

UNPACK THE ARTS

European residency programme for cultural journalists

**COPENHAGEN RESIDENCY
NY CIRKUS FESTIVAL
15-18 AUGUST 2012**

p. 3 ANA TASIĆ **From Traditional to Contemporary Circus / Od tradicionalnog do savremenog cirkusa**

p. 12 ARTHUR HOFMEESTER
New Circus in Denmark

p. 17 BIANCA VISSER **Ny Cirkus Festival presents energetic, well-balanced performances / Ny Cirkus Festival toont energieke en evenwichtige voorstellingen**

p. 25 CHRISTOFOROS PAVLAKIS **Drop of a hat?**

p. 28 DANIELA FIRESCU **Natural born artist / Natural born artist**

p. 35 LOUISE FINN **Into the mystic**

p. 39 IGOR RUŽIĆ **Face Nord's Acrobatics of Unstable Stereotypes / Un Loup Pour L'homme: 'Face Nord'**

p. 47 SRDAN LATERZA
If Nothing Falls, Nothing is Born

p. 51 VALENTIN TODOROV **Copenhagen's Ny Cirkus Festival: an Artistic Event of European Importance / Фестивалът на новия цирк в Копенхаген – арт събитие с европейско значение**

p. 59 ZALA DOBOVŠEK **What is the reach of new circus aesthetics? / Kam vse se seže estetika novega cirkusa?**



Presentation

Circus arts are an art form like theatre or dance, but have not yet a profound level of intellectual, cultural and institutional recognition it deserves, in Europe as well as at national and local level. Thereby political and financial support to this sector is quite low and there are structural weaknesses. There are strong imbalances in comparison to other creative areas, even when comparing the realities between regions or countries.

Despite the growing success of circus by the audience and programmers, circus arts are not covered by abundant literature, academic research, in-depth articles, reviews,... and artists themselves often experience difficulties in producing theoretical writing that communicates their practice, their creative processes and their productions. They rarely have the chance to exchange with critics and experts from the performing arts on theoretical or conceptual terms.

Also, many art writers are clueless about contemporary circus. Cultural journalists don't know the disciplines and techniques and overall they lack the contextual understanding to tackle a piece's dramaturgical choices, to reference other productions, or to interview artists creating non text-based works.

That's why Circuscentrum and 9 important circus festivals all over Europe conceived Unpack the Arts. Unpack the Arts is a European project – granted by Europe Culture – that provides residencies for cultural journalists in the context

of twelve major festivals programming contemporary circus. The goal of the project is to facilitate the circulation of knowledge and experience, to develop the critical discourses of its participants, and to further the role of the media within the circus arts and contemporary society.

12 Residencies – 120 Articles

Unpack the Arts consists of 12 residencies in 8 countries, spread over 2 years (August 2012 – February 2014). Each residency is set within the framework of a festival and follows the same format: over the course of 4 days, the participants contribute to a series of moderated thematic discussions, attend lectures by key circus experts, see 3-5 shows, and meet with and interview programmed artists along with a representative of the host festival. After the residencies, each participating journalist delivers one article. These texts are collected, translated and turned into an online, multilingual publication.

This first publication collects the texts of 10 European journalists who attended the residency at Ny Cirkus Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark, 15 – 18 August 2012.

We wish to thank all participants and all collaborators who made this residency a success.

KOEN ALLARY

Director, Circuscentrum (project leader)

YOHANN FLOCH

Adviser

From Traditional to Contemporary Circus

Towards a Definition of 'Postcircus'

A comparative analysis of performances by La Meute, Un loup pour l'homme, GLiMT and Subliminati Corporation presented at the Ny Cirkus Festival

ANA TASIĆ

Organised by Copenhagen International Theatre (KIT) and taking place 6-22 August, the Ny Cirkus Festival programmed a diverse range of performances by European artists working in contemporary circus. Audiences had a chance to see performances from Denmark, Belgium, France and the UK that were – in respect of both their content and structure – extremely different from one another. Some performances were very simple and likeable, closer to the concept of traditional circus, whilst others stood out for their sophisticated thematic content and inspiring hybridisation of various forms. This diversity within the festival programme was valuable in presenting a cross-section of the movements occurring within contemporary circus – a relatively new and heavily interdisciplinary genre among the contemporary performing arts. The term contemporary circus can be applied to complex, multi-genre, hybrid works of contemporary performing art which have evolved from the characteristics of 'new circus'.¹ New circus was established in the 1970s as one of many consequences of the new avant-garde forms that were developed within performing arts during the 60s. Although based on traditional

1. For more on the differences between new and contemporary circus see Tomi Purovaara's 'New circus – contemporary circus', in *An Introduction to Contemporary Circus* (New Nordic Circus Network, 2012), p. 105.

Od tradicionalnog do savremenog cirkusa

ka definiciji pojma postcirkusa

Komparativna analiza predstava prikazanih na NY festivalu, autora La Meute, Un loup pour l'homme, GLiMT i Subliminati Corporation

ANA TASIĆ

Od 6. do 22. avgusta se u Kopenhagenu, u organizaciji Kopenhagenskog internacionalnog teatra (KIT), održao festival NY na kome su prikazane predstave evropskih umetnika koji se bave savremenim cirkusom. Publika je imala prilike da vidi dela izvođača iz Danske, Belgije, Francuske, Velike Britanije, međusobno izuzetno različite, u pogledu njihovog sadržaja, kao i strukture. Pojedine predstave su bile veoma jednostavne i pitke, bliže tradicionalnom cirkusu u smislu njihove idejne svedenosti, dok su druge bile vrlo izazovne u pogledu sadržaja i podsticajnog ukrštanja različitih formi. Ta specifična heterogenost programa je bila vrlo dragocena jer je iscrtala relevantan presek strujanja u okvirima guste mreže savremenog cirkusa, odnosno adekvatno je predstavila raskošnu različitost tokova ovog interdisciplinarnog žanra savremenih izvođačkih umetnosti.

Određnica *savremeni cirkus* označava dela koja pripadaju polju složene, multižanrovske, hibridne, aktuelne produkcije savremenih izvođačkih umetnosti, ona koja su se razvila na bazi novog cirkusa.¹ A novi cirkus je prethodna forma, etablirana sedamdesetih godina prošlog veka, kao jedna od brojnih posledica opštih revolucija u

1. O razlikama između pojmova novog i savremenog cirkusa videti Tomi Purovaara, „New circus-contemporary circus“, u *An Introduction to Contemporary Circus*, New Nordic Circus Network, Stockholm, 2012, 105.

circus, new/contemporary circus is a lot more complex and self-confident, and often behaves rather subversively towards its own traditions. It is a hybrid form with elements of acrobatics, dance, dramatic theatre, shadow theatre, and marionette theatre that also incorporates contemporary visual arts and digital technologies. This text will show the differences between traditional and contemporary circus, mapping the similarities and differences between the two forms with examples provided by four of the performances presented at this year's Ny Cirkus Festival: *Tragédie Grecque* by the French group La Meute, *Face Nord* by Un loup pour l'homme, *Er du os?* by Danish company GLIMT, and *#File_Tone* by the French troupe Subliminati Corporation.

La Meute and Un loup pour l'homme – Self-confidence, physical reality, and failure as a means of self-reflection

Tragédie Grecque, a performance by the very young French group La Meute, is characterised by innocence, naivety, simplicity and a persuasive *joie de vivre* that makes its title somewhat ironical. Rather than being used literally in the work, the idea of the 'tragic' seems to be present only as a distant possibility – a misty echo of theatre tradition and a notion related to the past. In its content, *Tragédie Grecque* tackles issues of community, interpersonal support and competitiveness at the same time as it explores the limits of physical endurance. Its content and structure are also close to those of another performance presented at this year's Ny Cirkus Festival: *Face Nord* by Un loup pour l'homme, which actually suits much better the label of 'tragedy'. Indeed, the artists define themselves as tragic heroes: "The futility of fighting is beautiful. He [the hero] cannot accept his position; his revolt is his humanity... Whether he is aware of it or not, his only goal is to postpone his defeat, to delay the moment when time will triumph over his abilities."² The topics addressed by *Face Nord* can be compared to those of *Tragédie Grecque* – the limits of physical endurance and strength, bodily discipline, community, masculinity, competition in

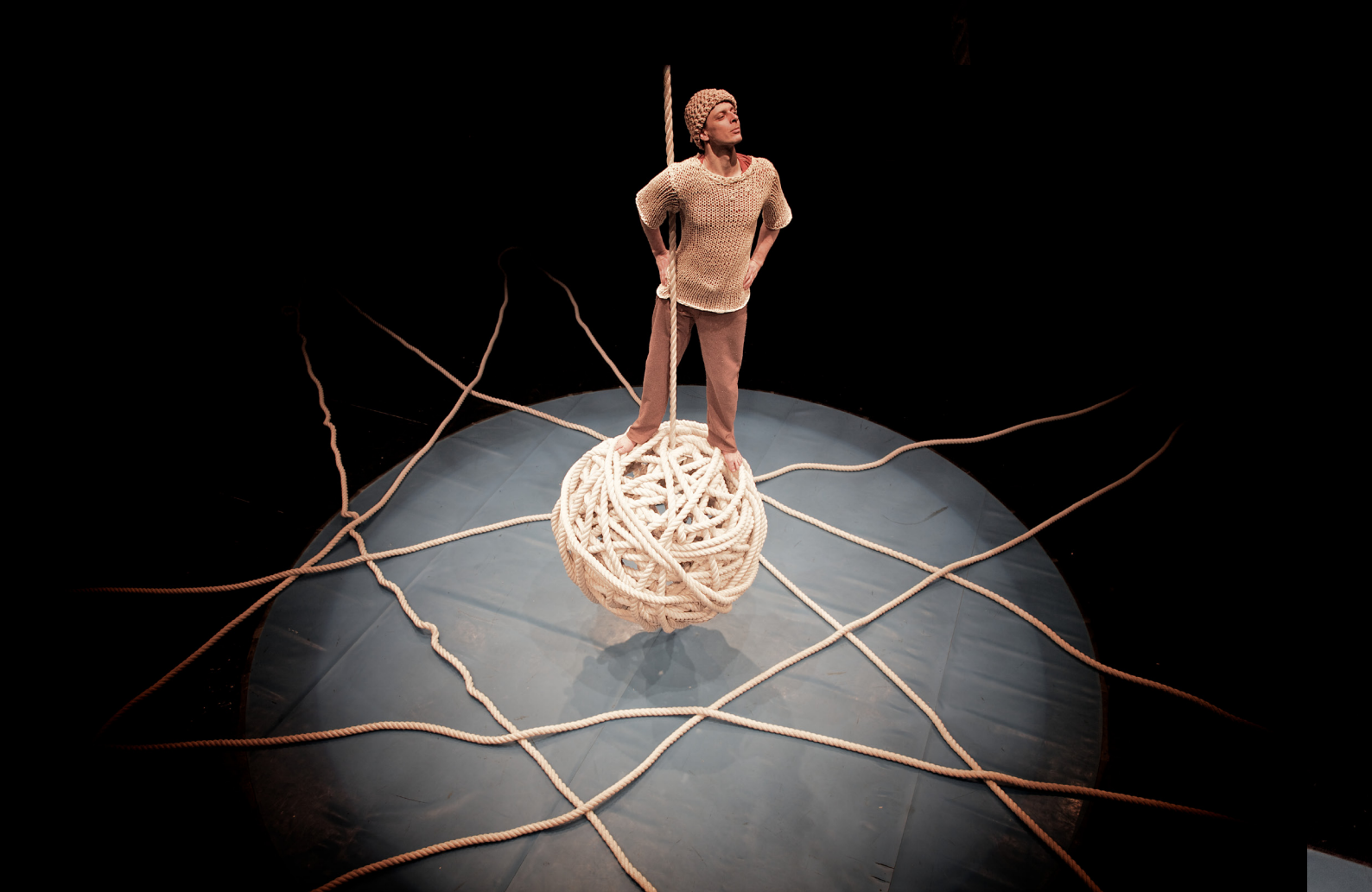
2. From the programme for *Face Nord*.

šezdesetim godinama koje su dovele do razvijanja novih avangardnih oblika izvođačkih umetnosti. Novi/savremeni cirkus je izgrađen na osnovi tradicionalnog cirkusa ali je od njega mnogo složeniji, samosvesniji i često vrlo subverzivno usmeren prema sopstvenoj tradiciji. Reč je sinkretičkoj formi u kojoj se ukrštaju elementi akrobatike, plesnog i dramskog teatra, teatra senki, marionetskog pozorišta, kao i savremenih vizualnih umetnosti i digitalnih tehnologija. U ovom tekstu ćemo pokazati razlike između tradicionalnog i savremenog cirkusa, odnosno mapirati tačke njihovog spajanja i razdvajanja, na primerima predstava koje su prikazane na ovogodišnjem NY festivalu: *Grčka tragedija* francuske grupe La Meute, *Lice severa* kompanije Un loup pour l'homme, *Da li ste vi mi?* danske kompanije Glimt i *Fajl_ton* takođe francuske grupe Subliminati Corporation.

La Meute i Un loup pour l'homme – Samosvesni prodor telesne realnosti, neuspeh kao sredstvo samoproblematizacije.

Predstava *Grčka tragedija* vrlo mlade francuske grupe La Meute određena je atributima nevinosti, naivnosti, jednostavnosti, ubedljive *joie de vivre*. U vezi sa time, može se reći da je njen naslov ironičan - ideja tragičnosti se ovde ne eksplatiše u nikakvom krucijalnijem vidu, više je prisutna kao nekakva daleka mogućnost, magloviti eho pozorišne tradicije, pojam zakucan u prošlosti. U pogledu sadržaja, *Grčka tragedija* se bavi pitanjima zajedništva, međuljudske podrške, ali i kompetativnosti, kao i istraživanja granica telesne izdržljivosti. Njena tema i struktura su bliske drugoj predstavi prikazanoj na ovogodišnjem NY festivalu, *Face Nord* grupe Un loup pour l'homme kojoj zapravo mnogo više odgovara atribut tragičnosti. Autori i sami sebe tako određuju, kao tragične heroje: „Uzaludnost borbe je lepa. On (heroj) ne može da odluči da prihvati svoj položaj: njegova pobuna je njegova humanost... Bio svestan toga ili ne, jedini mu je cilj da odloži svoj poraz, da pomeri trenutak kada će godine i vreme trijumfovati nad njegovim sposobnostima.“² Korpus tema koje predstava

2. Iz programa za predstavu *Face Nord*.



GLiMT – Er du os? © Adam Lehn

sport – but the basic tone of the two performances is completely different: the innocence, naivety and concentrated joy of La Meute's performance is highly contradictory to the strict determination, occasionally even frightening seriousness, of the Un loup pour l'homme performers.

Both performances reflect on the body and on physicality, and, while they might have different approaches, in both cases we can see the characteristics that separate contemporary circus from its traditional forebear. The performer's body has, naturally, always been the focal point of circus, but it is only reflected upon in the context of contemporary circus – a shift that can be partly attributed to the changing attitudes of society and the influence this has had on contemporary art. In contemporary circus performances like *Face Nord* and *Tragédie Grecque* the performer's body is simultaneously a subject and an object of expression. It is phenomenological and discursive, material and semiotic, a signifier and signified; the work is produced from within the material of the performer's own existence. Un loup pour l'homme are explicit that they don't want to *show* in their performances; they want to

Face Nord pokreće je vrlo uporediv sa *Grčkom tragedijom* – granice telesne izdržljivosti i snage, disciplinovanje tela, zajedništvo, muškost, sportsko nadmetanje. Sa druge strane, oštro ih odvaja osnovni ton – nevinost, naivnost i koncentrisana radost igre La Meute u drastičnom je konfliktu sa strogom odlučnošću, ponekada i zastrašujućom ozbiljnošću izvođača Un loup pour l'homme.

Obe predstave samoproblematizuju telo i telesnost što se postiže na različite načine, a reč je o karakteristikama koje odvajaju savremeni cirkus od tradicionalnog. Telo izvođača je, naravno, uvek bilo u centru cirkusa ali tek u savremenom cirkusu dolazi do njegove autorefleksije što je, između ostalog, posledica brojnih promena u današnjem društvenom okruženju, odnosno umetničkoj produkciji. U ovim predstavama je telo izvođača istovremeno i subjekat i objekat izražavanja, ono je i fenomenološko i diskurzivno, materijalno i znakovno, označujuće i označeno; delo se proizvodi u materijalu vlastite egzistencije performera. Un loup pour l'homme ključno naglašavaju da ne žele da *pokazuju* u svojim

UNPACK
THE
ARTS

be.³ This is a significant difference in relation to traditional circus, which was based on the creation of spectacle with the primary goal of entertaining the spectator, and is tellingly reflected in performers' facial expressions. Traditional circus practitioners most often smile, whilst the facial expressions of the *Un loup pour l'homme* performers are deadly serious. They don't promise any fireworks in their entertainment, but their intention is to *truly* test the limits of their bodies, and to do so in the total absence of theatrical mimesis. There is no boundary between reality and fiction: "We play for real".⁴ The 'performance' that spectators watch is the artist's reality; the performer does not represent but *embodies* himself, embodies his non-mediated and non-fake subjectivity. In this sense, a contemporary circus performer is the same as a performance artist who, instead of a performance, creates an *event* with the participation of spectators. In the absence of mimesis, illusion, or the fourth wall, the barrier between spectator and performer is removed.

In both *Face Nord* and *Tragédie Grecque* the artists pay a lot of attention to the possibility of failing during their acrobatic acts, this failure becoming both a means for them to reflect on their body and its physical (in)abilities, and an expression of one of the key differences between traditional and contemporary circus. In both works the performers (deliberately) fail to perform certain actions. In conversation after their performance of *Tragédie Grecque*, La Meute pointed out that the work is a reflection of their lifestyle and that their objective in scenes where the artists fail is, among other things, to demonstrate a distinction between the image of a superhero and the vulnerability of a human being.⁵ Failure is one of the taboos of traditional circus – the acrobats are not allowed to make mistakes because mistakes destroy the illusion and kill the essence of performance.⁶ But in new/contemporary circus things are different: protagonists play with the possibility of failure,

3. From the programme for *Face Nord*.

4. Ibid.

5. The discussion was held on 16 August within the Unpack the Arts residency.

6. This fact was explained to us by Yohann Floch, moderator and lecturer at the Unpack the Arts residency.

predstavama, već da *budu*.³ To je važna razlika u odnosu na stari cirkus koji je utemeljen na premisi pokazivanja i spektakla, na primarnoj funkciji zabavljanja gledalaca. U direktnoj vezi sa time je razlika u facijalnim izrazima izvođača. Tradicionalni praktičari cirkusa su najčešće plastično nasmejani, dok su izrazi lica izvođača *Un loup pour l'homme* smrtno ozbiljni, oni ne obećavaju nikakav vatromet zabave već nameru da *stvarno* testiraju granice svojih tela, u odsustvu teatarske mimeze. Granica između stvarnosti i fikcije se ovde ukida („Mi igramo za stvarno”/“We play for real”).⁴ Igra koju gledaoci prate je njihova stvarnost, izvođač nije predstavljatelj već otelotvoruje sebe, svoju neposredovanu, nepatvorenu subjektivost. U tom smislu, izvođač savremenog cirkusa se izjednačava sa umetnikom performansa koji ne kreira predstavu već *dogadaj* u kome učestvuju i gledaoci, imajući u vidu da je barijera između posmatrača i izvođača porušena, odsustvom predstavljanja, iluzije, četvrtog zida.

U obe predstave se njeni autori bitno bave mogućnostima neuspeha izvođenja akrobacija što je jedno od sredstava samoproblematizacije, tela i fizičkih (ne)sposobnosti, odnosno način odvajanja tradicionalnog i savremenog cirkusa. U obe predstave izvođači u više navrata (namerno) ne uspevaju da izvedu tačke. Na razgovoru o predstavi *Grčka tragedija*, članovi La Meute su istakli da je to delo refleksija njihovog životnog stila i da im je cilj, između ostalog, bio da pokažu distinkciju između imidža superheroja i ranjivosti ljudskog bića, što je bio cilj scena koje prikazuju neuspeh.⁵ Jedan od tabua tradicionalnog cirkusa je neuspeh⁶ - akrobatama nisu dopuštene greške jer one razaraju iluziju, ubijajući tako suštinu predstave. U novom/savremenom cirkusu se, naprotiv, akteri igraju sa mogućnošću neuspeha, namerno prave greške dubinski izazivajući publiku, i implicitno tražeći od nje da razmišlja o odnosu između tradicionalnog i novog, očekivanog i stvarno doživljenog. Neuspeh znači bezobziran prodor realnosti i na taj način se

3. Navedeno u programu predstave *Face Nord*.

4. Ibidem.

5. Razgovor je održan 16. avgusta u prostorijama KIT-a, u okviru kritičarske rezidencije Unpack the Arts.

6. Ovu činjenicu je naveo Yohann Floch, moderator i predavač rezidencije Unpack the Arts.

deliberately making mistakes to provoke the audience and stimulate it to think about the relation between traditional and new, between what is acted and what is really experienced. A ruthless characteristic of reality, failure articulates the spectator's role by eliminating the barrier lying between them and the performers. The spectators become part of the performance through their visceral response (whether fear, excitement or delight) to a stage performance that has been liberated from mimesis or illusion. Traditional circus generates a utopian, solid world where there is no possibility to fail. Failure in contemporary circus, on the other hand, creates crashes, gaps, tears – disruptions that are productive in the sense of opening infinite fields for (self-)analysis.

In addition to working at all times with the possibility of failure, *Face Nord* also employs other techniques, including music, that open a gap between traditional and contemporary circus.⁷ Music played through loudspeakers builds a clear contrast to the action on stage: it has a completely opposite meaning to the acrobats' performance, which reflects a world of extreme brutality as the artists enact a merciless fight to the death. The music is classical, spiritual, operatic, and plays while the stage is full of sweat and the sound of screaming. This juxtaposition causes a short circuit in the spectator's perception and consequently brings a sense of self-reflection. In a similar fashion, the scenes of brutal fighting between the protagonists are followed by scenes of extreme tenderness that sometimes also reflect a homoerotic subtext. Such sharp contrasts between successive scenes serves as an impetus for self-reflection and heightens the audience's concentration: more effort, more engagement, is needed in understanding the form and its possible meanings. This is what makes the circus of *Face Nord* contemporary. As well, the clearly homosexualised bodies that feature in the performance are in conflict with the masculinity

7. To be honest, dealing with the differences between traditional, new and contemporary circus and establishing categories and distinctions between them isn't something that circus artists really want to think about. This fact became evident in the discussions held between artists and critics during the Unpack the Arts residency.

osvešćuje uloga gledaoca, ukida se barijera između njih i izvođača. Gledaoci postaju deo predstave svojim stvarnim reakcijama, strahovima, uzbuđenjima, zadovoljstvima, kojima reaguju na scensku igru oslobođenu iluzornosti mimeze. U tradicionalnom cirkusu je stvoren jedan utopijski, čvrst svet u kome nema mogućnosti za pad. Neuspeh u savremenom cirkusu, sa druge strane, stvara pukotine, rupe koje su plodne u značenjskom smislu jer otvaraju nepregledna polja (samo)analize.

U predstavi *Face Nord*, pored upadljivog markiranja mogućnosti neuspeha, postoje i druga sredstva koja stvaraju jaz između tradicionalnog i savremenog cirkusa.⁷ To je, na primer, korišćenje muzike – muzika koja se emituje preko zvučnika gradi očigledan kontrast prema radnji koja se u to vreme odvija, ima sasvim suprotni smisao od igre akrobata koja konotira ekstremnu surovost, bespoštednost borbe do istrebljenja. Muzika je klasična, duhovna, operska, i emituje se dok se po sceni prosipaju znoj i jauci. Ta sinteza izaziva kratak spoj, kuršlus u percepciji gledaoca zbog šoka suprotnosti i onda konsekvantno ima smisao samoproblematizacije. Dalje, scene međusobnih brutalnih borbi aktera naglo smenjuju scene izrazite nežnosti između njih koje ponekada imaju i homoerotski podtekst. Takvi oštri kontrasti u tonovima sukcesivnih scena takođe imaju značenje autorefleksivnosti i izazivaju posebnu pažnju gledalaca, tražeći implicitno od njih veći angažman, krupnije napore u razumevanju, stvaranju novih mogućih značenja – i to čini ovaj cirkus savremenim. Takođe, jasno homoseksualizovana tela su u konfliktu sa tradicionalnom muškoću starog cirkusa gde su heteroseksualnost i čvrsta, tradicionalna rodna segregacija bili uobičajeni.

Animalizacija ljudskog

Tradicionalni cirkus se definiše kroz prisustvo životinja: „Cirkus je organizovana predstava životinja i veštih izvođača koji izvode u jednom ili u

7. Treba biti pošten i naglasiti da bavljenje ovim razlikama između tradicionalnog, novog i savremenog, uspostavljanje kategorija i distinkcija među njima nije nešto o čemu sami autori žele baš da razmišljaju. Ova činjenica se iskristalisala tokom razgovora između autora i učesnika kritičarske rezidencije Unpack the Arts. Podele i kategorizacije su rezultat potrebe kritičara/teoretičara da sistematizuju rad brojnih autora.

of the traditional circus, where heterosexuality and stereotypical gender roles are commonly upheld.

The animalisation of the human

Traditional circus can be defined in part by the presence of animals: "Circus is an organised performance of animals and highly skilled performers who perform in one or more rings surrounded by the audience."⁸ The founders of new circus, on the other hand, banished animals from the stage. In his lecture on traditional and new circus, Professor Michael Eigtved pointed out that in new circus a human body is the absolute focus of interest – instead of training animals, people train themselves.⁹ In several scenes in *Face Nord*, the performers imitate sheep, bleating and simulating animal poses. In *Tragédie Grecque*, a human is shown in the early, Neanderthal phase, and the audience are from time to time exposed to primal, inarticulate screams that are sporadically also accompanied by animal behaviour. The protagonists 'wear' towels that only hide their pubic regions, reminding us of cave people living in a pre-civilised era. Not only does the motif of human animalisation represent a formal crossing of the boundaries of traditional circus, it also bears suggestive metaphorical meanings. The merging of the human and the animal speaks of a general loss of humanity and the rise of a savage communication based on inherent, violent behaviours. The very name of the group *Un loup pour l'homme* reflects the significance of this issue. *Homo homini lupus est* – a paraphrase of Plato's thinking later developed in Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy – refers to a state of mind that is dominated by egoistic impulses: one that pits man against man on the individual level, and that will ultimately lead to a war of all against all. The sweat-soaked embodiments of these motifs that we find in contemporary circus can be seen as signs that the artform is establishing critical thought and greater social and political engagement – an idea of social action.

8. Tomi Purovaara, 'The Definition of Circus', in *An Introduction to Contemporary Circus* (New Nordic Circus Network, 2012), p. 73.
9. This lecture was held 16 August as part of the Unpack the Arts residency.

više krugova koji čine arenu okruženu publikom."⁸ Autori novog cirkusa, sa druge strane, isterali su životinje sa scene. U svom predavanju o tradicionalnom i novom cirkusu, profesor Michael Eigtved istakao je da u novom cirkusu ljudsko telo dolazi u apsolutni fokus interesovanja - umesto da ljudi treniraju životinje, oni treniraju sami sebe.⁹ U predstavi *Face Nord* izvođači u nekoliko scena imitiraju ovce, bekeću i simuliraju životinjske poze. U *Grčkoj tragediji* se prikazuje čovek u ranoj, animalnoj fazi - gledaoci su tu i tamo izloženi njegovim primalnim, neartikulisanim kricima, sporadično praćenim i animalnim ponašanjem. Pri tome, akteri su „obučeni“ u peškire koji skrivaju samo njihovo međunožje, što podseća na predstave pećinskih ljudi, onih koji su živeli u precivilizovanom vremenu, kada su bili stopljeniji sa svojim animalnim aspektima.

Motiv animalizacije ljudskog ne samo što označava formalno prekoračenje granica tradicionalnog cirkusa, odnosno predstavlja osobenost novog cirkusa - on ima i sugestivna metaforička značenja. Stapanje ljudskog i životinjskog označava degradaciju ljudskog i humanosti, otelotvorenje zverstva, komunikaciju zasnovanu na nasilnom ponašanju. Samo ime grupe, *Un loup pour l'homme*, naslućuje važnost ove problematike. *Homo homini lupus est* - parafraza je Plautove misli, kasnije razrađene u političkoj filozofiji Tomasa Hobsa, a označava stanje u kojem vladaju egoistički impulsi koji čoveka stavljaju u borbu sa drugim ljudima, uspostavljaju stanje *rata svih protiv svih*. Telesno osvešćen, znojavi prikaz ovih motiva u savremenom cirkusu može se tumačiti kao uspostavljanje kritičkog aparatusa i društveno-političkog angažmana, ideje socijalne akcije. U vezi sa time, *Un loup pour l'homme* su ubedeni da je cirkuska umetnost veoma moćna kao umetnost akcije: „Do toga dolazi kroz posvećivanje onome što se radi, izvođačevoj 'fizičkoj akciji'“¹⁰

Naglašena telesnost/emocionalnost igre snažno

8. Tomi Purovaara, „The Definition of Circus, u *An Introduction to Contemporary Circus*, New Nordic Circus Network, Stockholm, 2012, 73.
9. Predavanje je održano u prostorijama KIT-a, u okviru rezidencije Unpack the Arts, 16. avgusta.
10. Navedeno u programu za predstavu *Face Nord*.

The pronounced physicality/emotion of *Face Nord* strongly inspires social action, revolt against the *status quo*, and general discontent far more intensely than the dull intellectualism of mimetic theatre's psychologisation. Circus has always been inseparably connected with popular culture, a medium which defines itself through the idea of revolt and rebellion against dominant values, hegemonies and politics. Popular culture's main characteristic is an insistence on the carnal presence of the body – an excessive physicality which is subversive in suggesting chaos and disobedience and in reminding us, as the pop culture sociologist John Fiske points out, of the intrinsic weaknesses of social discipline and governing politics.¹⁰ Excessive physicality in contemporary circus should also be understood in the context of today's context of pervasive and radical social mediation. The average human is ruthlessly attacked by media delivered by way of television, film and the internet – theatricalised expressions of social reality. Corporeal materiality is threatened in such an environment – we live, in the words of Baudrillard, in reflections, surrounded by images, in a simulation of reality. Therefore, confronting real bodies in contemporary circus, bodies that are tired and under conditions of extreme stress, becomes even more special and exclusive – a unique privilege for the contemporary circus spectator.

Subliminati Corporation and GLiMT – Content triumphing over form

In traditional circus, the performance of extreme or risky physical acts is itself the *reason* for the performance; generally form is equal to content. In new/contemporary circus on the other hand, traditional acrobatic elements are most often only a means of expression; the content of a show therefore gains considerably more importance. Form is no longer equal to content. This interpretation might reasonably be applied to two further performances at this year's Ny Cirkus Festival: *#File_Tone* by the French troupe Subliminati Corporation and *Er du os?* by GLiMT. *#File_Tone* very decisively enters the field of

inspiriše društvenu akciju, pobunu protiv *statusa quo* i opšteg nezadovoljstva, mnogo intenzivnije nego suvoparni intelektualizam psihologizacije mimetičkog pozorišta. Cirkus je uvek bio neraskidivo vezan za popularnu kulturu koja se definiše kroz ideju otpora, pobune protiv dominantnih vrednosti, hegemonije, politike. Trejdmark popularne kulture je insistiranje na karnevalskoj prisutnosti tela, prekomernoj telesnosti koja je subverzivna jer sugerije nered, odbijanje poslušnosti, i podseća na krhkost discipline i vladajuće politike, kako to tumači sociolog popularne kulture Džon Fisk.¹¹ A prenaplašenu telesnost u savremenom cirkusu treba razumeti i u današnjem kontekstu opšte i korenite društvene medijacije. Prosečan čovek je bezobzirno napadnut različitim medijskim predstavama, teatralizovanim odrazima društvene stvarnosti, putem televizije, filma, Interneta. U tako organizovanom okruženju, materijalnost tela je bolno ugrožena - živimo u odrazima, okruženi slikama, u simulaciji stvarnosti, bodrijarovski rečeno. Onda suočavanje sa opipljivim, napetim telima u savremenom cirkusu, u tom kontekstu opšteg odsustva telesne stvarnosti, postaje još posebnije i ekskluzivnije, sasvim specifična privilegija gledaoca savremenog cirkusa.

Subliminati Corporation i Glimt – Forma pobedena sadržajem

U tradicionalnom cirkusu izvođenje ekstremnih, riskantnih fizičkih aktova je razlog postojanja predstave, forma je tu uglavnom izjednačena sa sadržajem. Sa druge strane, u novom/savremenom cirkusu tradicionalna akrobatska sredstva najčešće su zaista samo sredstva ekspresije, dok sadržaj postaje mnogo bitniji. Forma više nije izjednačena sa sadržajem. U tom smislu se mogu posmatrati dve predstave prikazane na ovogodišnjem NY festivalu, *Fajl _ ton (File _ Tone)* francuske kompanije Subliminati corporation i *Da li ste vi mi? (Are You Us?)* kompanije Glimt. Za predstavu *Fajl _ ton* može se reći da vrlo odlučno ulazi na polje (post)dramskog teatra ostavljajući pomalo za sobom cirkusku tradiciju. Izvođači tu koriste tradicionalne

10. See John Fiske, *Popularna kultura [Popular Culture]* (Clio, 2001).

11. Videti Džon Fisk, *Popularna kultura*, Clio, Beograd, 2001.

(post)dramatic theatre, leaving circus tradition behind. The performers use traditional acrobatic skills such as juggling not to fascinate the spectator but to disrupt the expectations of traditional circus. The company go a long way in pursuit of this aim – far enough that the artists manipulate their audience, constantly playing with and confounding their expectations. The show's hat juggling act, for example, is completely independent from the performance context; it is not an organic part of it. It comes like lightning from a blue sky and has only an absurd meaning, reflecting Subliminati's intention to profoundly provoke their audience by manipulating them. According to the artists, such manipulation is a way to understand and respect freedom.¹¹ The characters in the performance are miserable individuals – 'desperadoes' on the margins of society who feel a burning need to express their thoughts and emotions on many issues related to life in today's Europe –immigration, ethnic and sexual issues, endemic solitude, and the impossibility of finding understanding and love in an alienated world. These issues are the focus of their interest, and they tackle them in a performance that only occasionally uses elements of traditional circus.

Through their minimal use, the solo performance *Er du os?* by Lars Gregersen (GLiMT) also calls into question the self-sufficiency of traditional circus' methods. The principal motive behind the creation of this performance was the artist's wish to explore an initial idea – a strong vision that motivated him to engage in the process of its realisation. In doing so, he didn't want to be forced to use the circus skills that he had very skilfully used in his previous works. Rather than form, skills, physicality *per se*, the content of *Er du os?* is the *spiritus movens* of the performance as Gregersen addresses the relations between ourselves and others and the identity of nations. *Er du os?* shows a performer engaging in a complex, two-way dialogue with a huge ball of rope. He hangs on it, loves it, hates it, fights with it; he struggles with it, plays with it, insults and

11. A view expressed by members of Subliminati Corporation during a group discussion held on 16 August with critics on the Unpack the Arts residency.

akrobatske veštine poput žongliranja, ali ne u funkciji pukog fasciniranja gledalaca već da bi problematizovali tradicionalna sredstva cirkusa. Realizacija ove namere odlazi vrlo daleko, toliko da autori manipulišu publikom, neprestano izneveravaju njena očekivanja, igraju se sa njom. Na primer, scena žongliranja sa šeširima je toliko nezavisna od konteksta značenja predstave, organski joj ne pripada, dolazi kao grom iz vedra neba, pa ima apsurdni smisao. U tome se može prepoznati namera dubinske provokacije publike, kroz manipulaciju.

Prema uverenjima autora, takva manipulacija je put do razumevanja i oštovanja slobode.¹² Akteri predstave su nesrećni individualci, desperadosi na društvenoj margini koji imaju goruću potrebu da iskažu svoje misli i osećanja povodom života u današnjoj Evropi, pitanja emigracije, etničkih i seksualnih problema, kao i usamljenosti, nemogućnosti pronalaženja razumevanja i ljubavi u razorno otuđenom svetu. Njima su ova pitanja u fokusu interesovanja, oni se njima centralno bave koristeći pri tome samo povremeno tradicionalna sredstva cirkuske igre.

Solo predstava *Da li ste vi mi?* autora Larsa Gregersena (Glimt) takođe napušta samodvoljnost sredstava ekspresije tradicionalnog cirkusa koristeći ih sasvim minimalno. Osnovni motiv kreacije ove predstave je želja autora da istraži ideju, snažnu viziju koja ga je inicijalno motivisala da uđe u proces njenog stvaranja. Pri tome on nije želeo da bude primoran da koristi cirkuske veštine koje je u svojim ranijim delima više koristio, pa ih u ovoj predstavi i nije ključnije upotrebljavao.¹³ Sadržaj je dakle *spiritus movens* predstave, a ne forma, ne veštine, ne fizikalnost *per se*. A teme njegovog interesovanja u predstavi su odnosi između nas i drugih, identitet nacija. *Da li ste vi mi?* prikazuje izvođača koji je u složenoj, višesmernoj komunikaciji sa ogromnim klupkom konopca. On visi na njemu, grli ga, voli ga, mrzi ga, bori se sa njim, muči se, igra se sa njim, vređa ga, ponižava itd.

12. Ovaj stav su članovi grupe Subliminati Corporation izrazili na razgovoru sa učesnicima rezidencije Unpack the Arts održanom u KIT-u 16. avgusta.

13. Ove činjenice je autor otkrio u intervjuu sa novinarima koji su bili učesnici rezidencije Unpack the Arts - razgovor je održan u prostorijama KIT-a, 17. avgusta.

humiliates it... The ball of rope is a metaphorical depiction of Earth, and the relationship between ball and performer represents life on Earth: it is an aestheticised metaphor for human existence, as well as for humanity's attitude to Earth and the actions it takes in protecting or destroying it.

Towards a definition of the postcircus concept

Contemporary circus can undoubtedly be placed in the field of postdramatic theatre as defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann – theatre created in a new media age, after drama.¹² We might go even further and, in analogy with the concept of postdramatic, establish the concept of postcircus – a term that would serve better than the concept of contemporary circus as it establishes a relationship with the paradigmatic theories currently framing contemporary performing arts. Postcircus would exist as an offshoot of postdramatic theatre, and would define the field of contemporary circus that exists in today's new media era. Similar to dramatic theatre, traditional circus still exists, but it lacks the avant-garde, aesthetically innovative characteristics that postdramatic theatre exhibits in relation to dramatic theatre, and that postcircus exhibits in relation to traditional circus. Therefore I suggest introducing a postcircus concept that would refer to contemporary circus productions. It would also suit the works addressed in this article – deconstructive, self-confident and self-reflective, subject-based, socially engaged and very provocative in their relationship with their audience.

Klupko konopca je metaforički prikaz zemlje, a njegova koegzistencija sa izvođačem personifikuje život na zemlji, estetizovano označava ljudsko postojanje, kao i odnos čoveka prema planeti, opciju njene zaštite, ali i destrukcije.

Ka definisanju pojma postcirkusa

Za savremeni cirkus se sigurno može reći da pripada oblasti postdramskog teatra, kako ga je definisao Hans-Tis Leman, teatra koji nastaje u medijskom vremenu, posle važenja paradigme drame.¹⁴ Možemo da odemo i dalje i da, analogno koncepciji pojma postdramskog, utvrdimo pojam postcirkusa koji bi bio adekvatniji od pojma savremenog cirkusa - adekvatniji u smislu apdejtovanosti teoretskim tokovima u oblasti savremenih izvođačkih umetnosti. Postcirkus bi bio podskup postdramskog teatra koji bi označio polje savremenog cirkusa, onog koji egzistira u današnjem medijskom vremenu, posle važenja tradicionalnih paradigmi u sferi izvođačkih umetnosti. Kao i dramsko pozorište, tradicionalni cirkus postoji, ali nema avangardna, estetski inovativna obeležja, ona koja ima postdramsko pozorište u relaciji prema dramskom, odnosno, potencijalno, postcirkus u odnosu na cirkus. Zato predlažemo uspostavljanje pojma postcirkusa koji bi relevantno opisao produkciju savremenog cirkusa – on bi odgovarajuće označio i dela koja smo predstavili u ovom radu, dekonstruktivna, samosvesna i autorefleksivna, tematski bitna, društveno aktivna i vrlo izazovna u pogledu odnosa prema publici.

12. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište [Postdramatic Theatre]* (CDU & TKH, 2004).

14. Videti Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramsko kazalište*, CDU i TKH, Zagreb i Beograd, 2004.

New Circus in Denmark

Københavns Internationale Teater makes a valuable contribution to the growth of new circus in Denmark by organising the Ny Cirkus Festival, a biennial event featuring national and international companies and artists. In August 2012, the festival line-up included GLiMT, Subliminati Corporation, Un loup pour l'homme and La Meute.

ARTHUR HOFMEESTER

Denmark has a rich circus tradition. Diana Benneweis is the circus queen of Denmark. Her circus, founded by Gottfried Benneweis, has been on the road for 125 years and is one of the oldest circuses still touring in Europe. In Denmark, a country with 5.5 million inhabitants, there are two other large circuses, Arena and Dannebrog, both on the same scale as Diana Benneweis' circus, as well as four mid-sized circuses that provide entertainment in the country's villages. All these family-run businesses have their own loyal audiences.

In the Danish circus landscape there is one black swan. Circus Nemo, directed by actor Søren Østergaard, presents a crossover of circus, variety and cabaret. Their black big top is surrounded by vintage American caravans and old wooden 'Wohnwagens' (living trailers), and the atmosphere of the place – which includes a foyer tent where audiences may drink a glass of wine after the show – attracts the attention of theatre audiences in the big cities.

All these commercially run traditional or classic circuses are selling enough tickets to be healthy and profitable. Alongside them there are also some social circuses and circus schools in Copenhagen and Silkeborg, and even two circus museums.

It seems circus is in the blood of the Danish. But it looks like the enthusiasm is only for the native circus: Cirque du Soleil lost a fortune presenting *Quidam* in Copenhagen in the summer of 2001 because of bad ticket sales. Was the show too 'new', or was it because of the lack of elephants that so few tickets were sold?

New Circus

In the late 80s, the French equestrian Zingaro came to Copenhagen and Aarhus, followed by Archaos from France in the 90s. Since then, a constant stream of international new circus companies has been arriving. Even in the Cirkusbygningen (Circus Building), founded in 1886, some new circus companies performed before it became a venue for dinner shows. In the 70s, Amsterdam had its Festival of Fools, 'a comedy convention of New Clowns', and Jango Edwards did his Friends Roadshow on the beaches of Holland. People walked a little open-eyed through Christiania in 1972, an ideal environment for new circus, but they only saw jugglers.

People say that the new circus was born in France. It started when Jean Baptiste Thierrée and Victoria Chaplin put New! on the poster of a very traditional circus show by the Morales family. In a show with lions and horses and ordinary circus acts, Jean and Victoria did some sketches. It was the time after Woodstock; the students and workers were uprising in Paris. In the meantime, the quality of the traditional circus in France had dropped to a poor level and they had lost their audience. Alexis Gruss and Annie Fratellini, descendants of famous French circus families, both independently founded a circus school. Fratellini for her daughter and Gruss for his little Cirque a l'Ancienne (the circus of the old days). It was possible for outsiders (not born in a circus caravan) to become a circus artist. Through all this, the emergence of the new circus can be pinpointed in France, especially when considered



Cie Un Loup pour l'homme – Face Nord © Milan Szytura

alongside the cultural and financial support it began to receive from the French government.

No doubt, one of the meanings of new circus is the opportunity for outsiders (not born in a circus family) to learn circus skills, to do 'something' with circus in a professional way. It is not necessary to run away from home anymore to join a circus.

Students at circus schools in France, Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden are training circus skills as a degree and spend much of their time on artistic research. With great passion they develop new forms of circus which crossover with other artforms.

Ny Cirkus Festival 2012

One of the international crowd-pullers at the festival was undoubtedly the new performance *Face Nord* by the French company Un loup pour l'homme.

In one of the halls of a former tram depot in Copenhagen a green pitch (7 by 7 metres) was put down, with four straight stands holding a light tower placed in each corner. Several associations are triggered: an athletic field, a boxing ring (not on a stage), a circus ring (not circular) or an arena. Between the pitch and the audience is just a few centimetres' space.

Two men dressed in American football-suits face each other kindly, then in a threatening posture. With a hard kick, one man throws the other to the ground; next they do a little dance *face to face* and their shoulder pads, like epaulettes from a circus or military costume, flutter rhythmically. The first burst of laughter from the audience is a relief after the heavy opening. Two different men secure possession of the pitch, running wildly. Brute physical force converts to wild leaps. Exercises turn into acrobatics. Tentative and vulnerable, choreographing attraction and rejection – a ballet of four fighters?

Still, this is only for a moment. Partner acrobatics soon come to the fore, with a rich repertoire of unusual and original tricks. Interwoven poses, monkey-like tricks and brute force blend together. The finale is an old trick by the Rivel clowns: a four-person bridge. Silent fragments alternate with classical song and modest piano music.

Acrobat Alexandre Fray and trapeze acrobat Frédéric Arsenault have been working together for eight years in their company *Un loup pour l'homme*. Fray: 'we wanted an act with four men and with sports'. Following an audition process, Mika Lafforgue and Sergi Parés joined the company. After a long period of working together, a rough performance developed that included various sporting rituals. Arsenault: 'the performance is not intended to be funny, but the audience always laughs'. It is the slapstick-effect: the same as an actor receiving a blow from a stick. The four men of *Un loup* explain that the laughing during the performance is not an easy thing. 'My single goal during the performance is not to respond to the audience,' said Parés. To perform with a mask, then? 'That is not a solution. The effect would be gone,' Arsenault returns with a smile.

Face Nord is a refined show that takes sports as a starting point. It is tiring for the performers, and the audience shivers at hearing their gasps and seeing drops of sweat fly about. *A must see!*

La Meute's *Tragédie Grecque* is of a different order.

The men behind *Un loup pour l'homme* have been touring for years and perform with other companies now and then. The six young men from La Meute, on the other hand, are still fresh. *Tragédie Grecque* was made as their final assessed work at the University of Dance and Circus (DOCH) in Stockholm in June 2012.

A Greek tragedy then. The night of the performance the setting is the circular court at Tietgenkollegiet, a round building (by the Danish architects Lundgaard & Tranberg) with 360 rooms for foreign students. Some of the tenants are leaning wearily over their balustrades, waiting for the umpteenth spectacle. The heat is almost

tropical in Ørestad, where the campus is situated. Copenhagen's city centre is nearby.

The audience, apparently already acquainted with visual theatre, looks expectantly at the Russian swing and other circus props. They are seated round a green ring, as in a traditional circus. Even though the Danish have their own currency, the word Eurocrisis is mentioned somewhere.

Then they enter. Six pairs of brown, innocent eyes on top of naked or almost naked bodies look at the audience with surprise. Affectedly they assemble underwear from white hotel towels. Are they the skirts worn by the Greek guards at the palace in Athens or the belts of Sumo wrestlers? 'It's an idea from our director Dominique Bettenfeld,' said Julien Auger. 'The idea to call this performance *A Greek Tragedy* had nothing to do with the current events in Greece.' Auger and his companions met each other at the National Circus School in Rosny-sur-Bois (ENACR) near Paris. After two years they continued at DOCH. There, *Tragédie Grecque* was their exam performance. 'The director Walter Ferrero has supported us tremendously during the final stages of this project,' said Arnau Serra Vila.

Tragédie Grecque in Tietgenkollegiet meets every requirement for being an entertaining performance. It is provocative, there's humour and slapstick, and the artists produce outstanding and daring circus in disciplines such as Russian swing, teeterboard, banquine, hand-to-hand and floor acrobatics. But the performance is not yet complete. That is part of the vigour of this group of young circus artists. Spontaneity and rashness still abound. The young men react to an audience that loves their double somersaults from the Russian swing – as do the students, breathlessly watching this circus from their windows.

Before the Ny Cirkus Festival, La Meute had performed their show only seven times during a small tour in Sweden. Idney Pin: 'The idea behind this performance originated when we were trying to find a suitable subject.' As is often the case in new circus, this group has no obvious leader. Dominique Bettenfeld is the 'outside eye'. As mentioned before, the performance is not yet flawless. Bahoz Temaux: 'we want to use the



Subliminati Corporation – #File_Tone © Ben Hopper

teeterboard more often and a number of small acts need improvement'. In order to hold the audience's attention, the performance needs tightening up.

Julien Auger: 'We want to show stupid things and acrobatics. Then we are having fun. We push each other to keep acting like superheroes. We love working in the ring. There, the audience's involvement with the performance is optimal. Things come across better and you can't fake anything. We don't call our performance contemporary circus. It's circus!'

Tragédie Grecque is a highly entertaining performance, with staggering circus acts. Go and see!

The contrast between the performances by La Meute and Un loup pour l'homme is strong. One is young, fresh and still impetuous; the other radiates great professionalism and perfection. Both excel in circus techniques. It strikes that both companies choose to perform 'en rondé', in the ring, for a better connection with the audience.

New circus' balancing act

In the theatre République, set up in an old ammunitions depot built in the typical Danish red brick, Subliminati Corporation perform *#File_Tone*. Five young artists – an Italian, a Catalan, a Basque, a Korean and a Frenchman – offer a mix of acrobatics, juggling, dance, daredevilry and beat-boxing. They are friends that met at the Lido circus school in Toulouse.

The performance is dynamic and surprising. Surprising because political statements are expressed. The beginning of it tests the audiences with its performance and scenography, as a man in a red dress imitates a stereotypical woman. Drama and beat-boxing alternate.

But where is the coherence? Subliminati Corporation show their best circus techniques while juggling with bowlers and clubs – but these skills don't fit in the performance. *#File_Tone* raises several questions. Why the political statements? They are rather meek and not very topical. Why the emphasis on audience participation? Acrobat Mael Tebibi plays Barack

Obama standing on the top of a tall ladder. 'Do you want to see him jump?' a colleague asks. Does the audience want this? Why the question if the audience wants to see what sex the man/woman in the red dress is? Again: does the audience want this? Say the show plays in Amsterdam, and the audience replies with a loud NO! What will they do?

The beat-boxing is nice for enthusiasts. The juggler is good and the acrobatics by Subliminati Corporation are good as well, but the performance is not at all new circus. 'Is there alternative opera?' a lady asked at the entrance to Københavns Musikteater, where Lars Gregersen from the company *GliMT* was performing *Er du os? (Are you us?)*. The Danish acrobat founded his company in 2002 together with the acrobat Camila Sarrazin.

In his solo performance *Er du os?* Gregersen struggles with a gigantic tangled ball hanging from the ceiling. He tries to get on it, in it or near it. Once he is on or in the knot, Gregersen wants back down. What moves him? It was a long search. The concept for the show came quickly, but the road to the actual performance was long. About ten 'outside eyes' gave their advice. 'I was curious if I could manage a complete performance without any circus techniques,' says Gregersen. 'Only at the end do I do something on the vertical rope, holding the ball.'

In the genre of new circus, things are hard to define. Gregersen: 'I call this performance new circus because I wouldn't sell any tickets otherwise. Actually, it's visual physical theatre.'

Suddenly new circus could be marketed

What is in the mind of the smartphone generation when it comes to circus? The show by Diana Benneweis or *Undermän* by Cirkus Cirkör? Is it the commercial circus or the subsidised circus? How will the new circus reach that generation?

New circus could be marketed if theatre directors, and of course producers, put more effort into selling this crazy but very interesting product. The reason audiences buy tickets is the word circus on

the poster of a new circus company – for the majority of people the word circus has a magical attraction! Do not call it 'movement theatre with acrobatics' or anything like that – nobody will buy a ticket.

Many new circus companies only survive by selling their work to theatres or summer festivals. Theatre directors take a risk in selling tickets for an unknown company to a market that knows nothing about the product. But P.T. Barnum had the same problem for his *Greatest Show on Earth*, and Diana Benneweis must still face it today. Sooner or later, the smartphone generation will want to step out of the era of individualism. Let them discover the new circus! New circus will also need new marketing.

Ny Cirkus Festival presents energetic, well-balanced performances

There is much to discover at the Ny Cirkus Festival in Copenhagen.

What is special about this summer event is that the organisation that arranges it, the Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT), has no permanent venue of its own.

The personnel operate out of an office, a stone's throw away from the city hall, in the middle of a city known as the backdrop for the popular TV series The Killing.

BIANCA VISSER

Circus has undergone an enormous transformation in the last ten years. Alongside the traditional clowns, acrobats, trapeze artists, horses and tigers, a new movement has taken hold, commonly referred to as new circus.

The origins of new circus can be traced back to the 70s, when a group of circus artists, convinced it was time for change, began to introduce storylines into their work, weaving circus techniques into narratives. Collaborations with other performance disciplines were undertaken as circus sought alliances with music, dance and the theatre. It even combined with the fine arts... anything became possible. Out of this new movement emerged another movement, a counter-movement – a movement of resistance that pleaded for a return to the purity of the genre.

Meanwhile some ask themselves, at the mark of this sixth anniversary of the Ny Cirkus Festival, if it is even still relevant to use the term 'new'. Today most people prefer the label contemporary circus.

Ny Cirkus Festival toont energieke en evenwichtige voorstellingen

Er valt veel te ontdekken op

het Ny Cirkus Festival in Copenhagen.

Een groot aantal voorstellingen worden voor het eerst gepresenteerd. Bijzonder aan dit zomerevenement is dat de organisatie, het Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT), geen vast podium heeft. Het personeel opereert vanuit een kantoor, gelegen in het centrum van de stad, op een steenworp afstand van het Stadhuis, bekend van de tv-serie The Killing.

BIANCA VISSER

Het circus heeft in de afgelopen decennia een grote transformatie ondergaan. Naast de traditionele vorm, waarin clowns, acrobaten, trapeze, paarden en tijgers de revue passeren, bestaat er een moderne variant die bekend staat onder de naam *nieuw circus*.

De splitsing werd in de jaren zeventig teweeggebracht door een groep artiesten die meenden dat het tijd was voor verandering. Zij introduceren het aspect van een voorstelling met doorlopend verhaal, waarin circustechnieken in worden verwerkt. Ze gingen banden aan met andere disciplines. Zo zochten ze aansluiting bij de muziek, de dans en het theater. Ook andere combinaties zijn mogelijk, zoals bijvoorbeeld een circusvoorstelling met elementen uit de beeldende kunst. Alles staat open. Er bestaat ook een variant die zich juist tegen deze kruisbestuiving verzet. Zij pleiten er voor om terug te keren naar de puurheid van het genre.

Inmiddels vragen sommigen zich na een zesde lustrium af of het wel gepast is om de kwalificatie *nieuw* te blijven gebruiken. De voorkeur gaat steeds vaker uit naar de term *hedendaags circus*.

**UNPACK
THE
ARTS**

Free state Christiania

Each year the staff of KIT scour the city in search of suitable locations. Their preference leans toward sites which can contribute to the quality or character of a performance. The effectiveness of this *modus operandi* is confirmed, to take one example, by the site chosen for the very entertaining cabaret production *Pavlovs Hunde*. The performance was programmed in the famous Grey Hall in Christiania. Though a thorn in the side of those advocating order and authority, Christiania is *the* symbol for alternative culture in Denmark and a home for many progressive organisations who dream of a state where citizens have the final word.

The Grey Hall is an old deserted military base that was occupied by a group of hippies in 1970. Since then the commune has been tied up in a legal battle with the Danish authorities, who are naturally not amused by this coup. In spite of the ongoing altercation, the residents have succeeded in securing a certain autonomy.

The Grey Hall functions as a cultural centre. It is famous for its yearly alternative Christmas Market, as well as for the performances given by big, and not so big, pop musicians and theatre companies. The site was originally a riding academy – a lovely coincidence, since horses have played such a large part in the origins of contemporary circus. Around 1770, a certain Sergeant-major Philip Astley created shows in which he gave demonstrations in horseback riding and dressage. To give his shows more flair, he began to invite a whole variety of other performing artists to join him. The circus was born!

The circus artists probably held little affinity with the military background of the Brit. Just like the residents of Christiania, circus artists are known for their general disdain of rules and social pressures.

Balance

Many acrobats answered the call sent out by some Danish companies to take part in *Pavlovs Hunde*. Everyone involved works for next to nothing and the pure fun of it, and this solidarity

Vrijstad Christiania

Elk jaar struinen de medewerkers van KIT de stad af op zoek naar geschikte locaties. Het liefst vinden ze een plek die iets toevoegt aan de voorstelling. Dat deze *modus operandi* goed uit kan pakken, blijkt bijvoorbeeld uit de plaatsing van de zeer vermakelijke cabaretvoorstelling *Pavlovs Hunde*. Het optreden werd geprogrammeerd in de befaamde Grijs Hal in Christiania. Het mag een gruwel voor voorstanders van de orde en het gezag zijn, maar de vrijstad Christiania is het boegbeeld voor alternatievelingen en andersdenkende groeperingen die dromen van een staat waarin de inwoners het voor het zeggen hebben.

De oude militaire basis lag er verlaten bij toen een groep hippies in 1970 besloot het terrein te bezetten. Sindsdien is de commune verwickeld in een geschil met de Deense autoriteiten, die natuurlijk niet akkoord gaat met deze staatsgreep. Desalniettemin is het de inwoners gelukt om een zekere autonome status te verwerven.

De Grijs Hal fungeert als cultureel centrum. Het staat bekend om de alternatieve kerstmarkt die er jaarlijks wordt gehouden, evenals de optredens van grote en kleine popartiesten en theatergezelschappen. Deze plek is oorspronkelijk bedoeld als manege. Een mooi gegeven, omdat de oorsprong van het hedendaagse circus ligt in het geven van voorstellingen met paarden. Sergeant-majoor Philip Astley begon rond 1770 in Londen met het geven van die voorstellingen. De Engelsman liet tijdens deze shows demonstraties rij- en dressuurkunst zien. Omdat hij zijn programma meer kleur wilde geven, deden na verloop van tijd ook allerlei andere artiesten hun intrede in zijn piste: de geboorte van het eerste circus was een feit. Met de militaire achtergrond van de Brit zullen de circusartiesten waarschijnlijk niet veel affiniteit hebben. Net als de inwoners van Christiania hebben ze over het algemeen lak aan regels of sociale druk.

Evenwicht

Veel acrobaten hebben gehoor gegeven aan de oproep van enkele Deense gezelschappen om deel te nemen aan een internationale meeslepende show. Iedereen werkt bijna

creates a wonderfully joyful atmosphere, wherein everyone helps each other along.

The audience shares in the fun. An exuberant 'ohhhh' echoes through the space when the Danish acrobat Anders Skat Henningsen abruptly comes to a complete halt, half a metre from the concrete floor. Seconds before he had stretched his body out horizontally, balancing on the tip of a long pole, from where he hurtled in a self-induced free-fall to the ground below.

The audience is even less at ease when the tiny Katja Tomasevic loses her already shaky balance on the cloudswing, a rope that hangs loosely from two points on the ceiling, creating a swing. Her cohort, holding a safety cord tied around her middle, is seemingly not paying attention. In a delayed reaction he throws his small tight body in the air, catching and saving her at the last possible second.

The quick tempo with which the stunts follow one another is underscored by the compelling musical performance of the Swedish group LUR. Pure energy! With loops, samples and surprising sound effects, the two-man-band creates the illusion of a symphonic orchestra.

Company La Meute

That an audience can be invigorated by energy, enthusiasm and a fresh new approach is certainly apparent in the piece presented by the company La Meute. During the festival they perform the act with which they graduated from the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm. With a few small adaptations this debut can without a doubt easily take its place in the theatre circuit. With the deceptive title *Tragédie Grecque*, the performance is anything *but* tragic.

One by one the acrobats make their entrance. Naked. This outdoor performance takes place in the round inner courtyard of a students' dormitory. The inhabitants can watch the action from their balconies.

The artists cover their naked bodies with anything they can find, or finally, just with their hands. In the middle of the space lie white towels that they go



Brunette Bros

belangeloos en het eigen plezier. De saamhorigheid levert een prettige en opgetogen sfeer op, waarbij iedereen elkaar aan het juiste evenwicht helpt.

Het publiek deelt in de pret. Een uitbundige "ohhhh" galmt door de ruimte als de Deense acrobaat Anders Skat Henningsen een halve meter boven de betonnen vloer abrupt tot stilstand komt. Seconden daarvoor had hij zijn lichaam horizontaal gestrekt aan de nok van een lange paal, waarna hij zichzelf in een vrij val naar beneden liet glijden.

Niet minder gerustgesteld zijn omstanders als de kleine Katja Tomasevic haar tijdelijke wankele evenwicht verliest op de *Cloud swing*, een touw dat losjes aan twee punten op het plafond hangt, waardoor een schommel ontstaat. De collega die

on to tie around their waists. One loincloth resembles the traditional *mawashi*, worn by sumo wrestlers. The other is comparable to the *foestanela*, the kilt-like skirt worn by members of the Grecian ceremonial guard. They also resemble the linen skirts worn by gladiators. In short, these are warriors.

Then the show begins. To support the stunts which follow, they use a simple Russian swing, a teeterboard, an old mattress, a big cushion, a microphone, a saxophone, and their own physical strength – that which the performance is finally all about.

Rough and playful, they tumble over each other. One of the games entails five of them lying stretched out, side by side on the ground, while those remaining have to find some way to cross to the other side, without touching the ground or losing their balance.

A bit later one of the acrobats does a one-armed handstand. He does it balancing on the face of another who is lying on the ground. Occasionally one of the acrobats leaves the arena to provide musical accompaniment. They are obviously pushing their own boundaries, and they don't allow themselves to be discouraged by defeat. They are young and powerful enough to stand up to every danger. As if mere existence isn't exciting enough, they plunge into a dangerous game with the Russian swing. As the metallic seat swings wildly to and fro like a wrecking ball, the acrobats cross daringly from one side of the frame to the other. There is just enough space to crawl underneath or safely clutch onto the sides of the frame. The audience waits with bated breath for that fatal moment when one of the performers gets it in the back of the head.

Social Themes

Compared to La Meute, the members of Subliminati Corporation lead a much less carefree existence. The company is made up exclusively of men. Their current production *#File_Tone* tackles a whole series of social issues – questions of gender, immigration and the abuses of power. The performance takes place in a theatre.

het veiligheidskoord dat om haar middel hangt bedient is schijnbaar even niet aan het opletten. In een late reactie gooit hij zijn tengere gestalte in de lucht om haar op te vangen. Daarmee is ze op het nippertje gered.

Het rappe tempo waarin de stunts zich afwisselen, wordt benadrukt door de meeslepende muzikale performance van de Zweedse groep LUR. De energie spat ervan af. Door middel van loops, samples en verrassende geluidseffecten verwerft deze tweemansband de présence van een symfonieorkest.

Gezelschap La Meute

Dat energie, enthousiasme en een frisse blik een verkwikkende werking op het publiek heeft blijkt uit de voorstelling gepresenteerd door het gezelschap *La Meute*. Zij presenteren tijdens het festival de act waarmee ze eerder deze zomer zijn afgestudeerd aan de Universiteit van Dans en Circus in Stockholm. Met wat kleine aanpassingen kan deze debuutvoorstelling zich ongetwijfeld moeiteloos een plaatsje binnen het theatercircuit veroveren. Anders dan de titel *Tragédie Grecque* zou doen vermoeden, is deze performance alles behalve tragisch.

Een voor een verschijnen de acrobaten naakt op het toneel. Deze openluchtvoorstelling vindt plaats in de ronde binnentuin van een studentenflat. De bewoners kunnen het optreden vanaf het balkon volgen.

De artiesten bedekken het blote lichaam met wat voor handen ligt. Desnoods met de handen. In het midden van de ring liggen witte handdoeken die ze vervolgens om hun middel binden. De ene lendendoek lijkt op de traditionele *mawashi*, die wordt gedragen door een sumoworstelaar. De ander vertoont gelijkenis met de *foestanela*, het plooirokje gedragen door leden van de Griekse ceremoniële wacht. De eenvoudige kledingstukken lijken ook op de linnen lendendoek gedragen door gladiatoren. Kortom, dit zijn strijders.

Daarna begint de show. Ter ondersteuning van de stunts die volgen, gebruiken ze een eenvoudige

A woman who wanders around lost on stage turns out to be a man. Just as in Noh theatre, the Japanese musical drama form that has existed since the fourteenth century, all the roles are portrayed by men. By means of a wig or a mask, the audience is misled.

A subsequent sketch is about an immigrant. On the verge of being attacked by the gang of unsavory figures stalking him, he turns to the audience and asks if anyone wants to be his mother. Will anyone protect him? No one reacts, and he is consequently surrounded and overpowered. Just when the audience expects the poor fellow to be beaten by the mob, one of the ringleaders jumps up on the table. In the strong beam of a single light, he begins to juggle hats in the air. Moments later Castro, Berlusconi and other politicians are urging Barack Obama to jump from the top of a high ladder, to save the world. He has no urge to jump, but the social pressure becomes too much for him. Finally, when no one is looking, he does jump, but just before he lets go of the ladder, he cries out *Allah o akbar*.

One subject of discourse follows the other in a breakneck tempo. The hour flies by. Near the end, the character dressed as a woman returns. This time she is the unhappy assistant of a man who stands on stage. Irritated and bored, she starts to play with a pan trivet, pumping it in and out as if it were an accordion. She is admonished for not laughing. That is her obligation. When the man sees she has no intention of obeying him, he drags her up on stage. He puts a hook in one corner of her mouth, stretches the elastic attached to it around the back of her head, and inserts the hook at the other end of the elastic into the other corner. A smile is achieved. Then he asks the audience if they want to see her genitals. Maybe *they* don't want to but *he* does. He relentlessly pulls up her skirt.

Impressive

Insight comes with age. The adage is more than proven true by Cie un loup pour l'homme, a company founded by the Frenchman Alexandre Fray and the Canadian Frédéric Arsenault. Together with Mika Lafforgue and Sergi Parés, they present the impressive and socially engaged production *Face Nord*.

franse schommel, een wip, een oud matras, een groot kussen, een microfoon, een saxofoon en hun lichamelijke kracht, waar uiteindelijk alles om draait. Grappend en grollend rollen ze over elkaar heen. Een van de spelletjes die ze spelen houdt in dat vijf van hen languit op de grond gaan liggen, terwijl de overgeblevene de manier vindt om de andere kant van de rij te bereiken, zonder de grond te raken en zonder het evenwicht te verliezen.

Even later gaat een van de acrobaten op één hand staan. Daarbij balanceert hij op het gezicht van een ander die op de grond ligt. Af en toe verlaat een van de acrobaten de arena om de muzikale begeleiding te verzorgen. Ze zijn duidelijk hun eigen grenzen aan het verkennen. Daarbij laten ze zich niet door tegenslagen ontmoedigen. Ze zijn jong en krachtig genoeg om elk gevaar te trotseren. Alsof het bestaan niet spannend genoeg is, gaan ze een gevaarlijk spelletje met de franse schommel aan. Terwijl het metalen zitje wild heen en weer slingert als een robuuste klepel, bewegen de acrobaten zich van de ene kant van de binnenkant van het frame naar het andere. Er is net genoeg ruimte om er onderdoor te kruipen, of aan de zijlijn te blijven zitten. Het publiek wacht in spanning af op het fatale moment waarop een van hen een klap op het achterhoofd krijgt.

Maatschappelijk thema's

Vergeleken met *Le Meute* staan de leden van het gezelschap *Subliminati Corporation* veel minder onbevangen in het leven. Het gezelschap bestaat louter uit mannelijke deelnemers. Met de voorstelling *#File_Tone* proberen zij verschillende maatschappelijke thema's aan de kaak te stellen, zoals genderkwesties, immigratie en machtsverhoudingen. Zij treden op in een theaterzaal.

Een vrouw die verloren over het podium struint, blijkt een man te zijn. Net als in het Noh theater, het Japanse muzikale drama dat al sinds de veertiende eeuw bestaat, worden alle rollen door mannen gespeeld. Door middel van pruik of masker wordt de toeschouwer op het verkeerde been gezet.



Cikaros & TinCanCompany © Anders Find

The setting of the piece, performed in the circus school of Copenhagen, has been carefully determined. The epicentere of the play is a square green mat. The company found the femininity of the round unsuitable for this piece. Simple tribunes surround the space. This seating brings the audience intimately close to the acrobats. From this vantage point you can see the sweat fly and feel every effort and inhalation.

Just like the members of La Meute, they play games, but unlike La Meute, this company of acrobats are no longer boys. These are seasoned men who know it's essential to use one's power economically. Each movement is consciously and accurately executed. The depth of their

Een daaropvolgende sketch gaat over een immigrant. Voordat de vluchteling door duistere figuren wordt overvallen vraagt hij aan het publiek wie van hen zijn moeder wil zijn. Wie wil hem beschermen? Niemand reageert. Daarna wordt hij omsingeld en overmeesterd. Op het moment dat het publiek verwacht dat de mannen de arme sloeber in elkaar gaan slaan, sprint een van de onbekende raddraaiers op de tafel. Uitgelicht door een felle lamp, begint hij met hoeden te jongleren. Even later sporen Castro, Berlusconi en een paar andere politici Barack Obama aan om van een hoge ladder af te springen. Zo kan hij de wereld redden. Hij wil niet, maar de sociale druk wordt hem te groot. Uiteindelijk, als niemand kijkt, stort hij naar beneden. Voordat hij de trap loslaat, brengt hij een *Allah o akbar* uit.

Het ene onderwerp volgt het andere in hoog tempo op. Het uur vliegt voorbij. Tegen het einde keert de als vrouw verklede personage opnieuw ten tonele. Ditmaal is zij de ongelukkige assistente van de man die op het podium staat. Verveeld en ongeïnteresseerd rekt ze een uittrekbare pannenonderzetter in en uit, alsof het een accordeon is. Ze wordt vermanend toegesproken omdat ze niet lacht. Dat hoort ze te doen. Als hij ziet dat zij niet gehoorzaamt, sleept hij haar op het podium. Hij bevestigt een haak in een mondhoek, brengt het elastiek langs de achterkant van haar hoofd zodat hij de andere haak in de andere mondhoek kan plaatsen. Op deze manier fingeert hij een glimlach. Vervolgens vraagt hij aan het publiek of ze haar geslacht willen zien. Misschien willen zij het niet, maar hij wel. Gestaag trekt hij haar rok omhoog.

Indrukwekkend

Inzicht komt met de jaren. Dat bewijst *Cie Un loup pour l'homme*, een gezelschap opgericht door de Fransman Alexandre Fray en de Canadees Frédéric Arsenault. Bijgestaan door Mika Lafforgue en Sergi Parés presenteren zij een zeer indrukwekkend sociaal bewogen stuk, onder de titel *Face Nord*.

Het gezelschap heeft de setting van de voorstelling, die wordt gehouden in de circusschool van Copenhagen, nauwkeurig bepaald. Het epicentrum is een vierkante groene mat. Een

concentration infects the audience, mesmerised by the reflection of society, with all its weaknesses and contradictions, presented before them. What is particular about this performance is that it's about the imperfections of humankind, but also about the mysteries of our very existence.

Each game has its own rules and boundaries. The acrobats wriggle around, upon, and under one another like newborn cubs. They are protected from the danger around them by the fact that they are together, but being so close together also begins to become suffocating. For this reason each in turn tries repeatedly to rise up above the others, regardless of the pain this may cause his fellows.

Later in the piece a game of tag begins, wherein the one who is 'it' must keep his eyes closed as he tries to find and tag another. With only touch at his disposal he seeks out his opponents, until the last is tagged and out.

The rat-race continues. The men run so hard in a circle, one after the other, that they create a gust of wind. There is no winner.

Bit by bit individual egos come to the surface. The longing for contact comes into conflict with the desire for freedom. A tender embrace turns into a stranglehold. Each of the players gets better and better at getting their own way. Under physical duress, Alexander tries to force a kiss from Mika.

There are also moments of compassion. When Sergi seemingly loses all feeling in his body, Alexander carries him. The big man carries the small helpless one in his arms. A precarious situation develops. Sergi's arm slides off Alexander's shoulder. The lifeless limb pulls the rest of the body with it. At first Alexander tries to remedy the situation by roughly swinging the body back upwards, with the hope that the arm will land back on his shoulder, thereby getting himself back into balance. When this doesn't work, he is tempted to put the arm back in its place with a good hard kick. He doesn't do it, but we have seen the evidence. Evil arises in spite of the best of intentions.

ronde vorm vonden ze te vrouwelijk. Daaromheen staan eenvoudige tribunes opgesteld. Op deze manier kan het publiek de acrobaten van dichtbij meemaken. Ze zien het zweet vloeien en voelen elke steun en ademhaling.

Net als de leden van La Meute, doen zij spelletjes, maar dit zijn geen jongens meer. Dit zijn doorgewinterde mannen die weten dat het verstandig is om spaarzaam met krachten om te gaan. Elke beweging wordt bewust en trefzeker genomen. Hun concentratie slaat over op het publiek, dat gebiologeerd toekijkt naar een weerspiegeling van de maatschappij in al zijn zwaktes en tegenstrijdigheden. Het bijzondere aan dit optreden is dat het niet alleen om de onvolmaaktheden van de mens gaat, maar ook over de mysterieuze zijdes van ons bestaan.

Elk spel kent zijn eigen regels en beperkingen. Net als pasgeboren welpen kronkelen de acrobaten over elkaar. Het feit dat ze samen zijn biedt bescherming tegen gevaren van buitenaf, maar zo dicht op elkaar zitten werkt verstikkend. Daarom probeert elk van hen telkens opnieuw boven de anderen uit te steken. Dit doel wordt nagestreefd ongeacht of hierbij een ander leed wordt aangedaan.

Even later begint een partijtje tikkertje, waarbij degene die zoekt zijn ogen gesloten houdt. Op de tast speurt hij zijn tegenstanders, totdat de laatste uitgeschakeld is.

De ratrace zet zich verder voort. De mannen rennen zo hard achter elkaar in cirkels rond, dat er een windvlaag ontstaat. Er is geen winnaar.

Langzamerhand treden de individuele ego's steeds sterker naar voren. De wens naar contact raakt in conflict met het verlangen naar vrijheid. Een tedere omhelzing slaat over in een wurg-greep. Elk van de spelers wordt er steeds handiger in om zijn zin te krijgen. Onder fysieke dwang probeert Alexander een kus bij Mika af te dwingen.

Er zijn ook tekenen van barmhartigheid. Sergi wordt door Alexander gedragen als hij het gevoel over zijn lichaam blijkt kwijt te hebben geraakt.

They are not only egomaniacs. When they push their own self-interest to the side, wonderful shapes and figures emerge. Human towers, a rotating fan and a bridge that collapses when its two ends move too far apart from one another. These are the moments when one feels a sense of pride welling up. We *are* capable of overcoming obstacles, and creating beauty.

Face Nord is a physical performance which leaves each member of the audience enough space for their own interpretation. However, the sexual connotations, the cruelty, and the muted optimism with which this piece is infused, are irrefutable.

De grote man draagt het kleine hulpeloze ventje in zijn armen. Dan ontstaat er een lastige situatie. Sergi's arm glijdt van de schouder af. Het lome lichaamsdeel trekt de rest van het lichaam naar beneden. Eerst probeert Alexander het gewicht op te vangen door het lichaam een ruwe zwaai te geven, in de hoop dat de arm opveert en hij zijn balans terug kan vinden. Als dit niet blijkt te lukken, voelt hij zich even geneigd om de arm in beweging te brengen door er een schop aan te geven. Hij doet het toch niet, maar het bewijs is daar dat slechtheid soms onbedoeld wordt opgewekt.

Het zijn niet alleen egotrippers. Zodra ze hun eigen belangen terzijde leggen, ontstaan wonderbaarlijke vormen en figuren. Menselijke torens, een ronddraaiende waaier en een brug die neerstort naar mate de twee uiteindes verder van elkaar af gaan staan. Dit zijn de momenten waarop een mens een gevoel van trots op voelt komen. Wij zijn in staat obstakels te overwinnen en mooie dingen te maken.

Elke toeschouwer kan een andere interpretatie aan deze fysieke voorstelling geven. Daar biedt *Face Nord* voldoende ruimte voor. Maar niemand zal de seksuele lading, de wrangheid en het gedempte optimisme ontgaan waarmee dit optreden is geladen.

Drop of a hat?

CHRISTOFOROS PAVLAKIS

Exercise 10

Lift something heavy. Throw something light. Pull something tough. Touch something sharp. Walk on something soft. Jump on something hard. Roll down a slope. Run as far as you can and then ask someone to feel your heart.

Exercise 24

Choose a goal for your walking. Go there. Choose your next goal. Go there. Let nothing stop you. Observe how you walk. Describe to yourself what happens in different parts of your body.

(‘100 Exercises for a Choreographer and Other Survivors’, Eiva Lilja, 2012)

During the first residency of the Unpack the Arts programme, held in Copenhagen at the Ny Cirkus Festival, one question stuck in my mind: Where are the circus directors? Contemporary circus experts and other commentators are researching and writing on this topic, looking both within the form and outside of it for an answer, but the question itself is actually pretty complex. If contemporary circus is all about individuals, their personal desires and motivations, then what role is the ‘director’ even meant to fulfil?

Any attempt to describe the role of a circus director leads to the observation that their work very rarely resembles the kind of work we would expect from a film or theatre director. And indeed, strange new definitions have been emerging as the circus community tries to define the role of the circus director – ‘outside eye’ being a favourite expression among artists. Another approach avoids the issue altogether by bringing in dramaturgs, choreographers and other theatrical consultants rather than ‘directors’ as such. As I discovered in Copenhagen, artists themselves must often wear multiple ‘hats’ in terms of their jobs and responsibilities – becoming part creators, part directors, part magicians and part spectators. Their job can, and often does, switch from brainstorming impossible sounding feats and

theatrical effects, to solving the most banal problems. Some artists adopt techniques and methods from classic turn of the century sources, others invent material as new as anything in today’s theatre, but all must find solutions and workarounds to the weak points and logical inconsistencies in their productions’ dramaturgies. Do they always succeed? Hard to say.

A Circus Playground

For La Meute, an all-male group freshly graduated from the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm, it is a dream-come-true to stage their self-directed piece *Tragédie Grecque* at the Kobenhavn Internationale Teater (KIT). In this hour-long production, they are playful, energetic – unafraid to fail and start over again as they attempt demanding feats of skill. However, the show is still in its conceptual stages. What it needs is some more ingenuity in its engineering and structure – and perhaps to be infused with a touch of mystery.

As it is now, *Tragédie Grecque* leaves its audience feeling rather puzzled and waiting for something more – not in terms of spectacle; just more of a conclusion or development for some of the scenes, and a bit more rhythm or reason to some of the equipment used in the show. In spite of this, the beautiful, dexterous and tender moments of the production remain vivid, carried along in some sequences by live music that I could have listened to all day.

Also, in their defence, La Muete are reluctant to claim authorship and refuse to characterise their collectively devised piece as a purely artistic work.

At the performance I was stunned when I overheard the comment of one spectator sitting next to me: “They don’t cover many disciplines in their act!” While I found it common for audience members to comment on the specific disciplines of a piece, I was surprised to hear a comment on the *absence* of disciplines – and wondered why

this was, or whether it was a point that could have occurred to the creators.

I don't know how possible it ever is for circus artists to put themselves in the position of their audience – to set aside their own preconceptions of technique and enter into the mindset of an outsider. Ordinarily, as has surely been written many times before, the responsibility of tuning in to and affecting the audience's mindset rests with the director – but in circus the artists have to be clear with themselves what their work communicates.

A lot of modern/contemporary juggling is based around patterns that don't repeat – short sequences, single throws and rapid changes. And in some ways, I find this to be a shame. Only variation within repetition can lead to strong images and recognition from the audience, and I consider these characteristics to be important aspects of juggling as an art.

So were the staged disciplines of *Tragédie Grecque* too few? Or the repeated patterns too many? But too few for who, and too many based on which criteria, exactly?

Neither truth nor dare

The identity of a circus artist nowadays is strongly shaped by their school training and their involvement with artistic collectives. Directors are sometimes brought in to create shows with school students, but here – even though perhaps the director's role and vision is more real, more substantial, than in many other productions – the artists have already been trained, their skills already fixed.

In the case of Subliminati Corporation's show at KIT, *?File_Tone*, I raise a glass to whoever saw some potential within the god-awful mess of the group's miscellaneous skills and believed that they should be brought together on stage.

In *?File_Tone*, the performers' various abilities and props / pieces of equipment are joined to accentuate three chosen themes: immigration, politics and gender issues. From conversations with the artists, I gathered that they work with techniques drawn from street arts and stand-up

comedy, and I'm quite sure that this helps them to come up with ideas that are more wild, more subversive, more crazy than those of other groups.

Two and a half years ago, it all must have looked like a good idea. Six graduates of the Toulouse circus school needed a vehicle that would allow them to collectively showcase their work – but without any one performer stealing the limelight. They created *#File_Tone*, a show that aimed to tackle the issue of inequality within society at the same time as it celebrated ideals of mutual respect. In the version of the show I saw at Copenhagen, everyone was making a huge effort, but the humour in the piece didn't take hold and its aesthetic standard fell a long way short. It felt as though non-artistic imperatives were triumphing over artistic ideals.

So let us mention some positives. The scene focusing on gender issues – featuring a delicate performer in a red dress – is handled with authenticity, but is suddenly interrupted by a juggling act – as if the creators were afraid of making a firm statement on the matter. Similarly undermined, the very promising 'jump of freedom' sequence is lost in political correctness and cliché.

No time like the present

The most successful contemporary circus directors seem to be those who create shows that they claim are based on honesty, realism and individuality – made with and for the specific artists involved. Yet strangely, most of these shows also seem to carry on working when their casts have been replaced and new disciplines have been brought in. Is it possible that circus directors are more about spin than content?

Of course, the most important thing is the interpretation, and the attainment of a finely tuned physicality which is meaningful and expressive without being a mere faultless achievement.

If there is such a thing as an alchemy that occurs between a venue and a performance, *Un loup pour l'homme* found it with *Face Nord*. Performed within a square arena bordered on all four sides by the audience, the show is based on the idea of a

community as a living organism – a fluid being perpetually recreating itself – and the performers play with this idea of organic movement on every level. Joining together in twos, threes or fours the performers become hybrid creatures, all undulating, swirling steps and twisting movements. At times the ensemble surges forward like a wave, faces impassive as they perform ambiguous movements. One by one, every structure they create gives way to another shape – another collective effort, another renewal.

Nothing is choreographed; everything is played out as if for the first time and with a vital spirit. Watching the artists suddenly turn themselves into wrestlers we can see how the unpredictability of the form helps them to avoid ever losing the element of surprise: each showing of *Face Nord* is a performance of something that has never taken place before.

The artist has to struggle every day to achieve this sense of absolute surprise: the birth of a new kind of life, outside of the ordinary world, held within the sphere of the theatrical spectacle.

While timeless effort is ingrained in the work, a pessimistic undertone runs through *Face Nord*. At first the four performers act as a group, but then suddenly we find one is unsettled, imperfect, caught in the trap where the prelude to creation is destruction. In the end, he is carried out in the arms of a fellow, and the others abandon the stage.

Face Nord's images provided the audience with food for thought, but there was also laughter when the performers struggled on stage or felt pain in their bodies. Is it the audience's fault that they misinterpreted the creators' message?

You have a body but a body is not who you are

None of this is to say that the strength of an artist's personal values should be entirely discounted. A director starts with a concept, often inspired by paintings or other artworks, and then seeks out the artist that they want to make the envisioned piece with. The most convincing works are those where the artistic concept meets the personality of the performer. In other words,

when the director finds exactly the right artist to personify their concept. In which case, how can we answer the question of whether the concept comes from the director or the performer?

In GLiMT's show *Er du os?*, circus is stretched between technique and imagination – between (self-)expression and incorporation within the group – while technical disciplines are subordinated to the overall artistic concept.

The resulting solo performance is a cross-artform piece that takes on influences from many other practices. The artist, Lars Gregersen, directed the show himself but worked with ten different 'consultants' to achieve the level of skill needed to develop the core discipline of the show: climbing up and down a rope.

In *Er du os?*, an earthy performance that deals with almost primordial ideas, Gregersen, as artist and director, must contend with the difficulty of communicating from inside his own process. Given this, perhaps we see that the artist has greater control over the chaos *within* his production than over the chaos of ideas and concepts it creates. In fact it would be no bad thing to see Gregersen, for the benefit of his own career development, direct other performers, matching his own clear vision with the strengths and talents of others.

And where does all this leave circus directors and artists today? In any relationship, compromises are necessary. Sometimes one must back off from purely personal desires or needs. And in this specific relationship, between circus artist and director, priorities count. Sometimes as we search for solutions it is good to remember to be selfish. At the very least, there will be one happy person in the performance of the show (the artist themselves!).

But at the same time we do need directors (whatever we call them) – ones who can listen sensitively to the circus artist, and who can find the heart of the individual and help to bring it out. Directors who can take responsibility for the content of a production, yet use the artists themselves to communicate onstage, will create the clearest messages for their audiences.

Natural born artist

DANIELA FIRESCU

*"The theater, which is in no thing,
but makes use of everything
– gestures, sounds, words,
screams, light, darkness – rediscovers
itself at precisely the point where the mind
requires a language to express
its manifestations. To break through
language in order to touch life is to
create or recreate the theatre."
Antonin Artaud ATtribution D*

Theatre or contemporary circus? Dance or acrobatics? Ideas or emotions? Poetry or philosophy? All these questions come to mind when one watches one of the shows included in the NY CIRCUS FESTIVAL organized by Kobenhavns Internationale Teater (Tragedie greque – La Meute, File Tone- Subliminati Corp., Er du os? – Glimt, Face Nord – Un loup pour homme, Pavlovs Hunde- Cikaros & Tin Can Company, Cuerdo – Karl Stets). New circus in very different states, launching challenges, surprising and enraging, threatening with or without reason but with a common purpose – to captivate / charm / persuade audiences and especially to cause immediate and lasting reactions. The more sensations / perplexities / impressions persist and the more they "irritate" the mind, the more the show is successful.

I. THE SHOW

„Are you us?”

Idea and interpretation: Lars Gregersen

Music: Henriette Groth

Lighting and visual design: Mogens Kjempff

Playwright: Nina Basset

Choreography and costume consultant:

Camilla Sarrazin

The Glimt company's show, *Are you us?*, concentrates in a minimalist yet impact-filled visual effects setting, the spiny issue of personal and territorial limits: political, aesthetic,

Natural born artist

DANIELA FIRESCU

*„Teatrul, care nu este prezent în nici
un lucru, dar face uz de toate
– esturi, sunete, cuvinte, strigăte,
lumină, întuneric – se redescoperă
exact în punctul în care mintea
necesită un limbaj pentru a exprima
manifestările sale. ... A sparge
limbajului, în scopul de a atinge viața
este de a crea sau recrea teatrul."
Antonin Artaud ATtribution D*

Teatru sau circ contemporan? Dans sau acrobație? Idei sau emoții? Poezie sau filozofie? Toate aceste întrebări îți vin în minte atunci când urmărești unul dintre spectacolele integrate în NY CIRCUS FESTIVAL organizat de Kobenhavns Internationale Teater (Tragedie greque – La Meute, File Tone – Subliminati Corp., Er du os? – Glimt, Face Nord- Un loup pour homme, Pavlovs Hunde- Cikaros & Tin Can Company, Cuerdo- Karl Stets). *New circus* în ipostaze cât mai diferite, lansând provocări, uimind și exasperând, riscând cu sau fără motiv însă cu o finalitate comună- de a captiva/ fermeca/ convinge spectatorii și mai ales de a provoca reacții imediate sau de durată. Cu cât senzațiile/ nedumeririle/ impresiile persistă mai mult, cu cât „agasează” mentalul, cu atât spectacolul e mai reușit.

I. THE SHOW

„Are you us?”

Idee și interpretare: Lars Gregersen

Muzică: Henriette Groth

Lumini și design vizual: Mogens Kjempff

Dramaturg: Nina Basset

Consultant în coreografie și costume:

Camilla Sarrazin

Spectacolul companiei Glimt, *Are you us?*, concentrează într-un decor minimalist dar cu efect vizual impactant problema spinoasă a limitei – personală, teritorială: perspective politice,

psychological perspectives overlap, intertexts crowd the setting and provoke the viewer, forcing him/her to choose sides, to get involved, to get into the play, to catch the rope, to fight for it and finally, to decide which side to choose. In respect of the limit, the real problem - free will, freedom of decision - is suggested gradually. It's a difficult choice, because the question is as direct as it is ambiguous and misleading. And intrusive, and invasive, and radical, and especially very current. You're either with us or against us.

The stage opens fully: within a circular space, a giant ball of string hangs from the ceiling, and on that ball there is a man. Who is he? The Little Prince lost on a distant star, Sisyphus bearing his burden, or maybe the modern/postmodern/post-postmodern man isolated in a world where anything is possible and nothing final? A little of each probably. As the play unfolds, the supertheme conceptually dominating the show becomes clear - the artist's effort to look for the story (obsessions, obstacles, hesitations) and the artist's effort to say / expose the story once found. Along with the untying of the rope, the unraveling ball becomes the setting that announces, indicates the narrative strategy. Like Ariadne's thread, the rope is the support object showing the way out of the maze. The first stage of aggressive interaction with the ball acts (as the entire performance for that matter) at several levels - it foreshadows the destructive intent, it figures the obsession of deconstruction, of revealing the inner mechanisms while the unreeling-unrolling of the rope until its end suggests the reaching of the shore and, by extension, a possible rescue.

The relationship between man and ball of thread (expression of a personal microcosmos) passes through almost all the stages of a drug rehab: anger, fear, rebellion, denial, acceptance, integration, all acting spontaneously, apparently unpremeditated. The most spectacular sequence by far is the resonance with the ball world. The suggestion of full harmony is found in the image of the flight/float over the weightlessness limit, accompanied by classical arrangements. It's the time of grace when the beauty of music, movement, art and physical virtuosity come together and create emotion, it is the said

estetică, psihologică se suprapun, intertexte agomerează cadrul, provoacă privitorul, îl forțează să aleagă tabere, să se implice, să intre în joc, să prindă funia, să se lupte pentru ea și în final să se decidă de ce parte a liniei se află. Corelativ limitei treptat se insinuează adevărata problemă - cea a liberului arbitru, a libertății de decizie. E o alegere dificilă, căci întrebarea pe cât de directă pe atât de ambiguu-înșelătoare este. Și indiscretă și invazivă și radicală și mai ales foarte actuală. Ești cu noi sau ești împotriva noastră.

Scena se deschide complet: într-un spațiu circular, din tavan atârna un uriaș ghem de sfoară, pe care gravitează un om. Cine e el? Micul prinț pierdut pe o stea îndepărtată, Sisif putându-și povara, sau poate omul modern/postmodern/post-postmodern izolat într-o lume în care totul e posibil și nimic definitiv? Probabil că din fiecare câte puțin. Pe măsură ce piesa se derulează, devine evidentă supratema ce domină ideatic spectacolul - efortul artistului în căutarea poveștii (obsesii, obstacole, ezitări) și efortul artistului de a spune/expune povestea odată ce a găsit-o. Odată cu frânghia ce se deznoază, ghemul ce-și desiră firul devine cadrul ce anunță, indică strategia narativă. La fel ca firul Ariadnei, frânghia e obiectul suport ce arată ieșirea din labirint. Etapa inițială a interacțiunii agresive cu ghemul acționează (ca de altfel întreaga reprezentație) pe mai multe paliere - prefigurează intenția distructivă, figurează obsesia deconstrucției, a dezvăluirii mecanismelor interioare, în timp ce desfășurarea derulării frânghiei până la capăt sugerează atingerea limanului și prin extensie o posibilă salvare.

Relația dintre om și ghem (expresie a unui microcosmos personal) parcurge aproape toate etapele unui drug-rehab: furie, teamă, revoltă, negare, acceptare, integrare, toate acționând spontan, aparent nepremeditat. De departe cea mai spectaculoasă secvență este cea a intrării în rezonanță cu lumea-ghem. Sugestia armoniei depline e realizată în imaginea zborului, a plutirii la limita imponderabilității, însoțite de acorduri clasice. E momentul de grație în care frumusețea muzicii, a mișcării, virtuozitatea artistică și fizică vin împreună și creează emoție, este acel „L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle” (*Paradiso*)

“L’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle” (Paradiso XXXIII,145) from the Divine Comedy. It’s the time of the illusion that catches the viewer, cancels any distance for a second, where the merger of aesthetic experiences prohibits withdrawal. Then comes the moment of the matrix space, of immersion/regression in the protective space of the ball, all this return to innocence culminating in the need, or curiosity to discover the mysteries of the giant ball. From the list of potential reading scenarios for the final scene, in connection with the theme of the show, the hypothesis emerges of the total denudation of the means of expression, the assumed exit from a comfort zone and the entering into an area of vulnerability. Equally important in the economy of the show is involvement, stimulation of the audience. The problem of receiving the message is complemented by a desire to maintain attention and to ensure interaction with what happens on stage at any time. The artist is the one who controls the show, the artist is the one who controls the audience. Occasionally, the audience is given the sense of freedom and it is invited to contribute to the artist’s story. It’s a pretty risky move because the audience is different each time and it reacts differently, not necessarily unpredictably but rather predictably / following directions or rather waiting for instructions. The success of the performance (not of the show itself) depends on the viewer’s response and equally on the persuasive power of the artist. In *Er du os?*, the artist handles levers with dexterity, both literally and figuratively - he launches the rope on time, the viewer reacts promptly, the happening is created, the aesthetic shock occurs, the rope managed to tie, to connect unknown people for a few moments.

Everything is carefully thought, there is a guiding thread beyond moments of improvisation, adjustment / re-adjustment. It is said that details make the difference and, at least in this case, this seems to be true. The 222-meter ball of thread wrapped in a complicated way even in the stage elements – woven of a thread similar to a rope, “connects” all elements, while motions that succeed pretty fast manage to compose a unitary image where the rope is both object and subject.

XXXIII,145) din Divina Commedia. Este momentul iluziei ce prinde spectatorul, anulează pentru o clipă distanța, în care fuzinea de trăiri estetice interzice retragerea.

Consecutiv acestui moment este cel al spațiului matrice, al imersiunii-regresiunii în spațiul protector al ghemului, toată această reîntoarcere spre inocență culminând cu nevoia, curiozitatea descoperirii misterelor uriașului ghem. În lista potențialelor scenarii de lectură a scenei finale, în conexiune cu tema spectacolului se detașează ipoteza necesității de exhibare totală, denudare a mijloacelor de expresie, ieșirea asumată dintr-o zonă de confort și intrarea într-o zonă de vulnerabilitate. La fel de important în economia spectacolului este implicarea, activarea audienței. Problema receptării este suplinită de dorința de a menține atenția și de a asigura interacțiunea cu ceea ce întâmplă în permanență pe scenă. Artistul e cel care controlează spectacolul, artistul e cel care controlează audiența. Din când în când îi dă acesteia senzația de libertate și o invită să contribuie la povestea lui. E o mișcare destul de riscantă pentru că audiența e de fiecare dată diferită și reacționează diferit, reacționează nu neapărat imprezibil ci mai degrabă previzibil urmând indicațiile sau mai degrabă așteptând indicațiile. Reușita reprezentației (nu a spectacolului în sine) depinde de răspunsul spectatorului și în egală măsură de puterea persuasivă a artistului. În *Er du os?* acesta mînuiește cu dexteritate pârghiile la propriu și la figurat - lansează frânghia la momentul oportun, spectatorul reacționează prompt, happening-ul este creat, se produce șocul estetic, frânghia a reușit să lege, să conecteze niște necunoscuți, pentru câteva momente.

Totul este gândit minuțios, există un fir conducător, dincolo de momentele de improvizație, de ajustare/ re-ajustare. Se spune că detaliile fac diferența și cel puțin în cazul acesta pare să fie adevărat. De la ghemul de 222 de metri de frânghie complicat înfășurat pînă la costumația scenică- țesută dintr-un fir asemănător frânghiei totul este „în legătură” iar tablourile de mișcare ce se succed destul de repede reușesc să compună o imagine unitară în care frânghia e obiect și subiect.

Speech / non-speech: pure emotion

The option of nonverbal expression is one of the oldest and, at the same time, newest artifices for achieving pure emotion, an emotion that is unobstructed and unaltered by a message delivered directly. Movement, body language as universal language can be more nuanced and more open than the verbal message. One can speak of a gestural paralinguism where expression, attitude, facial gestures, physiognomy and affects coexist with the ability, weightlessness and strength of the body. Although it is very common, the expression "one image speaks a thousand words" accurately captures the construction of a fictional universe in images. The anatomy of the show is thus visible and invisible, and despite all efforts of signification, the message may reach the audience in a distorted manner or it may not reach the audience at all. The only actual indicator is the title that determines the idea of the play and its ideological color. As in the case of 19th century painters that allowed their fellows to admire their works when they were in an early or almost completed stage, but kept secret the title of the painting to avoid their idea being stolen – in Glimt's case – the title opens and closes the mystery. Without it the play would be incomplete, without it the social aspect – alienation / loneliness of contemporary man (trapped between symbolic boundaries) would not be so pronounced. It is not an identification show as no instant empathy with the protagonist is created. On the contrary, gestural repetitiveness and the mechanics of daily existence – exemplified in some typical attitudes – generate separation/distance and invite to reflection.

Fictional theme versus stage events

The author's intention to capture the present, to contextualise social and political events is quite evanescent as the cultural intertexts are more obvious than the ideological ones. The ever growing share of the political element is part of the trends of the contemporary circus, becoming one of the strengths of ideas support. One can talk about a rematch of the circus against politics or power. The saying "bread and circuses" as a strategy of manipulation is no longer valid. Contemporary circus assumes and expresses

Limbaj/non-limbaj: emoție în formă pură

Opțiunea pentru non- exprimare verbală este una dintre cele mai vechi și în același timp cele mai noi artificii în atingerea emoției în formă pură ne-obturată și nealterată de un mesaj livrat direct. Mișcarea, limbajul corporal ca limbaj universal pot fi mai nuanțate, mai deschise decât mesajul verbal. Se poate vorbi de un paralingvism gestual în care expresivitatea, atitudinea, mimica, jocul fizionomiei, afectele coexistă cu abilitatea, imponderabilitatea, cu forța corporală. Deși e un loc comun expresia „one image speaks a thousand words” surprinde cu acuratețe construirea unui univers ficțional în imagini. Anatomia spectacolului este astfel vizibilă și invizibilă, și în ciuda eforturilor de semnificare, mesajul poate ajunge deformat sau nu ajunge deloc. Singurul indicator concret este titlul care fixează ideea piesei și coloratura ei ideologică. La fel ca în cazul unor pictori din secolul al- XIX-lea ce își lăsau confrății să le admire lucrările pe când erau în stadiu incipient sau aproape definitiv, dar păstrau cu strășnicie secret titlul tabloului pentru a nu le fi furată ideea- și în cazul lui Glimt- titlul închide și deschide misterul. Fără el spectacolul ar fi incomplet, fără el încărcătura socială- alienarea/singurătatea omului contemporan (captiv între granițe simbolice) nu ar fi atât de pregnantă. Nu este un spectacol de identificare, nu se produce o empatie instantă cu protagonistul. Din contră repetitivitatea gestuală, mecanica existenței zilnice- prinsă în câteva poziții tipice produc o delimitare- distanțare și invită la reflecție.

Tema ficțională versus evenimentele scenice

Intenția autorului de captare a prezentului, de contextualizare socio- politică este destul de evanescentă având în vedere că intertextele culturale sunt mai evidente decât cele ideologice. Ponderea tot mai ridicată a elementului politic se înscrie în tendințele ale cercului contemporan devenind unul din punctele forte de susținere a eșafodajului ideatic. Se poate vorbi de o revanșă a cercului în fața politicului, a puterii. Dictonul „pâine și circ” ca strategie de manipulare nu mai e de actualitate. Circul contemporan își asumă și exprimă o viziune critică: parodia, satira sunt



Karl Stets – Cuerda © Lucie Herrera

a critical view: parody and satire are amplified – taboo topics, sensitive topics are approached in a dramatic register. Confluence with the theater becomes more obvious. Brecht and Meyerhold decisively influenced new circus: the first one through critical reflection and the second one through the revival of movement.

II. THE INTERVIEW

The residency program offered by NY Circus managed to provide a full image of the shows, combining actual viewing with a seminar of discussion on the plays presented and an unconventional interview/meeting with their protagonists. The meeting with Lars Gregersen – one of the founders of Glimt (along with Camila Sarrazin), the first contemporary circus company in Denmark, was one of the most special of the entire festival, enabling a dialogue about circus art, new circus and physical theater, the conflict and dichotomy between director and artist that exists in the contemporary circus, and especially about efforts, searches, doubts, “fights” behind

amplificate- subiectele tabu, subiectale sensibile aduse în discuție sunt tratate în registru dramatic. Confluența cu teatrul devine mai evidentă. Brecht și Meyerhold au influențat decisiv new circus: primul prin reflecția critică cel de al doilea prin revalorizarea mișcării.

II. THE INTERVIEW

Programul rezidenței oferită de NY Circus a reușit să ofere o imagine completă asupra spectacolelor combinând vizionarea propriu-zisă cu un seminar de discuții legate de piesele prezentate și o întâlnire-interviu neconvențional cu protagoniștii acestora. Întâlnirea cu Lars Gregersen- unul dintre fondatorii Glimt (alături de Camila Sarrazin), prima companie de circ contemporan în Danemarca a fost una dintre cele mai speciale în cadrul festivalului, oferind posibilitatea unui dialog despre arta ciroului, new circus și *physical theatre*, conflictul și dihotomia regizor – artist existente în contemporary circus, și mai ales despre eforturile, căutările, îndoielile , „luptele” ce se află în spatele fiecărui spectacol. Un spectacol nu e

each show. A show is never finished, "work in progress" being the artistic conception, each performance adding something else, developing, augmenting the show. Its preparation is done over two or three years of research, documentation, crystallization of ideas, concepts, movements. Speaking of *Er du os?* (Are you us?) Lars Gregersen confesses that the catalyst was an obsessive image – the ball of thread in motion.

Between the sensitivities of developing the contemporary circus show, there is the position / role of the director, which is often suppressed. Thus, in a show there are consultants / choreographers, playwrights, writers, designers, musicians, production designers, directors of photography, technicians – everything except directors. It seems that there is a structural incompatibility between artist and director, the artist preferring an author position, a personal vision and especially the freedom of movement, a total ownership of the work to be created. Talking almost point wise about the genesis and subsequent development of the show, we learn that the development of a sequence is nearly impossible without an audience, a minimal number of viewers. Paradoxically, there is a need of an external eye (the exact words that came again under discussion and that dominate, it seems, the minds of new circus artists are the external-eye), an objective perspective, providing a neutral view that the artist chooses to take into account or not.

A second challenge is to distance from its acrobatic nature, to avoid clichés and temptations regarding the overuse of acrobatic techniques used to demonstrate what and how much one can do. The rope is a spectacular tool that requires specific skills and techniques. Inclusion of additional elements would distract and confuse for the mixture of styles does not fit the general concept.

However, in the middle of both the show and the interview the obsessive question remains: Are you us? Seduced by spectacular images, music, poetry, flying and lights, beautiful words, ideas, smiles, confessions, thoughts, fears, obsessions, delusions and dreams, we forget about the serious subtext of interrogation or, more precisely,

niciodată terminat, concepția artistică e de tipul „work in progress”, fiecare performare adaugă ceva în plus, dezvoltă, crește spectacolul. Pregătirea lui se realizează pe parcursul a doi-trei ani de cercetare, documentare, cristalizare a idelor, conceptelor, mișcărilor. Vorbind de *Er du os?* (Are you us?) Lars Gregersen mărturisește că factorul catalizator l-a constituit o imagine obsesivă-ghemul în mișcare.

Între punctele sensibile ale dezvoltării spectacolului de circ contemporan este poziția / rolul regizorului care de cele mai multe ori este suprimat. Astfel, într-un show există consultantți-coreografi, dramaturgi, scenariști, designeri, muzicieni, scenografi, directori de imagine, tehnicieni - totul mai puțin regizori. Se pare că există o incompatibilitate de structură între artiști și regizor, artistul preferând o producție de autor, o viziune personală și mai ales o libertate de mișcare, o asumare totală a operei ce urmează să fie creată. Dicitând punctual aproape, geneza și evoluția ulterioară a show-ului, aflăm că dezvoltarea unei secvențe este aproape imposibilă fără participarea unui public, a unui număr minimal de privitori. Paradoxal se resimte nevoia unui ochi extern, (sitagma exactă ce a revenit în discuție și pare că domină mentalul artiștilor din new-circus este *the external-eye*), a unei perspective obiective, care să ofere o opinie neutră, de care artistul alege sau nu să țină cont.

O a doua provocare este cea a distanțării de natura sa acrobatică, de a evita clișee și tentații de supra utilizare a tehnicilor acrobatică pentru a demonstra ce și cât de mult poți. Frânghia este un instrument spectaculos, care necesită tehnici și aptitudini specifice, includerea unor elemente suplimentare ar distra atenția, ar produce confuzie pentru că amestecul de stiluri nu se încadrează conceptului general.

Însă în miezul spectacolului și al interviului deopotrivă rămâne întrebarea obsesivă: Are you us? Seduși de imagini spectaculoase, muzici, poezie, zbor și lumini, de cuvinte frumoase, idei originale, zâmbete, confesiuni, gânduri, frici, obsesii, iluzii și vise, uităm subtextul grav al interogației, sau mai precis al valului de interogații ce ne asaltează de la începutul până la sfârșitul

of the wave of interrogations that assail us from the beginning to the end of the performance: Where does our world begin? What are its limits? Where are we? Are we in or are we out? A continuous legitimation, self-awareness attempt. There are two problems: the attempt to define and to affirm oneself is achieved eventually through a negation, through a rejection of the item that does not match one's aspirations and beliefs and – the most difficult attempt that we try to elude as much as we can – that one has no answer, no solution. The lack of answers is not intentional, because there are no answers as the author confesses. At the most, there is a vision, a perspective. And it seems that it is not enough. The big step is not made. Is the search useless, is the artistic effort completely sterile without a final answer? Yes and no. The influence of the Brechtian theater is felt, but the end of the Good Man from Sichuan is programmed, it is the expression of a manifesto: "Dear viewer, go and find a solution, you must, you must!" Considering the show in terms of "work in progress", maybe in time it would reach a conclusion, considering the internal structure of the coming of age protagonist, maybe the lack of answers is a strategy, maybe the audience and the actor have to grow together, to obtain solutions together. And solutions should exist, because this is the mission of the artist, to put countless tedious questions but to provide some answers as well. As an open work, "l'opera aperta" has many interpretations, because it offers the premise of many answers.

Finally, one should consider the relationship between the initial idea and the final result. How did the image-obsession that started it all evolve? How have concepts clarified? Theatre, dance, or contemporary circus? Are there limits between them? What is the relationship with otherness? With limits? and especially What are the limits of the artist? All these questions were chained in a passionate discussion at the end of which I was offered more than answers, I was offered "a live performance", a demonstration of critical consciousness, "a portrait of the artist".

reprezentației: Unde începe lumea noastră? Care sunt limitele ei? Unde suntem noi? Suntem în sau suntem afară? o continuă încercare de legitimare, de autosituare. Există două probleme: încercarea de definire, de afirmare de sine se realizează până la urmă print-o negație, printr-o respingere a elementului care nu potrivește aspirațiilor, credințelor tale și- cea mai dificilă, pe care încercăm să o eludăm pe cât posibil- faptul că nu ai nici un răspuns, nici o soluție. Absența răspunsurilor nu e intenționată, pentru că nu există răspunsuri după cum mărturisește autorul. Există cel mult o viziune, o perspectivă. Și parcă nu e de ajuns. Pasul cel mare nu este făcut. Este căutarea inutilă, este efortul artistic în totalitate steril fără un răspuns final? Da și nu. Influența teatrului brechtian se face simțită, însă finalul *Omului cel bun din Siciuan* este programat, e expresia unui manifest: „Du-te, dragă spectatorule, găsește o soluție, trebuie, trebuie!” Considerând spectacolul din perspectiva „work in progress” poate în timp va atinge o concluzie, considerând structura internă a protagonistului de tip *coming of age* poate că lipsa de răspunsuri e o strategie, poate că spectatorul și actorul trebuie să se maturizeze împreună, să obțină soluții împreună. Totuși ele trebuie să existe, pentru că asta e menirea artistului să pună nenumărate, obositoare întrebări dar să ofere și câteva răspunsuri. O operă deschisă, „l'opera aperta” oferă multiple interpretări, pentru că oferă premiza mai multor răspunsuri.

Nu în ultimul rând trebuie luată în considerare relația dintre ideea inițială și rezultatul final. Cum a evoluat imaginea-obsesie de la care a pornit totul? Cum s-au limpezit conceptele? Teatru, dans sau circ contemporan? Există limite între ele? Care e relația cu alteritatea? Cu limitele? și mai ales Care sunt limitele artistului? Toate aceste întrebări s-au înlănțuit într-o pasionată- pasională discuție la finalul căreia am primit mai mult decât răspunsuri, am primit „a live performance”, o demonstrație de conștiință critică, „a portrait of the artist”.

Into the mystic

LOUISE FINN

STARTS

*"I wanna rock your gypsy soul,
just like way back in the days of old,
and magnificently we will flow,
into the mystic."**

I am watching a performer from the group La Meute hurtle through the air and the above words come to mind. He has just jumped from a Russian swing and is somersaulting towards a crash mat. It's a little sickening to observe, in fact I can hardly watch at all. I feel afraid, I am thrilled, yet curiously joyful; his face shows that he seems to feel the same.

The lyrics at the beginning of this piece are, for me, an apt if a little obtuse distillation of the performers' artistic intent. Through their show, and using skills which have strong roots in the past, they want to move the audience in the most magnificent way they can.

I'm at the Ny Cirkus Festival in Copenhagen and this is the first of four performances I am to experience during my short stay in the Danish capital. Coming from Ireland where there isn't as strong a tradition of new/contemporary circus performance as in other parts of Europe I wasn't sure what to expect from this festival.

Happily La Meute's *Tragédie Grecque*, Un loup pour l'homme's *Face Nord*, GLiMT's *Er du os?* and Subliminati Corporation's *#File_Tone* are illustrative of a diverse, at times divisive, but ultimately intriguing programme from organisers KIT (Københavns Internationale Teater). They should be applauded for this.

These performances raise numerous questions (we at Unpack The Arts spent four days debating them over endless cups of coffee) yet one issue in particular lingered in my mind.

How do new circus performances provoke complex emotional responses from their audience? For audiences are undoubtedly moved by these shows. There are breathless silences during *Face Nord*, nervous laughter in response to *Tragédie Grecque*, joyful smiles that can be seen in the half light of the theatre during *Er du os?*, contrasting sharply with fearful intakes of breath during *#File_Tone*. In simpler words, how can such overtly physical acts become things of beauty?

Tragédie Grecque is a good production to delve into because theirs is a young company whose techniques are still evolving. They are in the process of creating their new circus identity and by looking through the cracks in their craft you can see the mechanics of their show and perhaps understand a little more about this artform.

La Meute translates into English as "the pack"; in their promotional information the group refer to themselves as "the wolf pack" and indeed elements of the species are present in this group. Powerful and at times fierce they seem intent on working together for the benefit of one another.

Yet for the bravado of their name *Tragédie Grecque* begins in a distinctly humorous way. A company of six topless young men enter and use towels to clothe themselves. The towels are fashioned into nappies (diapers), a convention that infantilises the performers and highlights the youth of the acrobats we are about to see. La Meute are indeed a green group, fresh from training at the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm and understandably full of beans.

While creating these nappies they tease the audience and imply that we might see them fully nude – alas this doesn't happen. But as an introduction this establishes the cheeky tone of the piece; they are playing and we are playing with them. Almost immediately the audience are laughing and smiling in reaction to both the charm

of the company's openness and the awkward possibility that the towels covering their bodies might fall away and leave them exposed. Tension between reality and play runs throughout this piece and is crucial to the creation of its artistic identity.

They pause momentarily after getting dressed, striking poses which show off their physiques. The image formed is reminiscent of a tableau of classical statues you might stumble across in a dusty museum. The loincloths conceal none of the muscular masculinity of their bodies and this brief moment of stillness allows the audience's mind to wonder about the choice of title for the piece. Will what we're about to see end tragically, do these young lads know what they're doing, should we be on standby with an ambulance?

The majority of the show is centred on the Russian swing and includes high jumps, use of teeterboards and other props, spliced with loosely choreographed ground-based acrobatics that the group later admit are often improvised. Unlike traditional circus, when routines aren't completed perfectly they are repeated in what becomes a dialogue between performer and audience. They strive to deliberately create imperfection just to keep the audience on edge. We find ourselves willing them to succeed; we gasp when it seems they won't. They are playing again, this time with the idea of failure. In one tense moment the performers take time to precariously elevate an acrobat atop a set of poles. Once he is balanced, which is an impressive achievement to watch, he stays there until an inevitable series of mishaps elsewhere in the show unbalance him and he comes crashing to the ground. What they seem to be trying to tell us is that failure, at some point, is inevitable.

The difficulty in achieving the more physically exhausting feats is not hidden; smiles aren't painted on and instead the strain can be seen on their faces, arms and legs. Even so, they are aware of the audience, making eye contact and accepting applause, when it occurs, with boyish grins. Despite the difficulty of the act they still look happy to be there; the audience can see into their world, a world where there is pain but with it comes success.

Then there is an "accident" and a cast member stops the show to inform the audience. Of course there hasn't been an accident but they merrily lead us down the garden path and go so far as to grab an ice pack from Katrien Verwilt, one of the festival's directors. Eventually the agonised groans of the "injured" performer turn into the vocalisation of a Berber style song and we swing back into action again. The "accident" isn't the most convincing theatrical device they could have used, but once again they hammer home the paradoxical existence of risk and joy that is at the heart of this production and its performers' lives.

While their youthful exuberance and willingness to play is watchable, this show appears unfinished, most noticeably when at the end the performers unceremoniously leave the arena. There are other imperfections too. Some of the sequences drag on a fraction too long, especially those where the performers are working on the ground between more dangerous routines. Here, especially, their sense of dramatic timing needs work. More generally *Tragédie Grecque* lacks a slickness and purpose that would allow it to hold the audience's imagination completely. However this is something I feel they are likely to acquire with time; the raw materials are all there.

What they do achieve is nonetheless impressive, drawing the audience beyond mere awe at physical prowess and into a story about the existence of being a performer. Even though imperfect you will leave with a sense of what I can only describe as lightness; a joy that is infectious and akin to the rush the performers themselves must feel.

Speaking to the company afterwards they are as enthusiastically youthful as the content of their show suggests and charmingly uncomfortable with the notion of being artists and defining their work. "We don't claim to do 'contemporary circus'," one of them sheepishly protests. They accept the criticism that the production seems unfinished describing it as "a work in progress". Their intention right now, they say, is just to present something which shows what they are like when they work together and the enjoyable aspects of being a circus performer.

Art imitates life and they confirm my suspicions that rather than consciously playing roles they prefer to display the natural dynamic of their own personal relationships. It therefore makes sense that since the Russian swing was the piece of equipment they first worked on together it is at the core of this show. Through personalising the

us at the post show discussion, “What did you think of that?” They sit earnestly while this is dissected. While the group use the new circus convention of an outside eye – someone who is not a director but gives feedback and advice on the work – they are very much the creators and shapers of their art.



Subliminati Corporation – #File_Tone © Ben Hopper

performance by using their well-practised skill they are branding it with their own unique theatricality and drawing the audience into their world.

The importance of the performance space to the group is also touched upon in this talk. The pack have played various venues and say they prefer to have people “close” during a show. They believe that this creates a better atmosphere for the audience. I can understand why: their narrative relies on the audience feeling the risk the performers feel.

They are most curious about the efficacy of the part of the show which fakes the accident, asking

What becomes clear from the performance and this talk is that in *Tragédie Grecque* the dramaturgy comes primarily from the physical skills of its performers. They showcase these skills, the obvious difficulty they have in achieving perfection, the openness in their relationships, the codependency between artists, and this combines to form a narrative. This wordless, physical narrative about being an acrobat is what ultimately provokes emotion. Like the minutiae of body language we, the audience, read it and respond accordingly.

While it might be alien to some theatre fans, the concept of a skill-based dramaturgy is key to

appreciating this kind of performance and others in the new circus vein.

For example, in one of the other performances, *#File_Tone*, sometimes their circus skills feel shoe-horned into the production's political narrative. During a hat juggling section this act only appears to be present to showcase the performer's skill and not because it has any bearing on the dramaturgy at that moment. The result is that while the act itself is pretty it has no emotion or meaning and the experience is more akin to a traditional circus or cabaret routine. This adversely effects the impact of their show, which is a shame because there are moments in it which are touching and their ambition can't be faulted. *Face Nord*, the brainchild of experienced duo Frédéric Arsenault and Alexandre Fray, most successfully demonstrates the efficacy of a skill-based dramaturgy. Their acrobatic show flows seamlessly from one exhibition to the next. They can both charm us with childish games and chill us with a boisterous wrestling match that ends in an unwanted kiss. In the end though, you don't notice the mechanics of how they achieve such an accomplished performance. You just realise you are watching something bloody spectacular, which is the mark of a truly great show.

In short, while new circus might produce similar effects to those of theatre or dance, the experience of attending a show is rather different. Movement remains the bones of this artform while in theatre or dance these are words or the director's/choreographer's vision. As an audience at a new circus performance we are carried along by the act of creation, which occurs when we respond to the danger or skill in the movement of its performers. These circus skills from the days of old are placed in new contexts; the physical combines with the intellectual and is transformed into something magnificently boundary bothering.

The new circus shows born from this process push the audience and circus performer together into a shared experience I can only dare to dub mystic. At least that's the way I left Copenhagen feeling.

* Taken from the Van Morrison song 'Into The Mystic'.

Face Nord's Acrobatics of Unstable Stereotypes

IGOR RUŽIĆ

Both contemporary and traditional circus are able to surprise us – and in fact this is often what they set out to do because being surprised fascinates the audience and the fascination of the audience is the very essence of the performing arts. The surprise itself comes from the performer's virtuosity, regardless of the techniques, instruments or methods that they use. Whether it is a fantastic musician, a gifted actor or an acrobat, the performer works the audience into a state of expectation. Sometimes that expectation is failed, sometimes it is met, and occasionally it is even *exceeded* – perhaps in the form of an encore. (In any of the numerous performing arts, by the way, with the exception of music, the encore – even when it is dedicated wholeheartedly to the audience as a thank you for their applause and as a sign of special commitment and community – is usually completely out of place, redundant and even harmful.) The value that a performance adds to simple, virtuoso technique is the crucial feature that can make the difference between good and excellent, between fine quality and genius... in short, between craft and art. When it comes to art practices, these categories and distinctions are anything but simple. Indeed, if the craft itself is extraordinary, and its performance is, for the majority of consumers and fans, completely out of their own league and abilities, it is only possible to identify subtleties that distinguish craft from art by intensifying the consumer's perception and, of course, through the engagement of a certain intellectual effort, both during the performance and afterwards. Due to its outsider status, the

Un Loup Pour L'homme: 'Face Nord'

Akrobacije nestalnih
stereotipova

IGOR RUŽIĆ

Novi cirkus i suvremeni cirkus u stanju su iznenaditi. Dapače, to im je često i namjera, jer iznenađenje je dio fascinacije, a fascinacija gledatelja bit je izvedbenih umjetnosti. Ona je rezultat virtuoznosti izvođača, bez obzira kojim se tehnikama služili, kojim instrumentom ili postupkom. Dakle, bila riječ o fantastičnom glazbeniku, nadarenom glumcu ili akrobatu, svaki od njih u stanju je dovesti publiku u stanje očekivanja, iznevjerenog ili zadovoljenog, pri čemu je ovo posljednje još bolje ukoliko dolazi i bonus, ne nužno u vidu 'bisa'. Ovaj posljednji je, uzgred rečeno, čak i kad je s punim poštovanjem predan publici kao zahvala za aplauz i znak svojevrstne uzajamnosti i zajedništva, u bilo kojoj od brojnih faceta izvedbenih umjetnosti, osim u glazbi, u pravilu pogrešan, nepotreban, pa čak i štetan. Ali dodana vrijednost u samoj izvedbi je ona presudna stavka što čini razliku između dobrog i izvrsnog, kvalitetnog i genijalnog... ukratko, između zanata i umjetnosti. Takve kategorije i takva stratifikacija nisu najjednostavniji kad je riječ o umjetničkim praksama, jer ukoliko je i sam zanat takav da je izvanredan i da se njime performira nešto što je većini konzumentenata i ljubitelja izvan fokusa i praga mogućnosti, pronaći i prepoznati suptilne finese koje čine razliku između zanata i umjetnosti moguće je tek intenziviranjem konzumentove percepcije uz, naravno, određenu količinu intelektualnog napora kako za vrijeme izvedbenog čina tako i nakon njega. Pritom je cirkus, bila riječ o tradicionalnom, novom ili suvremenom, u nešto lošijoj poziciji od davno kanoniziranih umjetnosti, s obzirom na svoju, malo je reći, izdvojenu poziciju.

circus, either traditional, new or contemporary, finds itself in a somewhat less favourable position to those arts that were canonised long ago.

If traditional circus created fascination through the spectacular, perhaps even at the cost of intellectual stimulation, and continues this tradition today (if in a politically more correct way), contemporary circus supports, explores and offers different levels of perception. Due to its complex nature – attributable to the fact that it has formed at the boundaries of theatre, in particular newer forms of theatre and contemporary dance – the understanding and consequent enjoyment of contemporary circus does require intellectual involvement. To be more accurate: contemporary circus draws inspiration from these neighbouring art fields in terms of form as well as content; hence it adds to dramaturgy, concept and ideas, exactly those areas where the older or more spectacular circus – with due respect to artists involved in this genre – were found lacking. If I rephrase it: the easiest way to draw a distinction between traditional circus and contemporary circus might be that the first is related to the so-called 'ooh' effect whereas the second often also provokes the 'aha' effect. As well as craft and skills, contemporary circus offers something more, be it a story, message, statement or comment, or simply artistic value emanating from the performance.

The latest work *Face Nord* by the company Un loup pour l'homme has all the attributes that characterise contemporary circus. It is a small-scale performance that works exclusively with hand-to-hand technique, gymnastics and acrobatics – disciplines that don't require any specific equipment or set-up. Furthermore, it is strong and independent, attractive by most measures, and intriguing for its internal attributes, its tensions, and its consequences – or for all of what its consequences *might* be. In a square ring, which is not the only paradox to be found in this performance, four performers compete among themselves but mostly with themselves. In a pause between tense acrobatic stunts or complex collective routines, they relax in an almost childlike game, a staged combination of 'cat-and-mouse' and 'hide-and-seek'. Single-word

Ako je tradicionalni cirkus spektakularnošću dodavao toj fascinaciji, možda i na štetu intelektualnog napora, dok suvremeni nastavlja tu tradiciju ali na politički korektniji način, novi cirkus podnosi, traži i nudi i drukčije razine percepcije. Razumijevanje, a posljedično i uživanje u njemu ipak jest i kognitivna djelatnost, jer je i on sam zahtjevniji s obzirom da nastaje na granicama kazališta, pogotovo novog kazališta, i suvremenog plesa. Točnije, iz tih susjednih umjetničkih grana on crpi koliko je moguće preuzeti u formi, ali i u sadržaju, što znači da dramaturgiji, konceptu i ideji dodaje upravo onoliko koliko starijim, ili spektakularnijim cirkuskim inačicama, s dužnom isprikom svim umjetnicima koji se bave upravo tim žanrom, nedostaje. Naizgled samoobjašnjavajuća tvrdnja, koju je lako podvesti pod retoriku i sofistiku te tako diskvalificirati, ipak ima previše zagovaratelja i primjera da bi bila neumjesna ili netočna. Drugim riječima, možda bi najlakše bilo razliku između kvalitetnog suvremenog cirkusa i kvalitetnog novog cirkusa objasniti tako da se uz prvog veže tek takozvani 'oho efekt', dok uz drugi nerijetko izaziva i 'aha efekt'. Novi cirkus, jednostavno, pored zanata i vještine, nudi i nešto više, bila to priča, poruka, stav, komentar ili jednostavno – umjetnička vrijednost koju emanira kreacija.

U svojem najnovijem radu 'Face Nord', novocirkuska kompanija Un Loup Pour L'homme, ima sve postavke koje tako definira novi cirkus. Predstava nevelika formatom i nezahtjevna produkcijom, djelomično i zato što se oslanja isključivo na hand to hand tehniku, parternu gimnastiku i akrobatiku za koju ne treba posebnih tehničkih pomagala. Pored toga, ona je istodobno efektivna i samostojna, zanimljiva po najrazličitijim parametrima, intrigantna po svojim unutarnjim zadatostima i napetostima i, konačno, po svojim posljedicama ili svemu onome što njezine posljedice mogu biti. U četverokutnom ringu, što nije jedini paradoks vezan uz ovu predstavu, četiri izvođača natječu se u suradnji i profesionalizmu između sebe, ali najviše sa samima sobom. U stankama napetih akrobacija ili zahtjevnih kolektivnih figura, opuštaju se gotovo dječjom igrom, tek izvedbenim kontekstom uvjetovano teatraliziranim spojem 'lovice' i 'tko se nije skrio...'. Među mnogim mogućim opisima predstave u

descriptions of the performance could definitely include such terms as 'community' and 'game', but also 'effort' and even 'pain' and 'endurance'. Most of these terms also apply to sport, as well as to such art practices as physical theatre, contemporary dance and performance, spanning several artforms and practices in the same way that *Face Nord* itself may at moments be seen to occupy all these genres, or at least be related to them. Nonetheless, *Face Nord* is contemporary circus – and of a kind that demonstrates where the form can now be found, where it can go, and, finally, what it actually is.

There are various interpretative routes one might take in looking at *Face Nord*, which we can reduce to the two most obvious: the approach addressing the skill itself – where the circus experts accurately name single tricks, or at least their constitutive elements – which would ultimately be based on specific genre characteristics; and then the approach that reads the piece from the perspective of performance as an art practice, which would initially consider the context and, above all, the performance's surprising exposition. *Face Nord* begins with an inscrutable series of encounters where two performers, wearing the protective gear used by American football players, embrace, fall and run into one another. Although this opening scene only lasts for a couple of minutes and functions as an introduction to a performance that later on lacks any costumes (as well as other requisites such as risers, elements of set design and props), its significance is indelibly reflected in the rest of the piece. The relationships established through the highly symbolic costumes – as well as by the action of falling, the idea of deliberate destruction, and the attitude of the performers in leading one another to masochistic falls that they make no attempt to escape or ease – spread through the whole of the performance. The later scenes may have no further symbolism or context connecting them with highly commercialised competitive sports such as American football, but the performance never avoids potentially dangerous acts that could have painful consequences for the performers' bodies. Indeed, the introduction is a concentration of some of the crucial content and poetic information needed for the rest of the

jednoj riječi, sigurno bi se našli i pojmovi poput 'zajedništva', 'igre', ali i 'napora', pa čak i 'bola', te posljedične 'izdržljivosti'. Većina termina primjenjiva je i na sport, kao i na umjetničke izraze poput fizičkog kazališta, suvremenog plesa te performansa, kao što je i predstavu samu na trenutke moguće čitati u tim žanrovskim ili pod/nad/među-žanrovskim okvirima. Ipak, 'Face Nord' jest novi cirkus, ali takav koji pokazuje gdje ga se sve može pronaći, kamo je u stanju otići i, na koncu, što jest.

Među različitim interpretacijama mogu prevladati one očite, ili najbrže i najjasnije. Put koji će se baviti vještinom samom, pri čemu će cirkuski i novocirkuski znalci za svaku od figura ili barem njihove gradbene elemente znati i točne nazive, išao bi najprije iz samog žanra, dok bi čitanje ove predstave iz očista performansa kao umjetničke grane u obzir najprije uzimao kontekst i, prije svega, začudnu ekspoziciju predstave. 'Face Nord' započinje nejasnim nizom susreta, grljenja, padova i protrčavanja dvojice izvođača u zaštitnim odijelima kakve koriste igrači američkog nogometa. Iako to otvaranje traje samo nekoliko minuta, i funkcionira kao svojevrsni intro u predstavu kojoj kasnije više nema nikakvih kostima, kao ni drugih pomagala poput praktikabla, scenografskih elemenata, kostima ili alata, njegova se značenja neizbrisivo reflektiraju u ostatku komada. Uspostavljanje relacija preko suradnje viskosimboličnih kostima, kao i akcije padanja, namjernog rušenja i kombiniranja partnerske podrške s izostankom iste, što rezultira mazohističkim padovima bez i najmanjeg voljnog pokušaja zaštite u vidu izbjegavanja ili ublažavanja pada ili udarca, širi se kroz predstavu koja u ostatku ne bježi od potencijalno opasnih radnji s potencijalno bolnim i po tijelo štetnim posljedicama, ali bez simbolike ili poveznice s visokokomercijaliziranim sportskim natjecanjem i spektaklom kakav je američki nogomet. Uvod kondenzira nekoliko bitnih sadržajnih i poetičkih informacija o ostatku, kao da je u njemu sublimirano sve ono što će tek biti objašnjeno, zrcaljeno i supstituirano, ali prije svega – dovedeno u pitanje.

Novocirkuske karakteristike ove predstave možda i nije nužno nabrajati u detalje, nedostatak priče,



Cie Un Loup pour l'homme – Face Nord © Milan Szytura

performance, as if sublimating everything that has yet to be explained, reflected on, and, above all, questioned.

The contemporary circus characteristics of *Face Nord* need not be listed in detail, and the absence of plot, the particular style of the dramaturgy, and the nature of the performance as a theatrical experiment which doesn't present itself as such, are merely parts of the total picture – perhaps even the least visible parts. Much more obvious, completely clear to any spectator, is the fact that the performance that unfolds in front of their wide-open eyes entails a great investment of effort from the performers. Their sweat makes part of this picture; it is perceived both aurally and visually – and for those closer to the ring it might also be perceived by other senses. If not proof of actual pain – though there must be plenty of that – it is proof of the effort and concentration that must be raised to simultaneously overcome both fear and weakness. But then we enter the field of sport, always present in circus yet not to the level of this performance. Through the lightness of the performers' flights through the air, and through the construction of human towers and the

dramaturgija koja nalikuje performansu, novokazališnom eksperimentu koji to više nije ili suvremenoplesnoj produkciji samo su dio slike, možda i onaj manje vidljivi. Prezentniji, i svakom gledatelju u potpunosti jasan, s obzirom da se odvija ispred očiju i ušiju otvorenih zbog fascinacije ipak nevjerojatnim sposobnostima i hrabrošću izvođača, neskriven je trud kojim se sve to postiže. Spomenuti znoj dio je te slike, njegova proizvodnja podjednako je auditivna i vizualna, za one u bližim redovima središtu arene možda i dohvatljiva drugim čulima, jer je dokaz ako već ne konkretnog bola, iako treba biti poprilično siguran da i njega ima u sasvim pristojnim količinama, nego prvenstveno napora i koncentracije koja mora nadići i strah i nemoć istodobno. A to je već polje sportskoga, uvijek prisutno u cirkusu ali ne na istoj razini kao u ovoj predstavi. Lijepo je to i vješto dramaturški smišljeno, iako jest jedna od osnovnih postavki novog cirkusa. Uz lakoću leta kroz zrak, izgradnju ljudske kule ili svih ostalih karakteristika tehnike hand in hand, gledatelj ipak (p)ostaje svjedokom i intenzivnog fizičkog napora koji taj rad nosi.

execution of other technical elements of hand-to-hand technique, the spectator witnesses the intense physical effort involved.

Partly for reasons of poetics and partly for reasons imposed by the production itself, 'poverty' is one of the features of contemporary circus. The company actually has nothing but their bodies, and although the appearance of football gear at the beginning of the show is considered a unique introduction (a 'poetic' spin which we expect to be explained later, but which isn't), their way of performing without any special equipment gives this subgenre a completely different taste to other contemporary circus shows. Even the much praised, today cult, Australian company Acrobat, a group credited with revolutionising a great many aspects of contemporary circus, use a lot of props or pieces of equipment in their performances, their 'poverty' being mainly reflected in a shortage or ultimate minimalism of costumes. In *Face Nord*, the poverty seems to be of a poetic nature that requires a different explanation. As with poor theatre – an old invention that is interpreted today in ways that couldn't have been anticipated at its inception – this insistence on the self-sufficiency of the performer and their technique in contemporary circus is a unique deviation from practice – and even quite a recent one. This, of course, can be understood as the ultimate reduction of the *need* for technique, as well as a belief that the technique itself follows after certain authorial decisions deriving from the groups' poetics.

Considering all that's said above, *Face Nord* may serve as a good example of the various facets of contemporary circus. The technique the performance employs can provoke a spectator's fascination yet also provide – in a very subtle way – a certain aesthetic satisfaction centred on the performers themselves. In *Face Nord*, the performers' facial expressions are masked by grimaces – but, then, this is a natural expression to adopt when the body is under maximum tension and the mind occupied by no less risky feats of mental concentration. This type of circus lacks false smiles and phrases; there is no communication with the audience, not even eye contact. The system is closed in upon itself and its rituality, preventing the audience from thinking

Siromašnost je jedna od karakteristika novog cirkusa, djelomično poetski a djelomično i produkcijski zadana. Činjenica da ova kompanija gotovo da uopće nema ničega osim vlastitih tijela, i ako se pojavljivanje oklopa na početku uzme kao svojevrsni uvod u predstavu, poetski spin koji bi se trebao kasnije objasniti iako se to zapravo ne dogodi, način izvođenja bez ikakvih pomagala daje ovom podžanru sasvim drukčiji okus od uobičajenih novocirkuskih komada. Čak i hvaljeni, danas već kulturni australijski Acrobat, skupina kojoj se pripisuje rodonačelnički i prevratnički značaj u mnogim aspektima novog cirkusa, u svojim predstavama koristi mnoge sprave, pa se njihovo 'siromaštvo' očituje prije svega u nedostatku ili krajnjem minimalizmu kostima. Ovdje je, čini se, to siromaštvo odjek poetičke prirode, koji traži drukčiju vrstu eksplikacije. Kao i siromašno kazalište, davni izum ili '-izam', koji se danas tumači drukčije nego što bi njegov logički razvoj pretpostavljao, ili mogao pretpostaviti, ovo siromašno novocirkusko inzistiranje na samodovoljnosti izvođača i njegove, ili njihove tehnike svojevrsni je otklon od prakse, čak i novije. U tome, naravno, treba vidjeti i krajnje smanjene potrebe izabrane tehnike, ali također treba vjerovati i da je sam izbor tehnike plod određene poetičke, autorske i izvođačke odluke.

Imajući u vidu sve navedeno, 'Face Nord' predstava je koja može poslužiti kao kvalitetan primjer mnogih strana novocirkuskog izraza. Tehnika može donijeti gledateljsku fascinaciju, može čak i pružiti, što ovdje nesumnjivo, ali vrlo skriveno čini, i određenu estetsku satisfakciju i samim izvođačima. Ona to ovdje i čini, iako je facijalna ekspresija izvođača vrlo skrivena grimasom, ili, ako se čita s druge strane, prirodnim izrazom lica dok je tijelo u maksimalnoj napetosti a um u ništa manje rizičnoj koncentraciji. U ovoj vrsti cirkusa nema namještenih osmjeha i naučenih fraza, nema komunikacije s publikom, čak niti pogledom. Sustav je zatvoren u sebe i u svoju ritualnost, koja publiku ne zavodi i ne dopušta joj da pomisli kako biva zavedenom. Iako joj se, ne baš do kraja paradoksalno, upravo to i događa, čak i u onim trenucima kad se vještom dramaturgijom poigrava očekivanjima. Na primjer, iako i klasični i novi cirkus grade napetost ponavljajući akrobaciju

that it is being misled – but this is exactly what is happening in those moments when the brilliant dramaturgy plays with the spectators' expectations. Both traditional and contemporary circus build tension by repeating acrobatic acts one after another and each time increasing the dose of danger and 'disbelief', but contemporary circus intensifies the dramaturgical arc in a more open way, in front of the spectators' eyes, by driving actions to their ultimate, untested limits. Or at least it gives such an impression by 'acting' with the performance and thereby transgressing the limits of the genre, or the ring.

The most interesting thing about Un loup pour l'homme and their performance *Face Nord* is that the performers' bodies are constantly 'worn-and-torn'. This wear and tear is of a physical nature, and is not difficult to imagine in the context of circus performance – but it is not *only* physical effort: the performers' identities are simultaneously built and stripped back. They explicitly don't try to build a narrative or 'tell a story'; their positions are not fixed within a storyline even allowing that in circus the story can be scattered or unstable. Quite the opposite: there is nothing that might be used to establish causality between the scenes and acrobatic acts, or to find the reason for the risk and the sweat, even for the most teleologically minded or imaginative spectator. Because the plot simply isn't there. And, ultimately, it doesn't have to be. Indeed, identities are built and destroyed in a different way. The introduction with the American football gear is used to transform the already robust performers into contemporary gladiators enacting a game that is only a step away from the dystopian 'do or die' premise of, for instance, *Rollerball*. But then a total shift comes when these gladiators begin to play like children, and then again when they climb over one another, lean into one another, press upon one another... and, of course, when they sweat.

In this case, the basic positions of hand-to-hand technique, which require totally different forms of contact to other acrobatic or sporting skills that are easily compared to circus, bring a different definition and significance. It is this very technique, in the particular way it is used by these

za akrobacijom sa sve većom dozom opasnosti i 'nevjerojatnosti', novi taj proces zapinjanja dramaturškog luka čini otvorenije, pred očima gledatelja, tako da naučenu točku pokušava dovesti do krajnjih, još neiskušanih granica. Ili barem stvara takav privid, igrajući se i glumački svojom izvedbom koja tako izlazi iz žanrovskog zabrana, ili ringa.

U konkretnom slučaju kompanije Un Loup Pour L'homme i njihove predstave 'Face Nord', najzanimljivije je to što se izvođačka tijela pritom konstantno troše. To trošenje je fizičko, što nije problem zamisliti kad je riječ o cirkuskoj ili novocirkuskoj predstavi, ali ne troše se samo fizički jer se tijekom predstave i izvođački identiteti grade i ljušte istodobno, a to je ono što čini razliku. Oni eksplicitno ne pokušavaju usustaviti narativ, ili 'ispričati priču', njihove pozicije nisu čak niti zadane unutar neke fabule, koliko god ona u cirkuskoj maniri mogla biti rasuta i nestalna. Naprotiv, čak niti nekoliko zadanih elemenata, iz kojih bi se dalo početi graditi određenu kauzalnost prizora i akrobacija, te za one teleološki nastrojene, pronaći svrhu znojenja i riskiranja, ne daju za pravo u konačnici čak niti najmaštovitijem gledatelju. Jer priče, jednostavno – nema. I ne treba je, u krajnjoj liniji ni biti. Identitet se ovdje gradi na drukčiji način, kao što se i razgrađuje. Utoliko, početa postavka koja uključuje opremu za američki nogomet, a koja je smišljena tako da od ionako kršnih igrača stvori suvremene gladijatore u igri koju samo korak dijeli od antiutopijskih 'do or die' premisa, na primjer, 'Rollerballa', zaokreće stvar u potpuno drugom smjeru kad se svi ti kršni muškarci tijekom predstave najprije igraju sasvim dječjih igara, da bi nakon toga uspijevali postići to što postižu vrlo konkretnim prijanjanjem, naslanjanjem, stiskanjem... I, naravno, znojenjem.

Osnovne pozicije koje pronalaze tehnikom hand to hand, i koje zato podrazumijevaju sasvim drukčiju vrstu kontakta u koju se može, za razliku od ostalih sportskih vještina s kojima se cirkus također lako uspoređuje, ovdje donosi drugu vrstu određenja i značenja. Upravo je ta tehnika, pogotovo na način kako je koriste upravo ovi izvođači, najbliža suvremenom plesu i plesu općenito, a na tome Un Loup Pour L'homme



Subliminati Corporation – #File_Tone © Ben Hopper

performers, which is closest to contemporary dance and dance in general, and Un loup pour l'homme insist on it as the grounds of their practice. Although hand-to-hand technique has its own rules in the circus, just as do certain schools in contemporary dance, any technique is merely a tool in the hands and, more importantly, the imagination of the performers. Every artist is foremost the *interpreter* of a technique, and only afterwards its 'performer'. In other words, in *Face Nord* we are definitely dealing with acrobatic technique, but used by these performers as a derivative of Paxtonian improvisation principles so that it is transformed into something that is easy for a non-expert to read and to grasp – just as dance can be, in spite of all its technical and aesthetic rules. Parts of this performance, in fact the whole performance, could be, without special explanation or reason, selected for the programme of any contemporary dance festival, particularly when taking into account the conceptual quality of contemporary dance in recent decades.

But what is most important and makes this performance special, whatever the context of its presentation, is the identity 'dissolution' that takes place within it – the masculine relations

inzistiraju kao na postavki svojeg djelovanja u drugom žanru, ali u istosti tjelesnih odnosa i percepcije tih odnosa. Iako i sama tehnika hand to hand ima svoja pravila, i u cirkusu je, baš kao i u suvremenom plesu, svaka tehnika tek oruđe u rukama i, što je još važnije, imaginaciji izvođača, pa je svaki izvođač najprije interpret pojedine tehnike, a tek onda i njezin 'izvršitelj'. Drugim riječima, naravno da jest i ovdje riječ o akrobatskoj tjelesnoj mehanici, ali je način kako je ovi izvođači koriste kao derivaciju pakstonovskih improvizacijskih načela, pretvara u modifikaciju koju je lako čitati, i percipirati, kao ples, sa svim njegovim zakonitostima, od tehničkih do estetskih. Odbacivanje stereotipije dovodi do širenja područja borbe, pa bi dijelovi ove predstave, baš kao i ona u cijelosti, bez ikakvog posebnog objašnjenja mogli biti programirani u bilo koji festival suvremenog plesa, pogotovo ukoliko se uzme u obzir konceptualna kvaliteta suvremenog plesa posljednjih desetljeća.

Međutim, ono što je važnije, a što se događa u ovoj predstavi i po čemu je ona posebna u bilo kojem referentnom polju žanrova ili odijeljenih umjetničkih disciplina, činjenica je otapanja identiteta – uspostavom maskulinog odnosa među evidentno maskulinim tijelima na početku

UNPACK
THE
ARTS

expressed between the overtly masculine bodies at the beginning of the show are later confronted and softened by an irrefutable need for a community and connection that dissolves the impositions of sexual orientation, belonging and belief. The performance's message might in fact lie in its effective demonstration of the thesis that the body cannot be translated into imposed structures, as well as of the futility of any such effort. Today, sideshows, historical descendants of circuses that used to exhibit 'freaks' such as bearded women, are definitely no longer politically correct, although political correctness itself may be considered a bit incorrect. *Face Nord* works simultaneously against the concept of a sideshow and for it: it doesn't present itself simply for laughter or shock effect, making instead the argument for a more humane and happier world, justified by the hard physical effort of the performers and their aversion to stereotypes. Yes, onstage there are definitely four unerringly masculine bodies – bodies that exhibit their masculinity to the point that they are as naked as if they were actually unclothed. On the other hand, their transition from the strict codification of American football, or Japanese military history, to a subtle partnership with the improvisation of contemporary dance is simple and straightforward, suggesting that the 'male game', war, can be transformed into children's play, nice and innocent in spite of William Golding and his heritage.

Contrary to the trained worlds of the hugely overpaid stars of professional sport, or of the mercenaries that today can no longer follow the code of once (if ever) noble warfare, in the collaboration of *Face Nord's* four performers we find a skill that remains a skill and that serves itself and its own aesthetic and spiritual purity. It connects the ideal of sport, a human activity that shouldn't be deprived of its intellectual worth, with dance, whose emotional charge or intelligence might be less questionable. Nevertheless, the major strength of this performance is the way it plays with stereotypes, foremost those related to identity: just as it depicts, and unmasks, the 'boyish' nature of any war game, it is also able to translate any gender division into only a construct, eternal like a prejudice, yet transient like a leap.

komada suprotstavljen je cijeli niz omekšavajućih elemenata koji dovode do nepobitne potrebe za zajedništvom bilo kakvih, tj. s bilo koje strane otopljenih zadatosti spolne orijentacije, pripadnosti, zadatosti ili uvjerenja. Utoliko je možda i sama poruka predstave sadržana u ne toliko radikalnoj koliko efektnoj dokazivosti teze o neprevodivosti tijela u zadane strukture, i nepotrebnosti svakog nastojanja da se to čini. Sideshow kao povijesni odvjetak cirkusa za odrasle koji je nekada prikazivao 'nakaze' poput 'žena s bradom', danas više sigurno nije politički korektan, iako je politička korektnost već sama po sebi pomalo nekorektna. 'Face Nord' radi istodobno umjesto sideshova i za njega, jer ne nudi smijeh i zgražanje već dovoljno argumenata za humaniju i sretniju poruku koja također ima svoje opravdanje u teškom fizičkom radu i nesklonosti definiranju. Da, na pozornici zaista jesu četiri nepogrešivo muška tijela i ona se pokazuju u svojoj muškosti te su stoga i ogoljenija nego da su zaista ogoljena. Ali s druge strane, njihov je prijelaz od stroge kodificiranosti američkog nogometa ili japanske ratničke povijesti, do suptilnog partnerstva u improvizacijskom suvremenom plesu, jednostavan i pravocrtan poput mogućnosti da se 'muška igra' koja u konačnici uvijek jest rat ovim, onim ili upravo ratnim sredstvima, pretvori u dječju igru, simpatičnu, i bezazlenu, Williamu Goldingu u njegovom naslijeđu unatoč.

Nasuprot utreniranim svjetovima višestruko preplaćenih manekena profesionalnog sporta, ili plaćenim ubojicama koji danas više ne mogu slijediti kodekse nekada, ako uopće ikada, plemenitog ratovanja, u suradnji četvorice izvođača iz kompanije Un Loup Pour L'homme vještina ostaje vještina koja služi samoj sebi i svojoj estetskoj i duhovnoj čistoći. Utoliko je i poveznica s idealom sporta kao ljudske djelatnosti koja ne bi trebala biti lišena svoje kognitivne strane, i plesom, čije su emotivnost ili inteligencija možda nešto manje upitne. Ali bitna odrednica ove predstave prije svega jest njezina igra sa stereotipovima, najprije identitetskim, jer dok svaku ratničku igru prikazuje, i prokazuje, kao u dječjačkom ishodištu, tako i svaku rodnu podjelu lako prevodi u konstrukt, vječan poput predrasude i kratkotrajan poput skoka.

If Nothing Falls, Nothing is Born

Risk in Contemporary Circus

SRDAN LATERZA

A square made of mats is surrounded by simple wooden bleachers for the audience. The lighting is simple, even, non-theatrical. It seems like the setting for some kind of a sports event. This simple arena is surrounded by the soft darkness of the large hall of AFUK, Copenhagen's Academy for Untamed Creativity – an old train warehouse with huge hangars that are now used to teach young Danes circus skills. In the middle of the arena two men wearing padded armour that resembles the gear of American football players start clashing, fighting. Their conflict is followed by a silent act performed by two other men: one jumps to embrace the other, while the other one keeps increasing the distance between them. As the performance continues, the acrobats become visibly sweaty; the next act immediately follows the last. The rhythm is fast, accentuated by harpsichord music, while the dramaturgy is fragmented. Two acrobats are bowing down; their backs are flat. The shortest acrobat of the bunch steps on his colleague's back, and attempts to jump and land on the back of the other bowing acrobat. He fails.

These four acrobats together comprise Un loup pour l'homme, a French contemporary circus company, and their performance, *Face Nord*, is a part of Ny Cirkus Festival. The difficulty of their stunts increases as the performance draws closer to its ending, evoking the hierarchy of tricks one can see in the traditional circus. But most of the stunts the four men perform are far from the aesthetic of traditional circus – they make it seem like they are struggling, and their movements vary in tone from athletic efficiency to the grotesque. And, even more interesting, failure, the dreaded taboo of traditional circus, becomes the main building block of the work.

Circus is all about balance. Gaining it means the artist has survived whatever lethal stunt he set out to do. But losing it is even more crucial, for without it the act wouldn't even be possible. The act of losing balance itself contains two polar opposites: the possibility of a complete failure, and the possibility of creating something new and truly exciting. The possibility of an unwanted outcome – or, to put it simply, risk – has always been one of the defining features of circus performances. Over the course of hundreds of years numerous audiences flocked to the arenas, be it tents or otherwise, to admire the 'superhumans' performing unbelievable stunts, defying gravity, and testing the limits of their skills and good luck.

The actor can forget his lines, but that won't cause him to break his neck (except in the case of a particularly violent producer or audience). The circus performer, on the other hand, can't afford the luxury of a mistake, because his pride as well as his life might be at stake. He cannot afford the luxury of not being totally involved in what he does.

Tim Etchells, legendary artistic director of Forced Entertainment, preaches the necessity of a performer's total involvement – a state of mind which, once attained, should make the performance irresistible to its audience. In his short text 'On Risk and Investment' he writes:

"Investment draws us in. Something is happening – real and therefore risked – something seems to slip across from the private world to the public one – and the performers are 'left open' or 'left exposed'. To be bound up with what you are doing, to be at risk in it, to be exposed by it."



Cie Un Loup pour l'homme – Face Nord © Milan Szytura

We can't deny the investment of traditional circus performers, however trained or skilled they may be. There's always the possibility of a fatal outcome, as they aren't pretending when they perform dangerous stunts. They actually do it. The performers in contemporary circus are just as skilled and can break their necks just as easily, but their respective field is quite different. Leaving the circus tent behind, the contemporary circus artist lost the safety traditional circus performance enjoys as a medium that doesn't necessarily need to make any ethical, aesthetic or political statements. The artistic freedom contemporary circus gained meant more artistic responsibility, which resulted in a change to the very idea of risk. As the stunt started to become part of a more complex structure of performance, mental and artistic risk in some ways replaced physical risk – an idea expressed by Tomi Purovaara in his book *An Introduction to Contemporary Circus*.

Circus performances have a dreamlike, innocent and non-verbal quality, rich in visual symbols, that is revered by contemporary theatre. But how successful are they in using it to discover new artistic territories? Are circus artists bold enough to leap into the unknown?

The acceptance of (acted) failure as a legitimate part of the performance in *Face Nord* is part of the tradition of new circus. Jérôme Thomas, the famous juggler, accepted mistakes in his performances. His principle, 'if nothing falls, nothing is born, everything moves', led him, as Purovaara writes in the aforementioned book, to experiment with intentional clumsiness. But the accepted failure in *Face Nord* is just a tool for expression, even though it seems to be a symbol of artistic involvement and risk-taking. The true leap into the unknown happens elsewhere. Using the mechanisms of game playing the French company deconstruct the heroism and machismo of the traditional circus artist. From within the performance's rhythmic, energetic fragments – constructed as a series of tasks or games – the theme of intimacy begins to emerge and is explored.

The standing ovation at the end of the performance showed that the performers' involvement paid off. The decision to put the audience so close to the stage was also a wise one. Not only could the audience internalise the pain of the performers, but they could even smell them.

The exploration of various ways to make the audience an integral part of the performance is a constant occupation for contemporary theatre. And quite a risky one.

A huge ball of thick rope hangs from the ceiling. A man in a sweater sits on it, resembling Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*. His food is a diet of small rope worms. When some of them fall on the ground, he follows them, discovering a whole new world inhabited by his audience. The audience is seated on two bleachers, facing each other. He starts to interact with them, giving them the rope-worms. The two audiences can clearly see each other's reactions. Eventually, he tries deconstructing his native rope planet, and gives the ends of ropes to both parts of the audience, encouraging them to rock him while he stands on his planet, loudly singing.

This is the peak of the audience engagement in *Er du os?*, a solo piece performed by Lars Gregersen, member of the Danish contemporary circus company GLiMT. *Er du os?* is a performance with polished dramaturgy, where the circus skills are integral. But, to be completely honest, the performance itself doesn't have much in the way of acrobatics at all. The conceptual basis of the piece is its most important part, and is not to be overshadowed by anything else. Gregersen doesn't play with the rope ball in the manner of Chaplin's *Great Dictator*, but interacts with it almost as if it was his partner. Unlike the object handlers in traditional circus, in the end he completely destroys the ball.

Er du os? explores the dialogue with 'the others', and, even though the concept is not so innovative, Gregersen holds the audience's attention through the whole hour, creating a warm and memorable experience.

Gregersen took the risk of mirroring the audiences, creating a strong theatrical forcefield where everything is amplified and nothing can be hidden. The interaction with the audience is one of the main elements of the performance's conceptual underpinning, but Gregersen didn't explore it thoroughly. Apart from the aforementioned rocking of the rope ball, all the

attempts to actively engage the audience failed flat. Even though Gregersen carefully thought out the whole performance with the help of 'outside eyes', including various dramaturgs, the low interactive quality of the performance owes a lot to the performer's unwillingness to take the risk of establishing a deeper relationship with the audience.

The audience watching *#File_Tone* by Subliminati Corporation, an international contemporary circus company based in France, held hands and sang with the performers in a venue that didn't have any arena-like features. But a lot of them probably had the feeling that the performers were underestimating their intelligence and knowledge about the political issues currently affecting our world.

Subliminati's artists possess skills which are technically almost perfect, and which include very engaging beat-boxing and superb hat manipulation. Their performance consists of two parts, the first one dealing with immigration and world politics, and the second one exploring the role of women in contemporary society. Political issues aren't something that Subliminati deal with thoroughly enough; they are not like a serious political theatre that confronts the audience with sharp questions to think of or discuss for hours after the performance. The figures of President Obama, Carla Bruni and Fidel Castro are introduced only as the targets of superficial mockery. Consequently, the whole interaction with the audience is of low quality. Subliminati had a great opportunity to explore political issues, but didn't have the courage to leap more boldly over the border of political correctness.

They partly redeemed themselves in the second part of the performance. It was more poetical, more poignant and more disturbing. The nightmarish scene where a performer, dressed as a woman, shows his private parts, and has a smile forced by an elastic contraption attached to his head, is the peak of Subliminati's risk taking. They walked on the edge of vulgarity and created a powerful image that wasn't only a stark comment on the objectification of women.



GLiMT – Er du Os? © Adam Lehn

The taboo of nudity is also explored in *Tragedie Grecque*, a performance by La Meute, a French contemporary circus company whose members are fresh out of circus school. In it the six performers use only towels to cover their private parts as they fly through the air.

Tragedie Grecque is set in a difficult venue – a large atrium within a student dormitory without a clear demarcation of the place of performance. The audience is seated on the grass. La Meute's performance is coloured by their playful spirit: they perform stunts, act as if they can barely do them, and seem to be improvising a lot and having plenty of fun. The leitmotif of the performance is the acrobats' attitude to failure and danger, as all of the time they keep entertaining the audience by pretending they fear to do their stunts.

La Meute's performance is a work in progress. The loose dramaturgy is hidden by their charm and youthfulness. To take *Tragedie Grecque* to another level La Meute will have to leave their youthful carelessness behind and reach for more engaging conceptual material as it emerges from thorough artistic exploration.

La Meute and *Un loup pour l'homme* have a few things in common. First, they have wolves in their names. The first name means "pack of wolves" while the second is a part of the popular latin proverb "a man is a wolf to (his fellow) man". Their shows are both focused on the body and draw heavily from circus tradition, but the similarities stop there. While La Meute's performance is playful and simple, *Face Nord* is melancholic and sometimes even painful, leading the audience to experience an array of emotions. La Meute are at the beginning of their artistic journey, unaware of the risks they will have to undertake to develop further. *Un loup pour l'homme*, on the other hand, have reached artistic maturity and are able to explore the unknown boldly, pushing their bodies and creativity to the limit. They know the price is high, but they know it's worth it.

Copenhagen's Ny Cirkus Festival: an Artistic Event of European Importance

VALENTIN TODOROV

The Ny Cirkus Festival, held in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, was an unforgettable and captivating art event, important not just for Scandinavia's cultural life but for the whole of Europe. Founded in 2005 and programmed biennially, Ny Cirkus Festival is a relatively new event dedicated entirely to contemporary circus and organised by the Copenhagen International Theatre (directed by Trevor Davies and Katrien Verwilt). Over the past 30 years, the Copenhagen International Theatre has been the main organiser and promoter of over 50 festivals in various performance arts, but the Ny Cirkus Festival is the first to concentrate on presenting the emergent and avant-garde trends of contemporary circus.

The festival is funded by the Danish National Arts Council, Copenhagen Municipality, the Scandinavian Performance Arts Council, and France's Institut Français, and was organised in partnership with the seven Copenhagen theatres where the shows were performed. For seventeen days, in halls filled to capacity, nine companies performed 32 shows in the field of contemporary circus – an artform which is also called new circus by some critics.

The festival showcased breathtaking acrobatic performances by various European companies – all of them using the excellent traditions of conventional circus as a stepping stone at the same time as they revealed elements of circus' modern development.

Фестивалът на новия цирк в Копенхаген – арт събитие с европейско значение

VALENTIN TODOROV

Провелият се от 6.08. до 22.08.2012 г. в датската столица Копенхаген Фестивал на новия цирк (Ny Circus Festival) беше едно запомнящо се и интригуващо арт събитие не само за културния живот на Скандинавия, но и за цяла Европа. Ny Circus Festival 2012 е млад фестивал (организира се от 2005 г.), посветен изцяло на съвременното цирково изкуство, а негов организатор е базираният в датската столица Копенхагенски международен театър (Copenhagen International Theatre), ръководен от Тревър Дейвис и Катрин Вирвелт.

Копенхагенският международен театър е основен организатор и промоутър през последните 30 години на над 50 различни арт фестивала в областта на различните изпълнителски изкуства, а от 2005 г. организира и Фестивал на новия цирк, представящ новите и авангардни тенденции в това сравнително младо изкуство – цирка.

Организираният от Копенхагенския международен театър цирков фестивал беше подкрепен финансово от Датския национален съвет по изкуствата, от община Копенхаген, както и от Скандинавския съвет по изпълнителски изкуства и френския Institut Français, в партньорство със седем театъра от датската столица, където се изиграха спектаклите в рамките на фестивала.

В продължение на 17 дни, 9 арт трупи (артисти) представиха пред пълни зали 32 представления в

Each of the inspirational performances delivered by Gandini Juggling, Circ'ombelico, Jeanne Mordoj/Cie Bal, GLiMT, Subliminati Corporation, La Meute, Un loup pour l'homme, Cikaros & TinCanCompany, and Karl Stets left a lasting impression in the souls of young and old fans of the circus genre alike.

The performers were infectious in their dedication and provocative energy, immersing us in genres ranging from drama to tragicomedy, and making use of techniques including the most accomplished acrobatics and elements of understated pantomime.

Even though it lacks the pomp of its traditional ancestor, contemporary circus is no less artistic and carries rich undertones. The Copenhagen festival showed the different faces of new circus and was a meeting-point for various European artists to discover the latest aesthetic trends developing in their artform.

The grateful Danish audience were delighted by a series of contemporary circus performances that included extravaganzas of music and dance, brave acrobatic pieces filled with leaps and somersaults, and many other types of virtuoso performance that combined complex technical abilities with elements drawn from traditional circus, cabaret, theatre, etcetera.

Some of the shows, such as GLiMT's *Er du os?*, were stunning in their circus neo-aesthetics, while others, such as that of the French troupe La Meute, took a different approach by weaving the aesthetics of acrobatic precision and an effective use of music into an inventive interpretation of historic symbols.

Even though all the companies and artists chose to use simple costumes and spare sets, all of the shows offered the spectators a truly genuine circus experience where wholeheartedly committed and talented young performers combined music, acrobatics, dramatic performance and graceful circus aesthetics.

Events such as Copenhagen's Ny Cirkus Festival are of paramount importance in developing a

областта на съвременния, наричан още от критиците, нов цирк.

На сцената на фестивала, който се провежда на всеки две години в Копенхаген (следващото му издание е през 2014 г.), бяха представени от различни европейски арт трупи спиращи дъха акробатични спектакли, които, стъпвайки на отличните традиции на традиционния цирк, разкриха пред публиката и елементи от модерната версия на това изкуство.

Всяко едно от вдъхновяващите представления на Gandini Juggling, Circ'ombelico, Jeanne Mordoj/Cie Bal, GLiMT, на Subliminati Corporation, на La Meute, на Un loup pour l'homme, както и на Cikaros & TinCanCompany и на Karl Stets, оставиха сериозна диря в душите на малки и големи почитатели на цирковия жанр.

Артистите заразяваха със своята отдаденост и провокация, която ни потапяше в различни жанрове – от драмата до трагикомедията, от висотата на акробатичната естетика до дискретното присъствие на пантомимата.

Макар и лишен от пищността на традиционния цирк, проявленията на днешния, съвременен цирк, са не по-малко артистични и богати на внушения. Фестивалът в Копенхаген показва различните лица на новия цирк и беше мястото, където различни като творчески натюрел трупи от Европа "свериха своите часовници" за тенденциите в това изкуство днес.

Пред очите на благодарната датска публика се редяха модерни циркови представления, включващи феерия от звуци, танц, смели решения в областта на акробатичното изкуство - добре дозиран баланс от подскоци и превъртания, виртуозност при изпълнението на сложни фигури и съчетания от традиционния цирк, микс от кабаре и театър и т.н.

Някои от спектаклите поразяваха с цирковата неоестетика (например *Er du os?* на GLiMT), други пък бяха заложили на акробатично-естетическата прецизност и екстравагантното интерпретиране на познати символи от древността, в които имаше въздействаща музика и циркова магия във всеки номер (като френската трупа La Meute, например).

more sophisticated understanding of circus arts and in adapting audience tastes to the contemporary aesthetics of the artform. Ny Cirkus Festival offered a stylish and eclectic display of true circus art of incredible quality and depth, and was received equally well by both children and adults. The festival was wonderfully successful in its mission to be an ambassador for contemporary circus – an artform which is coming to occupy ever greater areas.

Ny Cirkus Festival has enriched contemporary circus art

Contemporary circus has many forms and characteristics: elements of traditional (or classic) circus, music, dance, sports, drama, pantomime, etcetera.

This year's edition of the Ny Cirkus Festival, held in August in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, complemented and enriched my understanding, as a journalist writing about the arts, of the modern dimensions of contemporary circus. Below, in the form of a brief critical review, I will look at and highlight some of the most aesthetically remarkable and effective shows performed during the Ny Cirkus Festival.

During the festival, my first encounter with the artform known as contemporary circus was La Meute's *Tragédie Grecque*, an impressive show that for me was one of the most memorable moments from the festival.

Six young and talented artists with a sophisticated sense of humour demonstrated that human virtuosity has no limits. Complicated acrobatic tricks and striking performances were used in a fascinating investigation of ancient myths, and the attendant crowd, which had come to see the La Meute boys on an open-air stage in Tietgenkollegiet, were kept glued to their seats. La Meute's performance consisted of an impressive and eclectic range of acrobatics that included dangerous tricks familiar from traditional circus. It used the tools of contemporary circus to tell us about the world around us; it was tragicomic, but real, as our lives are too.

Макар и всяка една от тези трупи/артисти да беше заложила на семпли костюми и пестелива сценография, всеки един от спектаклите предложи на зрителите 100 % истинско цирково шоу, съчетано с музика, акробатика, драматични изпълнения, пластична циркова естетика, осъществени от всеотдайни и талантливи млади изпълнители.

Значението на арт форуми като Фестивала на новия цирк в Копенхаген за развитието на това магическо изкуство - цирка, е огромно за днешното разбиране на цирка и за възпитанието на зрителските вкусове в по-модерната версия на това изкуство.

Фестивалът на новия цирк в Копенхаген предложи през месец август т.г. едно стилово еkleктично, но невероятно като изпълнение и дълбочина истинско цирково изкуство, което се гледа еднакво добре, както от деца, така и от възрастни.

Ny Circus Festival 2012 в Копенхаген изпълни по един прекрасен начин мисията си да бъде медиатор на модерния цирк, който заема все повече територии в това сравнително ново изкуство.

Ny Circus Festival обогати съвременното цирково изкуство

Съвременното цирково изкуство има много форми и проявления – елементи на традиционен(класически) цирк, музика, театър, танц, спорт, драма, пантомима и др.

Тазгодишното издание на Фестивала на новия цирк, провел се през месец август в датската столица Копенхаген, допълни и обогати с нови и интересни спектакли разбирането ми (като пишец за изкуство журналист) за модерните измерения на съвременния цирк като изкуство.

Тук, по-долу, в своя кратък критически преглед, ще разгледам и открия някои от най-забележителните в естетическо отношение, но и като степен на въздействие, спектакли, изиграни в рамките на копенхагенския Фестивал на новия цирк.

Първата ми среща по време на фестивала с арт форма на т.нар.нов цирк беше "Tragedie Grecque" by La Meute "Гръцката трагедия" - спектакъл, представен по един впечатляващ начин от френската циркова

The eclectic images in the show, created with a marked emphasis on an ancient Greek aesthetic, truly entertained the audience, whisking them away to a world that was just as illusory as it was real, where variety and change became a source of hope.

It was as though the group's six performers used their bodies to physically communicate with the audience whenever they performed impressive and difficult to execute tricks. Each performance of *Tragédie Grecque* was like an outstretched hand to the audience; the mood it created was infectious.

The energetic and tireless bodies of the La Meute sextet, constantly moving in excellent coordination before our eyes, were actually a means to communicate – to have a dialogue – with an audience who wouldn't stop applauding.

A very good show combining the magic of street arts and traditional circus, and an excellent example of a potential new direction for the development of contemporary circus.

#File_Tone by Subliminati Corporation

#File_Tone is an ambiguous show by Subliminati Corporation, a company based in France.

The company is in fact international, comprising five performers from different countries (France, Italy, Finland and Spain) who found themselves united by their passion for the 21st Century manifestation of circus – an artform which is in fact a synthesis of different arts, among them classic circus, theatre, dance, music, pantomime, and a number of sports.

I call this show ambiguous because it evoked mixed feelings in me as a spectator.

Bordering on the farcical and grotesque, with elements of political cabaret and burlesque, *#File_Tone* tries to engage the audience on various subjects: the place of women in today's society, politicians and their machinations, a united Europe, immigration, and how uncertain the world in which we live is.

The stand-out performance was by the Catalanian Jordi Querol, who skilfully embodied the parts of both a foul-mouthed beatboxer and one of

трупа La Meute, беше един от запомнящите се моменти на Фестивала на новия цирк в Копенхаген.

Шест млади и талантиливи артисти с изискано чувство за хумор показаха на публиката, че няма лимити за човешката виртуозност. Сложни акробатични номера, ефектни изпълнения в една интересна интерпретация на митове от древността - това за мен беше достатъчен аргумент за приковаване вниманието на публиката, дошла да види на открита сцена в Tietgenkollegiet момчетата от La Meute.

Изпълнението на артистите от La Meute беше ефектна, макар и еkleктична акробатика, включваща и опасни номера, характерни за традиционния цирк, и беше един разказ с инструментариума на модерния цирк, за това което е около нас – тъжно-смешно, но истинско, каквото е и самият ни живот.

Еkleктичните образи на шоуто, изградено подчертано в древногръцки стил, искрено забавляваха зрителите, като ги пренесоха в един колкото илюзорен, толкова и реален свят, където многообразието е извор на надежда.

Шестимата от групата сякаш комуникираха "физически" с публиката с телата си, с ефектните и нелеки за изпълнение гегове. Всяко едно от изпълненията на La Meute беше и протегната ръка към публиката, а настроението беше заразяващо.

Енергичните и неуморими тела на шесторката от La Meute, които постоянно бяха в отлично координирани движения пред очите ни, всъщност беше средството за комуникация, за "диалог" с публиката, която безкрайно ги аплодираше.

Много добър спектакъл, съчетал магията на уличното изкуство и традиционния цирк, показващ една възможна посока на развитие на днешното цирково изкуство.

"#File_Tone" by Subliminati Corporation

#File_Tone е един нееднозначен спектакъл на базираната във Франция трупа Subliminati Corporation, който също беше част от афиша на Фестивала на новия цирк в Копенхаген.

France's icons – Carla Bruni. His multi-layered performance is key to a politically tinged circus show which is, for me at least, more than just an exercise in the theatrical grotesque – rather it is contemporary circus with an added pinch of salt.

After all, the circus of the 21st Century is not simply a display of physical virtuosity or trained exotic animals. It is much more than that, and this show by Mikel Ayala, Jordi Querol, Lorenzo Mastropietro, Mael Tebib, and Joona Kaakinen is compelling proof.

***Er du os?* by GLiMT**

Er du os?, the one-man show by the established Danish circus artist Lars Gregersen, who works under the company name GLiMT, had five performances at Copenhagen Music Theatre. For me, Gregersen's piece set itself and its audience the greatest challenge out of all the performances at the festival.

It begins with one man, a 222-metre long rope, and a strong sense of being alone in the universe – a feeling of isolation that soon evaporates as the audience realises that this man is not actually alone in his confusing world...

Er du os? is a truly impressive show and an excellent demonstration of contemporary circus, unifying various performance disciplines into an original poem about one man and his world. The rope, rolled into a massive ball on which the show's hero has 'landed', is his universe – the one he has never left and knows well. However, when the man climbs down from the ball, and moves into the unknown he realises that... he is not alone.

This is a show with a complex message; it is more concerned with raising deep, philosophical questions than in entertaining its audience, and is, in my opinion, even sad at times. Without presuming to judge the world around him, Lars Gregersen provoked the audience with his performance and made us question the meaning of our existence. He is a wonderful circus performer and acrobat, graceful and expressive, and carries the entire one-hour show on his shoulders.

Трупата е интернационална - състои се от петима изпълнители от различни страни (Франция, Италия, Финландия, Испания), които са обединени от страстта си да към модерния еквивалент на цирка на 21-ви век, който всъщност е истинска синергия между различни изкуства, като класически цирк, театър, танц, музика, пантомима, както и завидно количество спорт.

Нарекох този спектакъл нееднозначен, защото той предизвика смесени усещания у мен като зрител. На ръба на фарса и гротеската, с елементи на политическо кабаре и бурлеска, #File_Tone се стреми да говори на зрителя за различни общочовешки теми като мястото на жените в днешния свят, политиците и техните манипулации, обединена Европа, имиграцията, и за това колко несигурен е светът в който живеем.

Сред изпълнителите се откроява каталунецът Жорди Керол, който ловко се превъплъщава в ролята и на циничен beat box изпълнител, и на една от иконите на Франция Карла Бруни.

Неговото многопластово изпълнение е ключово в този политически обагрен цирков спектакъл, който всъщност за мен поне, е повече театрална гротеска, с няколко "щипки сол" съвременен (нов) цирк.

Цирк, защото все пак циркът на 21-век не е просто и само показване на физическа виртуозност с тялото или дресура на екзотични животни. Той е много повече от това, и спектакълът на Микел, Жорди, Лоренцо, Маел и Йоона (това са петимата от Subliminati Corporation) убедително го доказва.

"Er du os?" by GLiMT

На сцената на Копенхагенския музикален театър в датската столица своите пет представления по време на фестивала имаше и моно-спектакълът на утвърдения датски цирков артист Ларс Грегерсен (който е част от GLiMT).

За мен лично, това беше и най-голямото арт предизвикателство сред останалите изяви на фестивала.

Един мъж, едно дълго 222 метра въже и усещането, че си сам във вселената – това чувство малко по-късно се сгромолясва, когато зрителят разбира, че всъщност човек не е сам в този объркан свят.

The music, carefully composed by Henriette Groth, also plays an important part in giving the show its powerful impact. At the end I had the feeling that no one in the audience left *Er du os?* unmoved.

Face Nord by Un loup pour l'homme

Face Nord is a strongly acrobatic show elegantly presented by Un loup pour l'homme, a wonderful quartet of French circus acrobats based in Lille. Their performance raged literally inches from our eyes: the bodies of the four never stopped leaping, flying, falling and climbing, and their constant movements made the audience feel the sweat and the strain of their exertions with every fibre of their bodies.

After the performance, the company explained that their aim in the show is to recreate the emotion that lies within movement – to view movement from a psychological and intellectual angle rather than with a physical perspective.

The company are interested in the close connection between action and direction, as well as in sport as part of the work of a circus performer. I was stunned, as were most of the spectators crowding the hall, by what the four acrobats were doing with their bodies as they skirted the laws of physics and challenged gravity. The entire *Face Nord* show was conceived and devised by Un loup pour l'homme as a game.

The four performers – Frédéric Arsenault, Alexandre Fray, Mika Lafforgue and Sergi Parés – deservedly won an ovation from the audience – not just for their playful fight against the gravitational limits placed on the human body, but also for the freedom with which their bodies communicated with the audience. Face Nord created a difficult but understandable language for the audience, a synthesis of fiction and reality, a kind of game played by grown-up children.

I can still see the intertwining bodies of Frédéric, Alexandre, Mika and Sergi, shaping bridges and other sculptural compositions to paint a picture of the beautiful architecture of the human body. Their bodies created poetic forms using the techniques of contemporary circus – an art where the body has its own fundamental language.

“Er du os?” е един наистина впечатляващ спектакъл, отлична илюстрация на съвременния цирк, обединяващ в едно различни изпълнителски изкуства, една своеобразна поетика на човека и неговата вселена.

Навитото на огромно кълбо върже, върху което е “кацнал” героя на спектакъла, е неговата вселена – тази, от която той не се е отделил и която той познава добре. Мъжът обаче слиза от кълбото и мръдва настрани в непознатото и разбира че...не е сам.

Сложен с посланията си спектакъл, който поставя повече дълбоки и философски въпроси, отколкото да забавлява публиката, дори по моя скромна оценка, на моменти тъжен.

Без да влиза в ролята на съдия на света около себе си, Ларс Грегерсен провокира аудиторията със своята игра и ни кара да си зададем въпросите за смисъла на съществуването ни.

Публиката на този спектакъл също има своя активна роля в представлението на GLiMT - тя си партнира с героя на Ларс Грегерсен, който е един прекрасен цирков актьор (както и акробат), пластичен и експресивен и който изнася целия едновременно спектакъл на раменете си.

За силата на въздействие на спектакъла значителна роля изиграва и музиката, внимателно подбрана от Хенриете Грот.

След края на спектакъла, в мен остана усещането, че никой от зрителите не си тръгна равнодушен от “Er du os?” ...

Face Nord by Un loup pour l'homme

Face Nord пък е едно истинско акробатично шоу, елегантно поднесено от прекрасната четворка френски циркови акробати от гр.Лил, където е базирана тяхната циркова компания Un loup pour l'homme.

Шоу то на френския квартет се вихри буквално на сантиметри от очите ни – телата на четиримата не спират да скачат, да се въртят, летят, падат и катерят.

Една безкрайна динамика от която зрителят с всички фибри на тялото си усеща тежкото дишане на четиримата акробати, чиято пот капе на педя разстояние от него.



Cie Un Loup pour l'homme – Face Nord © Milan Szytura

And yet I think that, despite its strong visuals, *Face Nord* should be viewed not just with the eyes, but also with the heart and soul, which will not be left untouched. The main word going around my head during the performance was 'freedom'.

Pavlovs Hunde Cabaret by Cikaros & TinCan Company

In my short critical review of the shows and companies that took part in Ny Cirkus Festival, I cannot fail to also mention the refreshing presence of an event that won great success with audiences: the *Pavlovs Hunde* cabaret by Cikaros & TinCan Company.

It played only for two nights, the performances taking place in the Den Gra Hal concert hall (packed to the rafters) in the legendary so-called free town of Christiania (which is a sort of small autonomous part of the Copenhagen Municipality).

Самите актьори споделиха след представлението, че в спектакъла са търсили да пресъздадат емоцията на движението, погледнато от неговия по-скоро психологически и интелектуален ъгъл, отколкото физически разрез.

Актьорите се интересуват от тясната връзка между действието като цел и посока, както и от спорта като елемент от работата на цирковия актьор-акробат.

Аз, както и повечето препълнили залата зрители, бях замаян от това, което правеха с телата си четиримата акробати, движейки на ръба на законите на физиката и отправяйки предизвикателство към гравитацията.

Целият спектакъл *Face Nord* е замислен като една игра – такъв е и концептуалния замисъл на авторите от *Un Loup pour l'homme*, които сами са автори и продуценти на шоуто.

Фредерик, Александър, Мика и Серж (четиримата от *Face Nord*) съвсем заслужено спечелиха зрителските овации, но само заради надпреварата с гравитационните лимити на човешкото тяло, но и заради свободата с която техните тела комуникираха с публиката. Един труден, но и разбираем от публиката език, един динтеж от фикция и реалност, една честна игра, изпълнявана от вече пораснали деца.

Още са пред очите ми вплетените тела на Фредерик, Александър, Мика и Серж, оформящи мостове и други артистични скулптурни композиции, рисуващи пред очите ни една красива архитектура на човешкото тяло. Тела, създаващи поетични форми със средствата на новия, съвременен цирк, в който изразяването чрез "езика" на тялото е основен фундамент.

И все пак, смятам, че въпреки силната си визуална част, *Face Nord* се гледа не само с очите, но и с душата и сърцето, които не остават празни от този стилин спектакъл, а основната дума, която се въртеше в съзнанието ми по време на представлението беше свобода.

Кабарето "Pavlovs Hunde" by "Cikaros & TinCan Company"

В своя кратък критически преглед на спектаклите и участващите в Ny Circus Festival трупи, не мога да не отбележа и свежото присъствие в афиша на това арт

**UNPACK
THE
ARTS**

Pavlovs Hunde is a true theatrical extravaganza, performed by Danish circus artists and international guests, and featuring classic cabaret, contemporary circus (with the occasional nod to its traditional roots), live music, complex acrobatics, and elements of slapstick and strange but captivating sleight of hand. Over an hour and a half, 13 Danish circus artists and their foreign colleagues took turns in entertaining the audience – conjuring the spirit of neo-classic cabaret, but without leaving out traditional circus techniques such as intricate juggling, slapstick and sleight of hand – all presented with a great sense of fun.

Even though some of the performers made the occasional error – which is rare in the world of circus – on the whole the show was performed in an extremely entertaining and enjoyable format, as evidenced by a crowd which, with sustained applause, brought the performers back to the stage for several curtain calls.

The show reached new heights in its genre, even though cabaret has been slightly overlooked by today's circus. Among the performers I would like to highlight the extremely graceful Danish circus artist Signe Løve Anderskov for his undeniably powerful stage presence. In addition to making the audience burst into laughter with his slapstick numbers, he also stood out as an excellent tightrope walker during his flawless crossing of a long wire to the accompaniment of well-chosen music.

The music in any cabaret is of key significance, and in *Pavlovs Hunde* the live music of the LUR duo was perfectly chosen, stylishly complementing the performers as they skipped along from number to number.

събитие, на пожъналия голям зрителски успех кабаретен спектакъл "Pavlovs Hunde" на компанията "Cikaros & TinCan Company".

Той се игра пред публика само две вечери в рамките на фестивала в препълнената до краен предел концертна зала Den Gra Hal в легендарния, т.нар. свободен град Кристиания (free town of Christiania), който е нещо като обособена малка автономна част от община Копенхаген.

"Pavlovs Hunde" беше една истинска феерия от класическо кабаре, съвременен цирк, с някои препратки към традиционния такъв, музика на живо, сложни акробатика, елементи на клоунада и странни, но завладяващи фокуси от датски и гостуващи циркови артисти.

В продължение на един час и половина на сцената се "въртят" 13 датски циркови артисти и техни чуждестранни колеги, които забавляваха екзалтираната публика в духа на неокласическото кабаре, без да подминават и традиционни циркови техники като сложно жонглиране, представени по забавен начин фокуси и клоунада.

Въпреки, че някои от участниците в това кабаретно шоу допуснаха отделни грешки, които се са рядкост в света на цирка, като цяло представлението беше представено по един изключително забавен и приятен за зрителите начин, които неколкократно, с продължителни ръкопляскания, изкараха отново на цирковата арена участниците в шоуто. А то беше на една съвременна висота, въпреки че жанрът кабаре в днешния цирк е малко позабравен.

С безспорно силното си сценично присъствие бих открил силно пластичния датски цирков артист Signe Løve Anderskov, който освен, че размиваше публиката с близки до клоунадата номера, се проявя и като отличен въжеиграч, който измина безпогрешно едно дълго като разстояние въже под звуците на добре подбрана за фон музика. Музиката в едно кабаре е от ключово значение. Така беше и в "Pavlovs Hunde", където музиката на живо на дуото "LUR" беше отлично подбрана и стилово допълваше актьорите, които се справяха много добре, "прескачайки" от номер в номер.

What is the reach of new circus aesthetics?

New (contemporary) circus

ZALA DOBOVŠEK

Traditional circus experienced an important conceptual rebirth in the 1960s when, in the spirit of avant-garde movement, it mixed elements of street arts and forms of performance that directly addressed their audiences with an (anti-)ideological attitude and a determination to decommercialise circus disciplines. It thus completely refused the use of animals, which at the time were considered a trademark of circus and the principal source of its entertainment and fascination.

Instead of training animals, the performers focused on the challenge of what a man might do with a man, and on the establishment of 'creative competition' in the fields of acrobatic skill and physical inventiveness. Human ability became the focal point of the artform, whilst performances moved from the circus ring (a venue which, by providing good visibility for the entire audience, eradicated the social boundaries between spectators) to ordinary stages or the street. Where traditional circus relied on a touch of sensationalism to hold its shows together and kept the dramaturgy of its individual acts separate, new or contemporary circus cultivated more complex narratives. This development of the artform was most pronounced in countries that have reputable circus schools, such as France (where today there are around 250-300 new contemporary circus shows each year), Canada, Belgium, Spain, Sweden and the UK. At present the pedagogy and aesthetics of contemporary circus is also gradually spreading to Eastern

Kam vse se seže estetika novega cirkusa?

Novi (sodobni) cirkus

ZALA DOBOVŠEK

NY CIRKUS FESTIVAL 2012

6. – 22. August, Copenhagen

Tradicionalni cirkus je pomemben idejni preporod doživel v 60-letih prejšnjega stoletja, ko je v duhu avantagardnega gibanja medsebojno premešal elemente ulične umetnosti, neposrednega nagovarjanja občinstva, (proti)ideološkega naboja in dekomercializacije cirkuških disciplin ter se tako rekoč popolnoma odrekel navzočnosti živali, ki so veljale za njegov zaščitni znak in temeljno izvedbeno substanco za zabavo in fascinacijo.

Namesto dresiranja živali se je fokus izvajalcev raje usmeril v izzive, kaj lahko človek naredi s človekom, in v vzpostavitvijo »kreativnega tekmovalja« v akrobatskih veščinah in telesni iznajdljivosti. Center je torej postala izključno človeška sposobnost, prizorišča pa so se iz kulturnih ovalnih aren (ki so zaradi dobre celostne vidljivosti sočasno brisale tudi družbene meje med statusnimi položaji gledalcev) prenesla v običajne odre ali na ulico. Medtem ko je klasično cirkuško dogajanje podpirala nota senzacionalnosti, dramaturgija posameznih točk pa je bila medsebojno neodvisna (vsebinska avtonomnost živali, akrobatov, klovnov, žonglerjev...), se v novem, sodobnem cirkusu goji preferenca po kompleksnejši narativnosti in zaporedju prizorov, ki jih je načeloma težka medsebojno permutirati. Ta uprizoritveni žanr se je najprodorneje razvijal v državah, ki imajo ugledne cirkuške šole; v Franciji (letno ustvarijo med 250 in 300 uprizoritev sodobnega cirkusa), Kanadi, Belgiji, Španiji, Švedski in Veliki Britaniji, postopoma pa se izobraževanje, razumevanje in dostopnost širijo



La Meute ©Thomas Seest

Europe (the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, etcetera).

As an artist working in theatre, I find the field of new circus relevant and interesting for its artists' characteristic tendency of avoiding collaboration with directors: the performers are the authors of their work, only occasionally consulting outside eyes or dramaturges. Can a handful of objective viewpoints be enough to provide a performance with overall coherence? Why do performers find it so difficult to adapt to a director's ideas and instead prefer to risk potential dramaturgical imperfection?

Between circus, contemporary dance, performance and physical theatre

It is impossible, perhaps even unnecessary, to position new (contemporary) circus as a pure and strictly defined performance discipline. This doesn't make it any less intriguing. Today, the broad field of contemporary circus aesthetics seems to constantly flirt with the genres of contemporary dance, performance and physical theatre, as well as focusing inwards on the many

tudi v vzhodno Evropo (Češka, Hrvaška, Madžarska ...).

Kot praktični soustvarjalci v gledališču, se mi zdi pomembno, še bolj pa izjemno zanimivo dejstvo, da je v polju novega cirkusa prisotna tendenca po avtorskih delih (izvajalci = avtorji), kjer se tako rekoč izogiba sodelovanju z režiserjem, le priložnostno se ekipa posvetuje z zunanjimi svetovalci ali dramaturgi. Je nekaj občasnih objektivnih vpogledov dovolj za celostno kompaktnost uprizoritve? Zakaj se izvajalci tako težko »podrejajo« idejam režiserja in namesto tega raje »tvegajo« morebitno dramaturško nepopolnost?

Med cirkusom, sodobnim plesom, performansom in fizičnim gledališčem

Umestitev novega (sodobnega) cirkusa v okvir neke čiste, definirane uprizoritvene panoge je seveda nemogoče, mogoče celo nepotrebno. A zato nič manj intrigantno. Dandanes se zdi, da se široko polje poetik sodobnega cirkusa neprestano dotika raznorodnih sfere sodobnega plesa, performansa in fizičnega gledališča ter njihovega

facets of its own complex existence. In doing so, new circus casts a fresh eye on these artforms – and on itself. It wants to create channels of communication between forms – sometimes by drawing a distinct line, at other times by blurring the lines between genres. When blurring the lines, the circus performance exists as though surrounded by a subtle, permeable membrane, its content and form related to all that surrounds it. It seems that the more contemporary circus strives to distance itself from traditional (expected) circus contexts, the more it strives to point out their absence (or intentional shortage) and make a (subversive) comment.

Some perceive contemporary circus in the aesthetics of the Canadian Cirque du Soleil or the Scandinavian Circus Cirkör (to mention only two paradigmatic groups known to broader audiences). Rather than stimulate the spectator's mind, these companies employ a chain of sensational scenes, sumptuous costumes, euphoric music, spectacle and appealing visual design to create a roller-coaster of emotions. But for many others, mainly younger generations, circus means something completely different – something considerably more complex and extremely elusive. Between August 6th and 22nd, the Ny Cirkus Festival took place in Copenhagen. It tried to include in its programme the broadest possible palette of contemporary circus aesthetics, and in doing so gave the impression that this genre (deliberately or unintentionally) is inevitably entwined with performance, traditional circus, contemporary dance and physical theatre practices. Today, circus, together with other artistic movements, has adopted a fragmented style of performance in order to comment on issues of contemporary (private and collective) migration; to create work resisting unambiguous or one-dimensional interpretations; and to connect contemporary circus to a broader global perspective which often includes political, ecological and historical elements. Rather than merely exploit the spectator's pleasure or the emotional shock brought by circus' (life-) threatening yet very attractive movements and skills, practitioners increasingly want to inspire a more profound reflection on the topics they present. And although some performances by

kompleksnega sožitja. Ob tem novi cirkus preigrava njih (in sebe), želi z njimi komunicirati – včasih tako, da se od njih precej loči, spet drugač, da se z njimi stopi in dokončno zabriše medsebojne žanrske ločnice. Takrat celota (predstava) lahko navzven zaživi kot nekakšna subtilna membrana, ki pa je v svoji vsebini in formi vendarle čvrsto speta z različnimi gledališkimi smermi. In zdi se, da bolj ko se sodobni cirkus želi oddaljiti od nekih klasičnih (pričakovanih) cirkuških okvirov, bolj jih v njihovi odsotnosti (oziroma namernemu primanjkljaju) želi načrtno poudariti, jim vnesti (subverzivni) komentar.

Nekateri sodobni cirkus vidijo v estetiki kanadskega Cirkusa du Soleil ali skandinavskega Cirkusa Cirkörja (če omenimo dve, paradigmatični, širšemu občinstvu poznani skupini), ki posegata po verižno senzacionalnih prizorih, razkošnih kostumih, evforični glasbi, spektakularnosti in vabljivi celostni vizualni podobi ter predvsem v silovitih emocijah, manj pa gledalčevi razumski investiciji. Mnogim, zlasti mlajšim, vznikajočim generacijam, pa ta strokovni termin predstavlja nekaj popolnoma drugega, še posebej pa bolj kompleksnega in vsebinsko neulovljivega. V Kopenhagnu je med 6. in 22. avgustom potekal mednarodni festival *Novi cirkus (Ny Cirkus Festival København)* – njegova različica *Festival novog cirkusa* bo novembra potekala tudi v Zagrebu –, ki je v programsko shemo poskušal zajeti čim širšo paleto sodobnih cirkuških poetik, ki so puščale sklepni pečat, da je tovrstni žanr (z zavestnimi ali pa nehotenimi nastavki) neizogibno prepleten s praksami performansa, klasičnega cirkusa, sodobnega plesa in fizičnega gledališča. Cirkus se je danes tako skupaj z ostalimi umetniškimi smermi usidral na stilno razdrobljenih, »nedefiniranih« tleh, ki želijo tako ali drugače komentirati problematiko sodobne (zasebne in kolektivne) disperznosti, se izogibati trdnim in enosmernim interpretacijam, pojem sodobnega cirkusa pa reflektirati skozi širši globalni vidik, kar v predstave pogosto prinaša tudi politične, ekološke in zgodovinske konotacije. V gledalcu vse bolj iščejo globlji razmislek o podanih vsebinah, ne pa le izkoriščanje opazovalnega užitka in čustvene pretresenosti, ki ga vzbujajo včasih ekstremno (živiljenjsko) nevarni, a obenem tako zelo privlačni gibalni postopki. In četudi so

younger artists might be based on pure physical strength, presenting an uninterrupted sequence of movement skills without any visual or verbal interventions, they nonetheless constantly explore, dissect, break down their disciplines (whether acrobatics, juggling, or beat-boxing) and add to them new semiotic layers.

However, I find it surprising that despite its extreme openness in terms of content and structure, and in spite of its liberal spirit, contemporary circus still needs to confront such taboos as nudity, injury and death. Somewhere at a 'subconscious' level, new circus principles seem to rest on the sensationalism of a traditional circus, which, at the same time as it provoked its audiences with dangerous techniques, 'dehumanised' and mechanised its performers – not only by placing them between human and machine, but also, to some degree, by sexually neutralising them. A long-term consequence of such traditions might still be embedded in contemporary circus, where a naked body still stands out (too much) and imparts a peculiar attraction.

Risks and healing effects

At a certain point, the phenomenon of risk encountered in circus undoubtedly comes very close to the character of contemporary performance. Indeed, in both cases we deal with the intrusion of 'realism', as a risky circus feat can result in serious injuries. It also brings a rush of adrenaline which, I suppose, is a key impulse driving the performer to undertake some extremely dangerous actions – they find it difficult to give them up. It is a mixture of (human) intellect and (animalistic) instinct. There is a known physiological fact that should be brought to attention: people who take risks in a particular (artistic or professional) field do not necessarily act in a similar way in their private lives. It would be interesting therefore to know whether the acrobats who put their lives on a sharp blade of danger also take risks in their private life.

In this context, we should also mention the phenomenon of social circus – a practice established as a specific version of psychodrama, i.e. as a means for an individual to process their

ponekod nastopi mlajših izvajalcev oblikovani kot čista telesna izurjenost in neprekinjeno sosledje gibalnih veščin brez posebnih vizualnih ali besednih intervencij, svojo disciplino (akrobacija, žongliranje, ventrilokvisti) vseskozi raziskujejo, secirajo, razgrajujejo in jim vstavljajo nove pomenske plasti.

Še vedno pa se mi zdi presenetljivo, da se kljub izjemni vsebinski in strukturni odprtosti ter liberalnem duhu, sodobni cirkus še vedno sooča z nekaterimi tabuji, kot so denimo golota, poškodbe in smrt. Zdi se, da se nekje na »nezavedni« ravni novi cirkuški principi, še vedno opirajo na senzacionalnost in spodobnost tradicionalnega cirkusa, ki je morda provociral z nevarnimi tehnikami in megalomanskimi postavitvami, a človeško bitje pri tem precej »dehumaniziral« oziroma mehaniziral - ne le zato, ker ga je vstavil v vmesno polje med človekom in strojem, ampak ker ga je na neki način tudi spolno nevtraliziral oziroma mu spodmikal pretirane seksualne konotacije. Morda je daljnosežna posledica tovrstne tradicije še vedno vpeta v sodobne cirkuške strukture, kjer prikaz golega telesa še vedno (preveč) izstopa in vpeljuje svojevrstno atrakcijo.

Tveganja in zdravilni učinki

Fenomen tveganja, ki ga srečamo v cirkusu, se na določenem mestu brez dvoma zelo približa značaju sodobnega performansa. V obeh primerih gre namreč pogosto za vdor »realizma«, za tvegan poseg v telo ali sprožitev rizičnih poškodb, ki jih lahko povzroči nevarna (akrobatska) akcija. Ob tem pa trčimo tudi v vzporednost adrenalina, ki – predvidevam – pri izvajalcu skrbi za ključni impulz, da posega po nekaterih ekstremno riskantnih izvedbenih dejanjih in se jim le stežka odpove. Gre za nekakšno mešanico (človeškega) intelekta in (animaličnega) instinkta. Pri tem pa je zanimivo omeniti znano psihološko dejstvo, da ljudje, ki tvegajo na določenem (umetniškem, službenem) področju, še ne pomeni, da podobna dejanja izvajajo tudi drugje (v zasebnosti). Bil bi zanimivo vedeti, koliko akrobati, ki nemalokrat svoje življenje postavijo na ostro rezilo nevarnosti, tvegajo tudi sicer v (zasebnem) življenju. V tem kontekstu pa lahko omenimo tudi pojav »socialnega cirkusa«, ki se je ustanovil kot

repressed emotions, psychological wounds and memories. The elements of risk and cooperation inherent in circus may bring young people out of the closed, safe (mental) walls they have built to protect themselves from a past trauma. And, taking this even further, neuroscientists have confirmed that circus activity can cause structural changes in parts of the brain related to skills and coordination. Learning juggling, for example, not only keeps the brain vital but also connects brain cells / axon terminals. Consequently, circus skills might offer a good treatment for multiple sclerosis and other brain degenerative diseases.¹¹ For young people, circus may help them to realise the limiting effects of fear, and, by giving them courage, play a significant role in their personal development. For adults, circus may return them to their childhood, and thereby reconnect them with their own memories.

In Peta Tait's article 'Circus Bodies Defy the Risk of Falling', there are two main threads to consider in the understanding of risk: first, the idea that risk is closely related to freedom, and that adventurous action can also defy and comment on social norms (physical risk is inherently also social risk). Second, freedom and risk as it manifests in circus intersects with a vague perception that circus artists are not quite human – they are something beyond.²² This may often trigger the phenomenon of projection within the spectator – a wish to have the same skill and ability as the performer. The more extreme acts generate a mixture of emotions that range from (uncomfortable) fear to (pleasant) excitement.

Reflection: Subliminati Corporation: #File_Tone

The performance *#File_Tone* by the French troupe Subliminati Corporation, selected for the programme of this year's Ny Cirkus Festival, is first of all notable for its structural fusion of the various performance practices mentioned above. Indeed, its fragmentary sequence of scenes constantly oscillates between contemporary theatre, dance

svojevrsna različica psihodrame, torej z namenom očiščenja posameznikovih potlačenih vsebin, neobdelanih psiholoških ran in spominov. Elementi tveganja in kooperativnosti v cirkusu lahko mlajšo populacijo potisnejo izven njihovih zadržanih, varnih (mentalnih) zidov, s katerimi so se ogradili zaradi doživete travme. In če se podamo še dlje: nevroznanstveniki so prav tako potrdili strukturne spremembe v možganih, ki se navezujejo na veščine in koordinacijo, ki ju terja cirkuško udejstvovanje. Učenje žongliranja, na primer, ne le ohranja možgane izjemno vitalne, ampak tudi medsebojno povezuje možganske celice/končiče. Posledično to pomeni, da je lahko ukvarjanje s cirkuškimi veščinami tudi dober tretma za multiple skleroze in ostale možgansko degenerativne bolezni¹. Neposredno sodelovanje v cirkusu lahko pri mlajših sproži raziskovanje svojih meja strahu in poguma ter pri tem gotovo odigra pomembno vlogo pri osebnotnem razvoju, pri odraslih pa lahko cirkuške veščine popeljejo nazaj v otroštvo, kar spet doprinese določeno mero komunikacije z lastnimi spomini in psihološkim razvojem, napredkom.

V članku *Circus Bodies Defy the Risk of Falling* avtorice Pete Tait zasledimo dve ključni niti v razumevanju tveganja: prvo se nahaja v vrednotenju svobode in tveganja skozi avanturistične akcije, ki hkrati definirajo in komentirajo tudi družbene norme (fizično tveganje je inherentno z družbenimi). Avtoričina druga postavka pa se nanaša na pomembno križanje izvajalske svobode in tveganja, ki pri gledalcu spodbudi nejasno percepcijo, da akrobati niso povsem ljudje, so nekaj čez². V tem momentu lahko pogosto vznikne pojav (gledalčeve) projekcije – želje, da bi tudi sam imel sposobnost tovrstnih veščin. Pri opazovanju ekstremnih točk se pojavi mešanica občutkov in suspenza, ki se preliva med (nelagodnim) strahom in (prijetno) vznemirjenostjo.

1. Web source: <http://www.rickshawcircus.com/blog/what-is-rickshaw-circus/social-circus>
2. Tait, Peta, 'Circus Bodies Defy the Risk of Falling' (La Trobe University, 2007)

1. Spletni vir: <http://www.rickshawcircus.com/blog/what-is-rickshaw-circus/social-circus/>
2. Tait, Peta: *Circus Bodies Defy the Risk of Falling.*, La Trobe University. Toronto, 2007



Tablecollectif

and circus disciplines. We not only witness a complex network of performing styles but also experimentation with music, sounds and voices. *#File_Tone* is a distinct contemporary combination of various performance styles which, in its subtext, also expresses a particular view on migration and certain aspects of globalisation and world politics. The performers – Mikel Ayala, Jordi Querol, Lorenzo Mastropietro, Mael Tebibi and Yeojin Yun – create numerous allusions and connotations whilst critically revisiting several topical issues – gender, nationality, politics, and the influence of history.

Subliminati Corporation, possessed of absolute acrobatic ability, a strong sense of humour, and a natural ability to flirt with their audience, may instantly (and sometimes in an extremely poetic style) switch to illustrations of violence, torture, humiliation, and the dehumanisation of immigrants. The ethnic composition of the company's performers isn't a coincidence; each of them, just by being present on stage, expresses a private national (cultural) identity. The structural line of the show is not only evident in the performance as a whole but also within individual scenes where a typically 'idyllic' and innocent

Refleksija: Subliminati Corporation: #File_Tone

Uprizoritev *#File_Tone* francoske skupine Subliminati Corporation, ki se je uvrstila tudi v program letošnjega Ny Cirkus Festivala, je na prvem mestu zaznamovala strukturalna fuzija različnih performativnih praks, ki sem jih omenjala uvodoma. Fragmentarno sosledje predstave namreč neprestano niha med sodobnim gledališčem, plesom in vnosi cirkuških disciplin. Pred nami se razpre zapletena mreža ne le izvajalskih stilov, ampak tudi eksperimentiranja z glasbo, zvoki in glasovi. Gre za prepoznaven sodobni preplet različnih uprizoritvenih elementov, ki želi v podtekstu izraziti tudi stališče o dandanašnji razpršenosti tako posameznika kot tudi drugih širših pojmov – globalizacije in politike. Izvajalci Mikel Ayala, Jordi Querol, Lorenzo Mastropietro, Mael Tebibi in Yeojin Yun v dogodek vnesejo številne reference in konotacije, pri tem pa se lotijo kritičnega preizpraševanja nemalo aktualnih problematik – umestitev spola, narodnostnega izvora, političnih preferenc in zgodovinskih vplivov.

Subliminati Corporation, ki jo sestavlja izčiščena akrobatska sposobnost, čut za humor in

circus act transforms into its opposite or vice versa. The performers constantly (in a non-violent manner) manipulate the audience's perceptions, throwing them from one atmosphere to another, focusing on either their (physical) strength or underlying (emotional) fragility. Subliminati Corporation make it clear that they care about current social and political conditions, and tell us that as a global community we need to reconsider the way we operate (on the level of both the individual and the state) and reflect on how easily we are provoked to put other people in risky situations (an idea communicated in the piece by President Obama, urged on by other heads of state, making a dangerous jump from a ladder). Nonetheless, the performance is anything but direct; it doesn't give any final answers and makes us wonder whether this is because it is open to interpretation or because it lacks courage.

koketiranje z občinstvom ter uravnovešeno svetlobna/lučna podoba, pa se lahko že naslednji hip (včasih v skrajno poetičnem slogu) spreobrne v prikaz nasilja, mučenja, poniževanja in imigrantske deprivligiranosti. Seveda ni naključje, da je sestava članov narodno raznolika, vsak od njih namreč skupaj z odrsko prezenco izkazuje tudi zasebno, neovrgljivo nacionalno (kulturno) pripadnost. To izvajalci razumejo kot svojevrsten privilegij, najbolj očitno pa ga izkoristijo v prizorih, kjer se transformirajo v različne politične like (Obama, Castro, Berlusconi ...). Vsebinski preseki uprizoritve se ne dogajajo le v okviru celostnega strukturnega loka, ampak tudi znotraj posameznih prizorov, kjer se mestoma »idilična«, čista cirkuška in zabavno nedolžna točka prelevi v njeno nasprotje, tesnobno atmosfero, ali pa se zgodi ravno obratno. Nastopajoči neprestano (nenasilno) manipulirajo z gledalčevo percepcijo, ga mečejo iz ene atmosfere v drugo, nekje na prvo mesto postavijo svojo (fizično) moč, drugje svojo prikrito (čustveno) fragilnost. Subliminati Corporation dajejo jasno vedeti, da jim ni vseeno za trenutno družbenopolitično stanje, da moramo kot globalna skupnost dobro premisliti o načinu delovanja (tako politikov kot nas samih) in se zamisliti, nad tem, da tako zlahka odreagiramo na provokacijo in nekoga postavimo v tvegan položaj (skok Obame z lestve). A po drugi strani je uprizoritev vse prej kot direktna, ne daje končnih odgovorov, pri čemer ni jasno, ali zato, ker želi puščati svobodno, odprto interpretacijo, ali pač zato, ker si tega preprosto ne upa dovolj.

UNPACK THE ARTS



Culture

This project has been funded with support of the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© Unpack the Arts. Only the project leader and co-organisers of Unpack the Arts can freely use this publication. If another organization or medium wants to publish (extracts of) the article, please contact maarten@circuscentrum.be.

[www.
unpack
thearts
.eu](http://www.unpackthearts.eu)

Coordination publication:
Maarten Verhelst
Graphic design:
Wilfrieda Paessens
www.wilfrieda.com



**Circus
centrum**

KØBENHAVNS INTERNATIONALE TEATER

SUBTOPIA^o

**FESTIVAL
NOVOG CIRKUSA**

les halles

Sirkuksen
Tiedotuskeskus

CircusInfo Finland

humorologie.be

**CRYING OUT
LOUD**

Partners

PROJECT LEADER:

- Circuscentrum (B)

CO-ORGANIZERS:

- Copenhagen International Theatre (DK)
- CIRCa (FR)
- Mala prsa – Festival novog cirkusa (HR)
- Subtopia (SE)
- Halles de Schaerbeek (B)
- CircusInfo Finland (FI)
- Circusstad Festival Rotterdam (NL)
- Humorologie (B)
- Crying Out Loud (UK)