspects of cultural mediation:

- Contributes to consolidate the mission with the programming of activities
- Promotes the development of partnerships and network
- Increases the influence of culture in the community
- Reaches new audiences
- Increases the number of sponsors

The negative effects are:

- The huge investment in time, money and human resources devoted to develop such activities in comparison to the time devoted to programming and presenting
- The government expectations to do such mediation as part of a presenter's mission

### **Casteliers**

In 2012, a single mediation activity promoted by Casteliers allowed a series of fallouts that were beneficial to the public's awareness for the art of puppetry, to the notoriety of Casteliers, and so, enhanced the support from citizens and the municipality for our initiatives.

Founded in 2005, Casteliers is devoted to presenting puppetry performances. We organise an annual international festival alongside the programming of a season. Our festival started in the Outremont borough, where professionals and university faculty, many Europeans and young upper class families live. Also a highlight, a large Hassidic Jewish Community lives in this neighbourhood. Through the years, Casteliers anchored itself in Outremont who offered us in 2010 our first office space. Since then, the council supports our organisation with an operating grant. Puppetry arts are part of the borough's cultural branding. Outremont became a founding member of AVIAMA (Association internationale des villes amies de la marionnette) in 2012. Since the first festival's edition in 2006, we have organized different outreach activities (exhibitions, films, round tables, workshops and master classes), by devoting lots of care to their artistic quality. In 2011, we created a cultural mediation project that would become outstanding and promising for our development.

### **'Marionnettes en vitrines!' – a success story**

Wanting to increase the visibility of Casteliers in the borough, we created Marionnettes en vitrines! (Puppets in shop windows!), which first led to a puppet-building contest in the schools, then unfolded into workshops in the schools, in a Christmas window and in an increase of store participation and merchants sponsorship, then into a quiz-rally, and an ongoing list of activities which are fall outs of 'Marionnettes en vitrines!'.

### **How did one single activity lead to so many spin-offs?**

'Marionnettes en vitrines!' is an initiative of Magali Chouinard, Casteliers's Assistant Director. Inspired by the decoration of all the shop windows during the festival in Charleville-Mézières (France), she wished to do the same in Montréal. We then asked all the professional members of the AQM to participate, lending one or several of their puppets for three weeks, before and during the festival. At the same time, Magali met with all the store-owners on the two main commercial streets of Outremont to explain our project and asked them to lend us their shop windows to exhibit the puppets.

On both sides, the response was enthusiastic! In March 2012, 23 merchants and as many professional companies and artists participated in this event. Each one was responsible to bring, hang and take down his creations. A contest was organized with six schools of the borough and the students' puppets were also exhibited in a large pharmacy window. This first contest allowed us to meet with teachers and school Directors whom afterwards invited us to offer workshops all through the year in their institutions.

The first edition of 'Marionnettes en vitrines!' was a success and Casteliers was awarded with the prize Initiative and Partnership that same year by the Council of Outremont.

The next year, in March 2013, more than 40 merchants and professional companies participated. Puppets of every size, from finger puppets to giant marionettes, were exhibited everywhere in stores, the Outremont subway station and in the library. That year, the AQM and Casteliers also proposed a quiz-rally, with questions regarding both the merchants and the puppets.

Since then, Casteliers also became a 'mediator' for the puppetry shows presented at the Theatre Outremont. In the fall of 2013, the show *Ma Mère est un poisson rouge* (My Mother Is A Goldfish) was the inspiration for the workshop *My mother is a puppet!* And the 98 'mothers' created

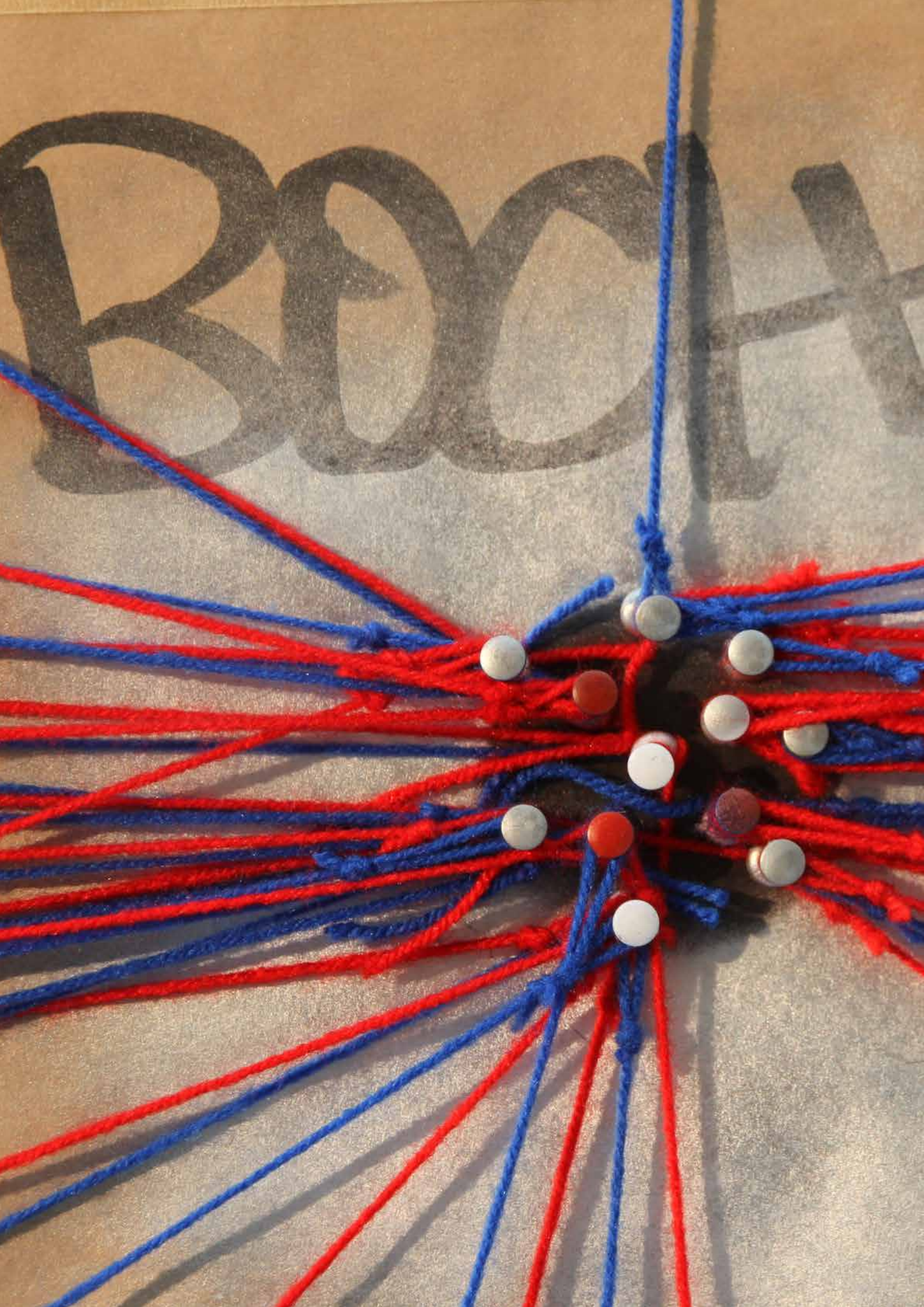
by children were exhibited in the window of the Theatre Outremont during the whole Christmas Season.

In 2014, we added a new activity related to 'Marionnettes en vitrines!', a guided tour of the shop windows, for the children of the numerous schools in the neighbourhood. Teachers and kids asked for more and more!

'Marionnettes en vitrines!' stands as real Cultural Mediation, i.e. «an action which promotes access to art». The whole neighbourhood is now sensitized to the approaching of the annual festival during the March break and its public has developed awareness of the rich diversity of puppetry art. This event proves our implication to energize and stimulate the cultural lives of citizens and has convinced different merchants with our passion! They keep encouraging us accordingly, along with generous sponsorship of goods, or money. 'Marionnettes en vitrines!' is now supported by the local newspaper, and the financial institution Caisse Desjardins became the festival's official presenter. Their support testifies to the government our involvement in our community as it helps us maintain and upgrade our programming.

Thanks to 'Marionnettes en vitrines!', the generous participation of puppeteers and the rich aftermaths, Outremont has voted last year to support the project promoted by Casteliers and the AQM to transform an old abandoned building into a Maison internationale des arts de la marionnette (MIAM). Devoted to creation, residencies, training and cultural mediation, the MIAM will begin its activities in 2017 as part of the celebrations surroundings of Montreal 375th anniversary.







# No education!? – Yes Education!

**Darren O'Donnell**



In his lecture O'Donnell stated right at the beginning that the title 'No education' was chosen by the ruhrtrienale, but his own feeling is contradictory; his opinion is: 'Yes, education!' To him art should be instrumentalized for various aims: "I say: Yes to education, yes to being used and yes to being a slave of the government. Only educated people are free to say: 'No education!' Not-educated people do not have access to education, they would never say: 'No education'." He thinks that artistic freedom and cultural education are a contradiction. If you are forced to live in a society you have to work with that society. For him, there is no artistic freedom existing at all. But there are artistic discussions, artistic debates and artistic negotiations.

O'Donnell explicates his point of view by describing various projects of Mammalian Diving Reflex. Founded in 1993, it is a research-art atelier dedicated to investigating the social sphere, always on the lookout for contradictions to whip into aesthetically scintillating experiences. The following descriptions are a mixture of the spoken word of O'Donnell during the conference and texts you may find on the webpage of Mammalian Diving Reflex.

## Projects:

### Haircuts By Children

involves children between the ages of 8-12. They are trained by professional hairstylists, and then paid to run a real hair salon, offering members of the public free haircuts. The project invites the consideration of young people as creative and competent individuals whose aesthetic choices can be trusted. While providing atypical entertainment for the public, Haircuts by Children also shifts the traditional power dynamic between children and adults, creating a safe social space where children and adults, who live in the same community, can meet and share a unique creative experience together. The idea that kids should be allowed to cut our hair evokes the same leap of faith, courage and understanding required to grant children deeper citizenship rights. For many it is actually less terrifying to contemplate allowing kids to vote.

### The Children's Choice Awards

is an intervention into the structure and institution of an arts festival, where a group of between 20 to 80 ten-year-olds from local public schools are appointed the official festival jury, are chauffeured to and from festival shows to see the art, take notes, and size it all up. The judges respond to criteria that they have created from their vast expertise, and collectively they determine up to 50 award categories and vote on the winners. The project culminates in an Awards Ceremony where the kids present hand-made trophies to the winners, all decided by them, and described in their own words.

### Eat the street

is an intervention into the city, in which a group of 20 to 40 ten to twelve-year-olds will make stops at several of a city's most notable eateries. They will be feted and fed, and charged with offering their brutally honest, uncensored opinions on the food, the service, the decor, the state of the washrooms and the charm of the waiters. For the mere cost of a meal, the public is invited to sit amongst the kids for a front-row view of

the youthful connoisseurs in action. It is possible to dine with the kids, to follow the shenanigans at [eatdastreet.blogspot.ca](http://eatdastreet.blogspot.ca). and finally to join the panel of pre-adolescent adjudicators for an uproarious awards ceremony where awards are bestowed for everything from 'Most Delicious' and 'Coolest Chef' to 'Least Graffiti in the Washroom.

### **These Are the People in Your Neighbourhood**

is a public walk and tour of local businesses in a community. These Are the People in Your Neighbourhood is a street-proofing and community fortification performance led by children. It is a performance of a very possible world: a place where children walk down the street, tipping their hats to the people they pass and making it safe and familiar for everyone. A group of ten-year-olds are going to school the participants about their 'hood. The kids did the research, analyzed the data and made the connections. For O'Donnell it is a performance fuelled by curiosity about the world and enthusiasm to share it.

### **Night walks with Teenagers**

is a walking performance created in collaboration with two groups of young people (one local, one non-local), who plan, design and lead public walks through the city at night, sharing their favorite parts of the neighborhood with members of the community. The project brings together teens and adults who might not otherwise meet, to have experiences related to a shared place and time; it offers an opportunity for adults to socialize with young people in a safe social space, where everyone can let loose, and silences offer moments for contemplation. Night walks with Teenagers is focused on the pro-social ameliorative power of walking together, and is inspired in part by the Situationist notion of the 'derive', as well as psycho-geographic wanderings through the city.

### **Monster Makers**

is an example for a theatre show. It is invented participatory work for children and adults. In Monster Makers there is a Sad Scientist who made a monster. But he is sad because it is a happy monster. He just can't get his monster to be monstrous. He needs help from the real experts: the kids. He wants the children to teach the monster how to behave evil. Another figure in the performance is a photographer who takes photos of the monster for a magazine. Finally the participants take the monster out and his job is to scare the public. The process afterwards is combined with reflection how all participants behaved – for O'Donnell it is a piece about failure and success.

### **All the Sex I've Ever Had**

offers the audience the experiences of a generation. Older adults courageously open up their personal lives and experiences to fellow participants and strangers, divulging stories of first crushes, turbulent affairs, unexpected pregnancies and deaths of loved ones. They chat with the audience, toast to important milestones and sometimes dance on-stage. All the Sex I've Ever Had offers an opportunity to acknowledge that our elders have a lot to teach us, a lot to share, and that aging can yield a way of being in the world that is open, generous and fearless. In our youth-obsessed culture, All the Sex I've Ever Had re-establishes the notion of a community of wise elders to whom we can turn for advice gleaned from their vast wealth of life expertise.

Is it art or not? O'Donnell explains his concept with the PCS Rigour Model. After the presentation of the projects in the Fidenza conference the question aroused whether this kind of working is to be understood as art. O'Donnell explained his idea of art more deeply and enfolded the PCS Rigour Model. For him, that is the base to encounter and to understand contemporary art.

### **A Typology of the Three Primary Rigours**

This brief typology examines the three primary rigours; the three key areas within which artists can apply their labour to produce impressive results: the physical, the conceptual and the social. The first two – physical and conceptual – have been around for a while and are widely understood. Social rigour, in contrast, is relatively new to the scene, only popping up in the late 20th century and is still the subject of confusion, debate and controversy. As the idea of social relations as material becomes another tool available to all artists, determining whether or not what we're viewing is breathtaking or dull becomes a central task.

#### **Physical Rigour**

Physical rigour is the most immediately impressive and easiest to apprehend, understand and appreciate. It includes the obvious, like impressive displays of complex choreography, singing but also the skilled dramatic performance where the body is conceived of as an instrument and emotions are realistically and convincingly represented to great and moving effect.

#### **Conceptual/Formal Rigour**

Conceptual rigour resides in the realm of ideas, often relying on surprise, irony and the juxtaposition of conflicting elements. The audience is taken to a point where they see the familiar in new ways. Advances in form always proceed along conceptual lines.

#### **Social Rigour**

Social rigour resides in the realm of social relations, where social differentials are utilized to bring people together in unusual ways. It is often deployed to make political comment, explore new social ontologies or 'ways of being together' and address inequity, marginalization and the gaps between people. The collaborators are often non-artists whose participation hinges on their identity, role and location within a social geography.





## Why do theatre for young people?

Theatre in schools – theatre in public? What is the relation between the theatre for young people in public and adult theatre? Can we say and show everything to children?

### Catherine Poher

I have never asked myself why I do theatre for children and young people. Children, young people, grown-ups and elderly people all live in the same world and we all share everything on Earth. I do theatre – full stop!

I began my career in the 1970s with a group of pictorial artists who were engaged in theatrical interventions in public spaces. The work was intellectual and primarily concentrated on aesthetics. There was no direct contact with the audience. When I became a mother I suddenly discovered that this distance from the audience was unbearable. I wanted to create a connection, set up a more intimate relationship. I wanted to bring people together. And once again feel the deep emotions that we feel when we experience something jointly with other people. Since 1981, the year in which my son was born I have been trying to create a form of theatre which works for children and young people without my having to compromise its artistic quality. I have discovered that children are very open to poetry, philosophy, abstract art and the most diverse types of music when adults are prepared to share their passions, interests and curiosity with them: to share a common experience in a direct, sensual and intimate contact. Close to one another.

However, in order not to lose my adult audience I had to work on three very different levels. On the sensual level, which is very effective and direct, the level of deep understanding, of intimate resonance (in the belly or the heart), which might be called that which is. This unconscious, archaic level speaks to children who experience things via their bodies; and also to adults because this level arouses the child in them. I work very precisely with sound, light and all things visual. Children have taught me not to be afraid of the banal and the mundane; not to fear direct contact. For the banal and the mundane can be very poetic if you only change them just a little.

The narrative level speaks to us all. The psychology of characters speaks to us on this level.

Finally there is the symbolic, mythical level that speaks primarily to adults. In my plays I have always dealt with themes that threw up questions which interested me during the process of creation. For example the joy of repetition, the meeting of the moment and eternity (Haiku), internal boundaries and the boundaries between cultures and countries, the underlying presence of death, even in moments when we would really like to celebrate life, the question of how to take one's leave... And I have discovered that you can talk to children about everything. What is important is the way we talk to children about difficult themes. I do not show pornographic scenes but talk about how people feel drawn to one another, about the joys of meeting one another, the sensual pleasure involved. I do not talk about torture or psychological violence, but about the feeling of weakness we have when confronted with someone who is practicing violence, about our fear. The horrors of the world do not have to be discovered in the theatre. Sadly they often intrude much too early into children's lives. It is then the duty of adults to face these problems. But I am not afraid to share my own questions, philosophical, metaphysical and poetic reflections with children and to confront them with difficult situations.





My aesthetics have not changed. As a pictorial artist I have continued my work as before without asking myself what sort of things children might like or allowing myself to be dominated by Disney aesthetics which have influenced all works for children.

A theatrical language which is ageless speaks to the adults in us; to the adults that we are and to the child that we once were. In children it speaks to the child they are and to the adult they will become. Adults and children influence each other mutually when they experience a theatre play or an art of work together: indeed we might even say when they experience life together.

My work as an artist is connected with the child in me: the part of me which vibrates in me and is astonished by everything, no matter what. The capacity to be astonished is the path to marvel. I work on myself in order to give other people something. My theatrical quest is not simply artistic, but also political. It is a reaction to our social order which, since the Industrial Revolution, has pushed two groups to the margins – children and old people – of both sides of the world of working productive people.

The myth of a happy childhood has grown up because we have separated a child's world from an adult's world. Adults would like childhood to be a carefree time without duties. They want to protect children from life, above all from difficulties. They want to entertain them to prevent them being bored. There are scarcely any attempts to stimulate children with physical or mental challenges.

A child develops its thought processes, its creativity and its self-awareness in a confrontation with art. For the experience of art is a constant dialogue between oneself and the work. Art can change the way we see the world. It opens up our senses, strengthens our critical spirit and connects us to the world. When adults and children experience a work of art together the result is a strange poetic dialogue between them.

Despite the fact that I prefer theatre to be shown in theatres – in good conditions for presentation – I continue to create plays which can be presented in schools. It is important that the plays can be shown in outlying places where there are few opportunities for culture. Thanks to schools this is possible. That said, this requires a lot of work. Teachers have to be trained in art appreciation and there has to be some sort of cooperation between them and the cultural institutions that are offering the programmes. I don't know if that is the case in Belgium. Unfortunately in Denmark schools tend to buy up only the most traditional plays – plays which from an artistic point of view are the most uninteresting – because teachers become afraid when they see something which isn't immediately clear and obvious. They have not learnt to experiment with works of art. They are afraid they will not understand them.

For this reason they only offer their school students inferior quality: a bad copy of a well-known children's book of fairytale. Or realistic plays about how to clean your teeth, or about the unhappiness which results when parents get divorced, or about chickens that sing an opera whilst laying eggs. It is important to ask whether theatre should teach children something, entertain them or open up an unknown world to them. There are plays which cover all three possibilities. It is also important that schools imbue in their students the habit of watching theatre, all sorts of theatre. Not only plays suitable for the curriculum, but also plays that upset the existing order.

We adults should share our experiences with children – how we delight in a picture, or when we paint, read a poem or write, go for a walk in the countryside, when we listen to a story or music, when we play and dance, when we look at beautiful buildings or create things that are completely useless, hang around together doing nothing or sit down together ... etc. Such things enable us to be able to enjoy life to the full. We develop respect, learn more about ourselves and are more aware of other people. We also increase the capacity to develop our potential to the full, something which has to be defended in a world where there is no more time for dreaming. Creating works of art for children is not childish. Quite the contrary it penetrates into the very heart of the matter. We should not be afraid of expressive variety, linguistic variety, incomprehensible words which can become music. Nor should we be afraid of choreographed or incoherent movements, or optical and tonal associations that might disclose to us a tiny slice of the riddle of life.







## small-size – The network for spreading the performing arts to children under six

**Barbara Kölling**



Helios Theater has existed for the past 25 years and for the last nine years it has been involved in continuous and active exchanges with other European theatres. Some of these exchanges take place in a European network called small-size.

In 2004 the Théâtre de la Guimbarde, (Belgium) the GOML Theatre (Slovenia), the Accion Educativa (Spain) and La Baracca (Bologna) threw up the idea of a network to promote activities to do with theatre for very young children. The aim was to meet up, exchange ideas and opinions, present work at network festivals and develop a network between the countries to support the establishment of theatre for the very young in the individual countries. Together with their German partner Helios Theater, the Teatrul Ion Creanga from Bucharest and Polka Theater in London the network managed to receive its first European funding in 2006 and take up its work.



From the very beginning small-size was shaped by the member theatres. Today it is the most important European network for theatre for children to the age of six. The network aims to “promote the idea that people have a right to art and culture from the very start of their lives.”

The start of the network work was marked by an intensive consideration of the education systems in the different countries. It was important to compare these in order to recognise the different theatre structures in the countries and understand them in context.

The network participants originally planned to make as many decisions as possible on a grassroots basis. Such work would entail a lengthy process as it would have to be organised in at least four and often up to seven different languages. It might also result in misunderstandings and require a lot of patience. However this would be compensated by the pleasure and the knowledge that the theatres were gradually coming closer to one another.

During the first three years (2006-2009) small-size met up around 4 to 5 times a year in different places in Europe, during which time after a series of different discussions the participants managed to set up a working structure. The programme included books and DVDs that documented the experiences of the individual theatres, along with festivals, new productions and cooperative projects.

The work has always been about being open to other interested parties. Thus an independent association was set up for interested parties who did not have the capacity to become an independent network partner. Under the title small size promotion funds it was possible to fund productions by non-members with small amounts of money: this would also give an impulse to further promotion partners in their own country.

In order that the colleagues could exchange ideas and opinions on content over and above the network structure, we are also working on a system to enable expert exchanges, further training and cultural research.

One unusual example of an exchange of experiences within the network was the artistic research undertaken by three theatre directors, Charlotte



Fallon (Belgium), Barbara Kölling (Germany) and Valeria Frabetti (Italy) in 2008 and 2009. By setting up a different sort of workshop for interested actors and directors we not only wanted to inspire ourselves through conversations but also get to know more about each other in our practical work. We three artists met up at the start in order to find out more about our different artistic and aesthetic approaches. Over a period of two years we held three-day workshops for actors and directors on directorial and acting themes. Each of the three artists was responsible for a single day and the other two were present as observers. At the end of each day the three of us put forward our observations on what had happened and the way of working.

Happily the network was able to receive a second funding from the European Union from 2009 to 2014. During this time it was joined by new partners from Hungary, Salzburg, France, Austria and Finland. This meant we had to find a new working structure to avoid exhausting ourselves in purely administrative discussions. For the second phase of the network work we decided to allocate each partner a specific area of responsibility.

La Barracca has taken over most of the administrative work and deals with applications and the accounting work on the expenses incurred by ALL the partners in the network. The Helios Theater organises an annual artistic directors' meeting: I have been responsible for this since 2010.

Since 2010 the artistic heads of the partners have met up for two days in late summer every year in different places in order to exchange ideas and opinions on a specific theme concerning our artistic work. Based on a conception devised by myself and Gerd Taube, the head of the Centre for Children's and Young People's Theatre in Germany, 12 to 17 people (some of them for the first time) have been meeting to discuss their artistic work within an open framework. This has been a risk that has happily always turned out well

In 2010 our theme was: the relationship to the audience. Each theatre was called upon to submit a DVD of one of its productions that would reveal in some way or another its relationship to the audience. Gerd Taube and I then selected four of the submissions for discussion. These were always about describing approaches and observations as precisely as possible; but without evaluations and judgements. It was always about the "how?"; a method that was new for most of us and demanded some practice.

There is a special relationship with the very youngest audiences in theatre. More than anywhere else the actors are asked to open up the so-called fourth wall in order to allow their actions to take place in a direct relationship to the audience. I do not mean that the actors always have to address the audience directly, or that the audience has to be specifically animated. It is all about the actors opening themselves up to the audience. The sight of a child who is not yet accustomed to theatre conventions reveals all the basic questions about the relationship between the audience and the playing area. Thus theatre for the very young is also ideally suitable to enable discussions on the relationship to audiences of all ages.

Establishing discussions of this type in the small-size network is a very gratifying task. For this is not about evaluating the artistic work of a partner but about observing and understanding it. In this way our artistic directors' meetings have enabled us to grow closer to one another in the past four years. Thus it is more than encouraging to report that the EU

#### References

Helios Theater: [www.helios-theater.de/](http://www.helios-theater.de/)  
Small Size: [www.smallsize.org](http://www.smallsize.org)

has just agreed to fund the network for the third time. From 2014-2018 the network of partners from Italy, Germany, England, Ireland, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Finland, Belgium and France will be enriched by partners from Sweden, Denmark and Poland, thereby driving forward the development of theatre for the very young.







# Puppetry in times of globalisation

Anurupa Roy

## Global Situation in India

In India the traditional puppet players follow the conventional divisions of Glove, Rod, Shadow and String. In the string puppets one can see a combination of rods puppetry as well. It is important to understand that these traditions are closely related to rituals in temples or rites of passage in the family or community. Some are used for exorcisms or even in purifications. The contexts and narratives remain as strong as they were hundreds of years ago. The division of the puppets is mainly in the 4 Southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, in the East in Orissa, Bengal and Assam, in the West in Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

Shadow Puppetry: Togalu Gombeyata- Karnataka, Thol Pava Koothu- Kerala, Tolu Bommalata- Tamilnadu, Thol Bommalatam- Andhra Pradesh, Orissa- Ravanchhaya. Rod Puppetry: Bengal- Dan-ger Putul, Orissa- Sakhi Kundhei. String Puppetry: Rajasthan- Katputli, Orissa- Sakhi Kundhei, Karnataka- Salakhi Gombeyatta/ Yakshagana Gombeyatta, Andhra Pradesh- Koyya Bommalata, Bengal- Tarer Putul, Assam- Sutor Putul, Karnataka, Maharashtra- Kalsutri Bahuliye. Glove Puppetry: Kerala- Pava Kathakali, Bengal and Orissa- Benir Putul

## Current political situation

The current political situation is a really unknown one. The party in power is a self-proclaimed "Hindu" party with overt religious leanings. This will in the future have serious repercussions for the arts and censorship. Ideas of "morality", religious "right and wrongs" will become governing forces in the arts. Culture will be determined by right wing majority. This process has not begun but we can see a shift in education policy. The Arts will be next. This colony is still in an unsure situation. There is a court stay till the end of the month. I will be meeting the puppeteers soon and I will keep you posted.

## Traditional puppet players in times of globalisation: the impact of the development for those players

The Shadipur Depot, the area where the traditional puppeteers of the Katputli form have settled down, has been sold now to one of the biggest builders' corporations in Delhi. The colony of performers which includes puppeteers, acrobats, magicians, drummers and musicians want to stay in this area but the building corporation wants them relocated for two years in another area. They want to use 3/4th of the area to build a 64 story luxury apartment and build 5 story lower income group houses for the residents in 1/4th of the area. The main players in this situation is the Raheja Builders, the Delhi Development authority and the artists of Katputli Colony, Shadipur.

The artists are demanding rehabilitation in a place of their choice or at least new accommodations of their choice which is conducive to their art practice, so no 5 story buildings but an artist commune with a theatre, rehearsal space and land allocations per family instead of small apartments. The stale mate continues but in the meantime the Delhi Police joined the builders last month to enter the colony last month and brutally beat and arrest 12 young people on the pretext of a drunken brawl. Furniture was broken, the arrested youth were beaten up and the families were threatened with worse consequences if they did not agree to leave the colony.

Globalisation shoot down the tradition of the puppetry and the way the inhabitants shared their daily life and their art in that area.





## Public discussion: Maarten Seghers and Oliver Kontny on Freedom of the Art



### Annette Dabs:

The title of our discussion is: 'Artistic freedom and the impossibility to talk about art'. Is it possible to talk about art? Is it impossible to talk about art?

In museums or galleries most of the art works have no title. They are called sans titre (without title) or they have numbers. Obviously the artist has no word for it or doesn't want to give it a name. Nowadays many curators, festival and theatre directors invite an artistic work and make it to a subject of discourse, in which all kinds of philosophical phrases are used. Hans Thies Lehmann calls this tendency „The hypertrophy of the discursive“. It means, that these curators - and all of us - put a label on art, subsume it under one title of debate. It means to shrink the piece of art into common categories. This is a devaluation. Sometimes even the artists have a tendency to follow an anticipatory obedience, when they give their artwork a title which might please the foundation, where they apply for money.

Maarten, the title of your two performances that will premiere tomorrow is: THE OHNO COOPERATION CONVERSATION ON THE O.H.N.O.P.O.P.I.C.O.N.O. TAUTOLOGY. Is that right?

### Maarten Seghers:

That's the title of a part of the first performance. Seven years ago Jan Lauwers and I were asked, to have a public debate or a conversation on making art. We decided to use this as an excuse to make another work of art. We made a video of this conversation, we founded OHNO COOPERATION. It was actually like a mutual commitment to keep on talking about making art. This video work will keep on growing. So every once in a while, we will make a new video work, that documents a dialogue between Jan and me. The performance will keep on growing like this until we both are dead probably. Every video is an autonomous work we can show itself. The performance has a title and the different elements of the performance are also autonomous works of art with their titles. I think, that titles are not so problematic. On the contrary, if they become parts of thinking about the art work, they are challenging and a part of the

playfulness, that making art is.

**Annette Dabs:**

Besides this attempt to combine the very ephemeral moment of a theatre performance with a steady, lasting piece of art work – I think, this is one attempt that Needcompany has ...

**Maarten Seghers:**

... of course, we have been discussing whether we would show the film or if we would show the performance. Of course the film is in the performance. It was a kind of essential to go for the performativity of the thing, because that's what this is about. But it stays ambiguous - these works can have their autonomous value, but can also be used to support a different sort of narrativity, I think this ambiguity and this unclarity are very necessary.

**Annette Dabs:**

Jan Lauwers said, that the work together with you, as you do in OHNO COOPERATION, is like a brain storm. Is this work together of you two guys artistic freedom?

**Maarten Seghers:**

Well... yes.

**Annette Dabs:**

Oliver, you state, that artistic freedom is for everyone and you feel the need to reflect upon the relationship of artistic freedom and intercultural concepts. Can you explain what is your concern and how are you going to work in the Zukunftsakademie?

**Oliver Kontny:**

Zukunftsakademie is an institution, that will combine work in the fields of urban development with what is called 'interculture' and 'cultural education'. Art in one or another way comes into each of these areas. The problem has been facing in Germany, that artists who are not of a white, german background they were excluded from theatres, from decision making processes, from funding. I was working at Ballhaus Naunynstraße which has been voted the most remarkable off-theatre in Germany. It was that post-migrant theatre. It happened to me, that I was talking to people working in film distribution and they said: "You know, we are running this open air cinema and usually we are giving free tickets to junkies and homeless people, if there are seats available. So we can also give some tickets to the artists from your Turkish theatre." This is completely not what it is about. It is just about incorporating people with a post-migrant background and that certain people want to exercise equal rights in terms of getting access to funding, to stages and so on. In order to do so you have to break labels, you have to deconstruct notions in people's heads. There are two ways of doing that: One is highly discursive and the other one is artistic practical.

**Annette Dabs:**

Maarten, Needcompany is situated in Brussels. In Brussels you have a lot of post-migrant people. The work of Needcompany also deals with a situation, works with different languages and different nations. Do you have the feeling, that this is an intercultural work you do?

**Maarten Seghers:**

It is, but it is not because of the intercultural work. It is just a fact, because Needcompany just embraces this reality. Because its interest is

making art, making theatre – of course they are beyond the limits of peoples background. Because of your common interest you find each other. We try to find a common language, because of course spoken language is an imitation then in our case. But it's never about the fact, that somebody is different or from a different background and that you want to put this in a picture. Then you would touch some sort of exotic feeling, which is a little bit as if you say: 'Ah, you can give some free seats also to the turkish people.'

**Annette Dabs:**

Jan Lauwers is always talking about that there is no artistic freedom, and no general freedom without responsibility. He says: 'Art is in danger, because of the extreme capitalistic tendencies that rule the world. There is no slow process we need to produce, or to work, to receive a good result of an art work. It is not possible in a world of efficiency, measurable results and commercialization.' This is the topic which Jan Lauwers especially focuses, right?

**Maarten Seghers:**

I think, art will never be in danger. In this way, that you can always think free, but you might not always be able to share freely or to show freely. The context allows it to happen or not. I don't think, that artists have to feel attacked in their freedom. But of course, if you want to perform, if you want to share, then you immediately touch society and politics. Of course there he is very right to say: 'Where is the slowness or where is the space and so on...?'

**Annette Dabs:**

We discussed about the question: 'Does the artist need a crisis to be creative?' Oliver, following your keynote this morning I had the impression that you would like the artists more to intervene or to involve into real life. Am I right?

**Oliver Kontny:**

I don't think, artists are necessarily separated from real life. But I think, there is a tendency for us not to talk about certain things in art. I find this highly dangerous. There has been a plethora of performances – for example in a city like Berlin – that get funding, but no audiences, some performances, that get audiences, but no funding. This is a political issue, because it's just about asking: 'Will I be able to survive with what I do?'. There is a tendency all over Europe, especially for young people from financially better-off families to be able to continue working under an immense pressure. They can work for 700 Euros a month in Berlin, because their dads giving them 2.000 Euros. Those people, who don't get this support just can't do it because theatre, owners, directors, funders will say: 'Well, 700 Euro, I am afraid, that is what you get.' René Pollesch talks about it like he is shooting one hundred pages pamphlets per hour. But usually people don't really talk about it. What is really interesting, because when you talk about the danger, that the acceleration of life brings, then it is obvious, that, if you do live performance art, usually you would rehearse for six weeks or more and then perform three nights – it is what we call the three scenes. Obviously for you as an artist, these six weeks would be much more important than the three nights. But usually what happens is – because of the conditions – that people just kill themselves or sometimes kill each other within this six weeks just in order to have a good performance at the end of it.

**Maarten Seghers:**

But it is also probably something very personal, how you deal with this.

You also have to be strong enough in your sense of freedom, what you allow or permit yourself. If you are strong enough to believe, then you will be fine and you can allow your performance to fail for example. Which is a very interesting thing to show an audience, that it might also fail. That's part of life and of art. If you don't allow your work to fail doesn't necessarily mean, that you are not concerned with this problematics around it, like you say... You know, what I mean? It also really depends from artist to artist to be able to accept this failure or to balance it...

**Annette Dabs:**

A lot of people have demands - especially politicians try to tell artists how and on which topics they should work on. I ask myself, if people would demand the same from a researcher, a chemist or a physic researcher, who is going to make a research for a new medicine. You get a lot of money for the research, because you hope, that at the end you will have a very good result, a new medicine. Of course researchers fail. Sometimes I ask myself, why artist have to legitimate, to justify their work.

**Maarten Seghers:**

But that's the freedom of the spectator. In this way, that the spectator expects an outcome or he can allow a 'non outcome'. In this way, that you could say: 'It was good.' or 'It was bad.' or 'It was interesting.'. Maybe it is a bit naive. You can appreciate the failure in arts or in scientific research. They have to fail in order to discover the final good outcome. But you have to – as a spectator – to be able or be willing to see this bigger picture.

**Annette Dabs:**

Maybe the most political or most important aspect of art is, that it is the only field, that is free of function. That it is the only space without any purpose – in nowadays especially – that it does not have any usability or practicability or it is not measurable.

**Oliver Kontny:**

Fluxus artists used to say the attitude is more important than the product. This is what it is all about. Basically what is of value for me as a spectator and also as an artist, is not necessarily to see a super show, but to be involved in a process, where you can display, see, reflect and change attitudes towards life, towards each other ... This has been like a standard credo of avant-garde arts for forty, fifty ears. I think we have to get back to this. The focus is on the performance, you have to deliver in order to legitimate your funding entitlement. It applies not only to pharmaceutical researches but also for people in the social sciences and humanities, which need to publish, publish, publish and to present results. It is a feature of neoliberalism. And as a matter of fact I believe that most young girls in this city face immense pressure of a daily body performance in the public space as soon as they leave their room. They are under the pressure to meet up to standards imposed on them by media discourses. That is a kind of pressure on almost every person you meet in your life. So why not say: 'Look, let's actually talk about this pressure, let's develop attitudes vis à vis this kind of pressure to perform, this pressure not to fail, this pressure to achieve...'

**Annette Dabs:**

This is the perfect introduction to your work. It is really about the second part of your evening. It's all about your solo, ...

**Maarten Seghers:**

Is it?



**Annette Dabs:**

Yes, it is!

**Maarten Seghers:**

Wow...

**Annette Dabs:**

Well, I am presumptuous. I already saw a very small part. What I saw is, that you try to communicate, to reach the audience, you ask almost desperately for their understanding.

**Maarten Seghers:**

Yes, but it is also an image of somebody who hysterically tries to communicate. It is my attempt as an artist, but it is also my choice for the show to make an image about this artist, who does that. Is that clear? I think, it is a reflection on the need to communicate. It is not necessarily a statement to say you have to. But I have my questions about it: 'Why do you need to get somewhere?', 'Why do you need to have an aim or a purpose as an artist?' This is very linked to the question: 'Why should I communicate or why should I not?' It inspired me to make a show on this image of an extreme communication or attempt to communicate.

**Annette Dabs:**

The title is very special.

**Maarten Seghers:**

(laughing) It is a concert and the title of it is: 'What do you mean What do you mean and Other pleasantries'. It consists of different songs and one of the songs is called: What do you mean What do you mean?. This is a very clear question. The second part of the title: And other pleasantries suggests that many more nice, innocent or guilty pleasures are happening.

**Annette Dabs:**

Some of the pleasures are your band The Horrible Facts.

**Maarten Seghers:**

Yes. They are called The Horrible Facts, because working on my sounds generating sculptures, it got more and more basic. What I apparently always have been doing was to work so much on something or ask so many questions about it myself, that in the end there was always almost nothing left. I had a big conflict with myself on the subject of my work or on the content of my work. I was like: 'Where is my responsibility now?', 'Ah, there are all these other horrible facts in the world, where I should talk about, because I am responsible as an artist.' That's why I engage my band and call them The Horrible Facts. Then they are also present. That is what happened. Tomorrow night somehow relies to the idea of not showing a concert, but suggesting a concert or so much more by the memory of it.

**Annette Dabs:**

Does that include reactions of the audience like getting up, screaming and taking photos and so on? I mean, are we allowed to do that?

**Maarten Seghers:**

Of course, it is all about freedom. (laughing) I don't mind, I don't know how the people will deal with that. Yes, feel free to react however you like. Definitely. Not only for me tomorrow night.

# Freedom to do what? The Tension between Cultural Education and Artistic Freedom

**Gabi dan Droste and Jonas Klinkenberg**

During the symposium the speakers often took up opposite positions, and put forward extremely different ideas and thoughts. The following article is the result of a discussion between Jonas Klinkenberg and Gabi dan Droste on the talks and discussions given on “Artistic Freedom and Cultural Education”. Here we hope to be able to make connections between the different contributions, throw up questions and finally provide an outline for further thoughts from our own perspective.

## **I. What and who is free? ... and from what?**

Anurupa Roy, a director and event manager from New Delhi took up the theme of crisis, gave it a clearly economic focus context and set it in the context of current global changes. She spoke of the Kathputli Colony in New Delhi, a slum area inhabited by traditional puppeteers and (street) musicians, and simultaneously a place where people can train, rehearse and be creative. Due to gentrification the inhabitants of the well-known Colony are threatened with evacuation. This fact shows that the term “artistic freedom” has to be defined utterly differently from the way it is understood by most of us. Here freedom means being able to work as an artist and have the space in which to do so. A long-established island of culture is being forced to make way for new modern buildings and a traditional art form is experiencing its right to exist only in the context of tourism.

By contrast, in the discussion between Maarten Seghers, Oliver Kontny and Annette Dabs, Seghers represented a decidedly Western European idea of art. The young Dutch performer, musician and all-rounder skilfully used rockstar attitudes and an artistic soul to plead for unlimited artistic freedom. When Annette Dabs suggested discussing whether curatorial practice and (thematic) guidelines might put limitations on artistic development, he preferred to ignore this completely and concentrate on his own artistic habitus: art is like an uncontrolled growth created from within.

In the shadow of the talk given by Anurupa Roy and the ideas put forward by Oliver Kontny it became patently clear which socially privileged situations give rise to such a concept of freedom.

Oliver Kontny’s work is committed to a post-migrant transgender discourse. He revealed the mechanisms which lead to artists being excluded from the production apparatus of art. His point of view corresponded with Roy’s descriptions. He too took up the theme of the results of globalisation and gentrification and pointed to the lower status of immigrants in German theatrical culture and the hurdles facing them in the German arts scene. In addition he pointed to the generally precarious situation of artists in Germany and the prevalent pressure on production. It was no accident that he demanded a return to an attitude appropriated by artists e.g. from the Fluxus movement, in which art was about taking up a specific position and not simply about products and efficiency. “Life is a work of art and a work of art is life”. (Emmett Williams)

## **II. Who mediates to whom? ... and to what end?**

The three contributions given by Louise Lapointe, Airan Berg and Darren O’Donnell all took direct work with project-specific target groups as their theme, but their focus and approaches were fundamentally different. Lapointe spoke about measures that may be defined as belonging to classical audience development strategies: measures that put a project more powerfully in the focus of public perception and simultaneously enable

the general public to participate. In the final analysis such work generates new audiences, new sponsors and supporters and is a part of publicity work. Such an approach helps to smooth the way towards “actual art”. By contrast the projects of Airan Berg and Darren O Donnell moved work with non-professionals into the focus. The possibility of including a broad spectrum of people – whether they be school students, local inhabitants or specific groups – in an artistic process is central to Berg’s work: at the same time he aims to cut across the borders of artistic work and social life. Collective work aims at creating a joint experience that leaves its mark on society, something he connects with the term utopia.

By contrast O’Donnell, the head of Mammalian Diving Reflex, talked about projects that could be described as provocative, not only within the symposium. As a rule these are projects that break with social customs. Children become hairdressers or members of a theatre jury; young people become town guides, and older women speak about their sexuality. Such projects not only aim at creating an artistic value in the form of a product but are also process orientated, whereby participation plays a central role. Both O’Donnell’ projects and his talk were intended as provocations. The core of his work is, however, to be understood as a form of empowerment. Spaces are created in which children and senior citizens, young people and local inhabitants are given the chance to find their own voice and be heard. The projects question the norms and hierarchies existing in the worlds of art and culture and throw up a huge amount of other questions of more general interest.

The projects discussed in the symposium showed clearly different approaches. Creating new audiences, collective experiences and breaking away from cultural norms are the three essential bywords: they not only cover an enormous spectrum but also highlight the dichotomies existing in cultural education. At the same time the question remains as to whether this is an (unwelcome?) accessory to a person’s own artistic work, or whether an artistic vision is intrinsically interwoven with an outreach character. Is it about teaching and producing, smoothing out paths or about celebrating artistic vision and freedom together?

### **III. Who is the spectator – and why?**

The term “Cultural Education” is generally linked to the idea of art for children and acquainting them more closely with it. The two directors Catherine Poher and Barbara Kölling dedicate their work to theatre for the very young. Both have a decidedly artistically motivated approach to a very young people whom they naturally address as spectators. Both also represent a development that was unthinkable in Europe and Germany fifteen years ago. Until now such young children were not recognised as being an audience and were not an obvious part of the open space called theatre. Artists working in children’s theatre mostly aimed their work at audiences between the age of four and five, and tended to focus on telling stories. Poher and Kölling have liberated themselves from this convention. They neither try to educate their young audiences by means of theatre, nor do they use particular formats to introduce children to art. Nor do they speak about the necessity of using their art as a means of education. It is more the case that the presence of very small children and babies in the audience inspires them to think more about their own artistic expressions and develop a specific artistic language with which to include children. Children are valued as a challenge to and source of inspiration for their own artistic work. Thus in the concept of the symposium Poher and Kölling threw up a quite different perspective on how to understand artistic freedom.

#### **IV: Our concluding theses:**

- What we should understand as artistic freedom is wilfully independent, related to a specific context and individual.
- Artists create artistic projects within the topography of artistic education.
- Artistic freedom and cultural education are not necessarily contradictions.
- Wilful independence is a basic parameter both of cultural education and artistic freedom.

What remains is wilful independence.



## Speakers

### Oliver Kontny:

Oliver Kontny was born in Dortmund in 1974 and read philosophy and history at the University of Bremen from 1993 to 1999. Subsequently he worked as a solicitor's assistant and translator from Turkish in Istanbul, London and Oxford. He has been living as a freelance worker in Bochum since 2005 – amongst others in the film branch for Fatih Akin and Semih Kaplanoglu. Oliver Kontny has curated, chaired and acted as a translator for events on Turkish, German and Persian literature in a number of different German cities: these include the "lit.Cologne 2014". He has translated into German the crime novel "Behzat C. – Every Touch leaves a Clue" (2011) and a book of short stories entitled "Young Losers" (2014) by Emrah Serbes (binooki). From 2006 to 2009 he followed courses in Turkish Studies and Iranian Studies at the FU Berlin. Between 2009 and 2011 he worked as a dramaturg, curator and author at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße. In 2012 he wrote and directed the radio feature "Iranian Voices – Republic of the Crazy" with music by Marc Sinan. It was broadcast by RBB, WDR and Deutschlandradio Kultur and received the "Long Burning Microphone" award at the 2013 Berlin Radio Play Festival. Since 2010 Oliver Kontny has been regularly invited to lecture at symposia, congresses and specialist conferences in Germany and abroad, where he has spoken about his philosophical reactions to post-migrant theatre, intercultural matters and the interface between dramaturgy and social policies. In 2014 his article entitled "From Quality to Alterity – Postmigrant Theatre as a Counter Model to Debates on Integration", was published by the Bertelsmann Foundation in a collection of essays entitled "Vielfältiges Deutschland" (Diverse Germany). In addition he is a member of the jury for the Augsburg Dramatists Prize whose theme in the current year in transcultural writing on the theme of "home".

### Airan Berg

Airan Berg set up the "Theatre Without Borders" in 1993 with Martina Winkel, and organised the "The Power of Wonder" international puppet theatre festival. Between 2001 and 2007 he was the joint head of the Vienna Playhouse with Barrie Kosky. From 2007 to 2010 he was the artistic head of performing arts for the Cultural Capital, Linz09, during which he presented a project entitled I like to move it move it with 90 schools in Upper Austria.

Every person is creative: this was the basic philosophy behind iKEDI (in German: iKATZE) a participative project developed by Airan Berg with the puppet-maker Roger Titley for the 2012 iDANS Festival in Istanbul. Since 2010 almost 40,000 people have taken part and built puppets representing the streets of Istanbul.

In his role as artistic head he is currently acting as consultant for the application from the south Italian town Lecce for the title of European Capital of Culture 2019.

### Catherine Poher

Catherine Poher was born in 1953 in Paris and now lives in Denmark. In her work as a director and pictorial artist she is constantly searching for the moment in time when it is possible to fuse different generations in art, for in art she sees moments when people come together. Her theatre work for children is not so much about sketching out a world for children but sharing thoughts, wishes and feelings with them. She has received the Danish Reumert Award on many occasions for her theatre for babies and children.

### **Darren o'Donnell**

Darren O'Donnell is the artistic head of the "Mammalian Diving Reflex" performance and research collective from Toronto in Canada, which has existed since 1993.

In its work with schools, business companies and senior citizen's homes Mammalian Diving Reflex uses performative practices to try to lay bare systems and place them in fresh contexts. His work with children and young people, their views on art and the way they shape their everyday life, is often to the fore.

At the Ruhrtriennale 2012 – 2014 Mammalian Diving Reflex presented the "No Education" programme with its Children's Choice Award. Here children make up the festival jury and award their own personal prize at the end.

### **Louise Lapointe**

The annual Les Trois Jours de Casteliers festival in Montréal was set up in 2005. Louise Lapointe is the artistic head and co-founder of the festival which presents current national and international puppet theatre shows for people of all ages over a period of three days. The festival is accompanied by conferences, exhibitions and workshops. Louise Lapointe learned how to make masks and puppets from Felix Mirbt and studied, amongst others, at the "École Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette" in Charleville-Mézière.

Since 2001 she has been a part of the "Association québécoise des marionnettes" and the UNIMA Commission for International Festivals. For April 2014 Louise Lapointe is initiator for a conference where different initiatives of cultural education projects from puppet theatre companies in Québec are taking part. The focus will be on the question about differences between cultural education and cultural animation. The problems dealing with the demand for cultural education projects from the governments and sponsors will also be discussed.

### **Anurupa Roy**

Anurupa Roy is a puppeteer and director of puppet performances based in New Delhi, India. She is the Founder and Managing Trustee of The Katkatha Puppet Arts Trust and also currently the General Secretary of UNIMA India.

Katkatha works as a touring puppet theatre company with shows that tour internationally and in India to festivals and theatres. Katkatha also works in training new professional puppeteers. Anurupa also works as a consultant on using puppetry in peace building in conflict zones which are both in areas of armed conflict (like Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Manipur) and also areas of deep social conflict (with marginalised youth)

### **Barbara Kölling**

The HELIOS Theatre was set up in 1989 and moved to Hamm in 1997. It has had its own theatre building since 2004. The company consists of an ensemble of eight actors under the artistic direction of Barbara Kölling and Michael Lurse. HELIOS theatre's main work for the very young has taken on many formats. In 2005 it organised a symposium on the theme during the "hellwach" (wide awake) festival. Since then it has participated in the EU programmes, "small size – the net" (2005 – 2009); "small size – big citizens" (2009 - 2014) and "Theatre from the Start!" (2006 – 2008). In these formats artistic work is accompanied by scientific studies.





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### **International Meeting of Festival Directors** 2003, 2007, 2014

The International Meeting of Festival Directors is a project of festival FIDENA, Bochum in cooperation with the UNIMA Festival Commission.

The First International Meeting of Festival Directors was held in May 2003 in Bochum, Germany. Under the title "Individual Wilfulness Required? - International Festivals in times of Globalisation", attention was drawn to culturally conditioned features and the potentially unique characteristics of puppet festivals in an international context. How do festivals change as a result of the forward march of globalisation and ever increasing rapid data links? How can wilfulness and individuality be preserved?

After casting our eyes inwards to the structures and needs of the festival itself, we decided to look outwards. In the year 2007 the second conference "Responsibility Required? - International Festivals in times of Globalisation" was the result. Where and how does art affect matters that go beyond aesthetics and beyond the direct effect on the audience? How can we make better festivals and festivals better? What areas of life are touched on by art? What positions can art and festivals take up with respect to global challenges created by social and ecological changes?

Finally this year's theme has been: "Artistic Freedom vs. Cultural Education – International Festivals in times of Crisis."

The conference programme presented unusual projects which exemplified the link between art and mediation. It simultaneously presented concepts which refuse mediation and nonetheless (perhaps for this very reason) find a way of reaching the target audience.