

EUROPE NOW, ARCOLA WORKSHOP

- ABOUT PROJECT

Key words:

Migration, multiculturalism, identity

EUROPE NOW is the name of the project, developed by Swedish National Touring Theatre- Riskteatern from Stockholm. This project is a result of a common feeling and the urge to exchange experiences of living in a multicultural society that is nowadays severely questioned. Therefore, five theaters from different parts of the world: Stockholm, London, Berlin, Amsterdam and Istanbul, were invited to participate with their own productions in order to create a platform that would communicate differences and similarities in these countries with performances that had the themes of migration and multicultural identity in Europe, at this particular moment.

In its program, Europe Now project, most certainly has an agenda that pushes towards didactic theatre but more than that, it has an aim to facilitate discussion and exchange experiences so that didacticism is not misunderstood for treating audience in patronizing way, but rather to trigger intercultural discussion on different political and personal problems that big multicultural cities and more importantly people are coping with.

After developing a program or *travel* that would effectively exchange these experiences, the first *stop* was in Arcola, theatre based in London, where all the theater partners would meet at the workshop that was organized in order to participate while the plays were still in the phase of development. Every theater brought their own director and commissioned playwright, as well as dramaturges and production managers to work together and give a short presentation of their work along with the discussion that followed.

- *I call my brothers*: Riksteatern (The National Touring Theatre), Stockholm

Key words:

Virtual community, prejudices, paranoia

*"I call my brothers and say:
Something really bad happened yesterday.
I got on the subway and caught sight of an extremely suspicious individual.
He had black hair and an unusually large backpack and his face was covered by a keffiyeh.*

I call my brothers and say:

B BB B e fB BB c fB c BB c B B e

Jonnas Hassen Khemiri

Jonas Hassen Khemiri wrote *I call my brothers*, play that will be staged by Farnaz Arbabi.

Inspired by the event that happened in Stockholm in 2010, when a 28-year-old Swede of Iraqi origin, Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly, a bomb attacker, killed himself and slightly wounded two people on side streets crossing the pedestrian mall, the city's principal shopping street. In this attack, only the bomber got killed. This event was referred to as a clumsy do-it-yourself attack that if had succeeded would obviously have had a catastrophic consequences. However, this event gave rise to enormous public debate that triggered questions of this one and possibility of more terroristic attacks in Sweden, furthermore the questions of safety of the country and the Islamic community as a part of it.

Jonas Hassen Khemiri's play *I call my brothers* is a question and comment about rising Islamophobia and the common feeling inside Islamic community, the fear of being labeled as a *terrorist* only because of appearance, the color of skin or hair, in other word it speaks about prejudices that derived as a consequence of this attack that generated fear amongst people who belong or appear to belong to Islamic community.

I call my brothers gives the insight into how individuals who are not terrorists feel endangered as minority that is being labeled as potential threat to safety and piece of the whole country on the basis of their appearance. It is written in the form of monologues and the only communication is happening via telephone calls. The form itself implies a feeling of being disconnected from the society and your own family and community.

Talking over the phone indicates the absence of true communication and presence of a false one, or *virtual one* (metaphorically speaking)- one in which individual stays alone. This single individual named Amour, is dealing with his own personal struggle to defeat the hegemonic narrative and ends up being defeated by the *public voice* of mass media and the politicians, that in the constant repetition became his own opinion.

Even though it was written as a very personal story, about one intimate psychological journey of one young man, this play captures the essence of much more, and I would dare to say goes beyond, and deals with the problem that individuals in the whole European can identify with whatever race, ethnicity, nationality etc. they belong to.

Okay. I admit it.

B c fB

B fB

B c fB ec

are described as a... larger... network.

B c fB

parliament.

D B B B B c fB ec B B B B B ec B B
never seem to learn, because all signs indicate... and fear of what we call different is so deeply- *fB c B B B B e B*

- **Beg your pardon: Ballhaus Naumburger Strasse, Berlin**

Key words

Integration, the (im)possibility of being other people, the right winged communist thought winged

Personal communication
 crashed against a brick wall, if it even moves from
 impossible to pass the naturalization test.

Marrianna Salzmann

Marrianna Salzmann is a Berlin based writer who's play *Beg your pardon*, will be directed by Hakan Savas Mican.

Beg your pardon is a research based play with the elements of documentary theater. Playwright, Marrianna Salzmann made a series of interviews in Copenhagen as artist in residence, with the right winged politicians as well as the immigrants in Denmark. She used these interviews in developing the play and some of these she used as they have been said, in form of a transcript.

Beg your pardon with the caption: "Emigrating from the world" opens with the scene that I quoted from earlier, and is spoken by the character of Politician who is in the play nameless or simply He. He/ the Politician sets the standard or *the rules* that govern society we live in and people in it. What follows is personal journey of Thea, the main character of the play who after her friend Marva gets deported, leaves her newborn child and goes away to "the other world". Thea, driven by the feeling of being unable to make the change in the world, overwhelmed by helplessness and the feeling that she is *not-cut-out for this world*, together with her monkey Chica, escapes to an alternative community where she expects a personal asylum and to be treated as equal amongst other *refugees*.

Thea, the main character's name has an obvious symbolic meaning, and her character could be seen as *theanthropic*. She belongs to a *privileged class* and not having to worry about possible deportation, she wants to live in a world where everybody is *equal* and ends up facing herself with her own drive to save over and over again, and the impossibility to do it.

The *Other world* she longs for is symbolically represented in her companion Chica and as explained in the quotation Marrianna Salzmann herself used in the character list:

chica always had this function: ... to be a physical translation of exagg... feelings. In some cases... as trance dancing, the link to the body in a state... is very direct. In this context, it is interesting to note that the... choreography comes from...

Its symptoms consist of sudden, rapid, uncontrolled and hysterical movements. In this way, I hope, we can understand that this behaviour, just like other forms of peculiar, extreme or provocative behaviour, is an essential element of what it is to be a B- c

(Alain Platel. Extract from a portrait in the tanz yearbook 2010)

In the end of her *emigration from the world*, Thea kills her monkey, Chica and then comes back to the world she escaped from: to her partner and a child. Ironically, she finds out that her partner is about to get married to her previously deported friend Marva, and therefore provide her the *privilege* to stay in the country.

Beg your pardon touches upon the explicit right winged policies and warns about its growth in Europe, but at the same time claims to the empathy amongst people while questioning it.

- ***Lust and found: Theater RAST, Amsterdam***

Key words:

Migration, isolation, identity crisis

"Hell is other people."

Jean- Paul Sartre B B B

Özkan Golpinar was commissioned to write a play for Europe Now project that will be staged by Şaban Ol.

Özkan Golpinar wrote *Lust and found* autobiographically in many ways. He himself, moved 53 times and the main theme of his play is loss of identity in a never-ending search for it, while changing cities around the world without settling down.

Lust and found is set in a Lost and Found department of the unknown airport somewhere in the world. Four characters, John, Ninah, Ab and Fidan have one thing in common. They lost their luggage and wait for it in this section of the airport. They are *stuck* there with each other, and as the play shows, more importantly with themselves.

Luggage in context of the play has an obvious symbolic meaning: it stands for their past- that they are unable to cope with, but also their future- that is yet unknown. Furthermore, it can stand for their identity in its whole, for what the play shows, they are looking for their identity that is lost somewhere along the way.

Four characters try to escape from their past towards the unknown future and in this *No- c / Bc / f* they meet and their past comes out into the surface, making them face themselves in the eyes of the *Other*.

This play has a reference to Jean- Paul Sartre's famous play *No exit* throughout not only the setting, but the characters that fight with their own identity crisis and like in *No exit*, face themselves using the knowledge of other people. They judge one another and these judgments that the other characters say to one another, are in fact fragments of this past that they are desperately trying to run away from.

Furthermore, the claustrophobic atmosphere that emerges is also produced not only by this small area they have to stay in and the intense dialog they lead, but shows the their own personal imprisonment.

Even though, the four characters' stories are in many ways different, they are all personal intimate portrays that throughout the relationships that emerge, reflect the overall feeling of helplessness to make a change, fight against and overcome the instrumentalism of the individual in order to lead a life of a fulfilled individual.

- ***Pippa, Talimhane Tiyatrosu, Istanbul***

Key words:

East vs. West, the (im)possibility of female liberation in East

Deniz Altun is a Turkish writer of a play called *Pippa* that will be directed by Lerzan Pamir.

Pippa, the play is inspired by the brutal rape and murder of an Italian artist Di Marineo, also known as Pippa Bacca that happened in Turkey in 2008. Pippa, together with her artistic partner Silvia Moro went hitchhiking from Milan towards the Palestinian territories wearing wedding gowns. They started the journey on March 8th and the two artists separated in Istanbul, and were supposed to meet again in Beirut.

Brides on Tour was the name of the performance and two artists went on a tour of the places that were recently affected by war, to spread the message that, as Silvia Moro put it, "by overcoming the differences and lowering the level of conflict, individuals and cultures could come together."

Even though the rape and the murder was confessed by the perpetrator as a savage raping, strangling and stealing victims mobile and money, that had no political implications, Deniz Altun inspired by this event made a fictional story that follows this same narrative as it might have happened.

Contrasting the courage and the emphatic motive of the artists to create and support this performance piece with the story of a woman that depicts the female position in the East, Deniz Altun condemns this crime, and more than that, she questions the position of Eastern woman and the highlights the different starting position of a feminist artist that claims for independence versus the position of a woman in massively patriarchal setting.

- ***The Mare Rider, Arcola Theater, London***

Key words:

Myths, the escape, eastern women and the integration in the western society

Leyla Nazli is UK based writer of a play named *The Mare Rider* that will be directed by Mehmet Ergen.

Leyla Nazli as she said, was triggered to introduce the myth of Elka in a play, after finding out that many women undergo therapies even nowadays, after claiming to have been visited by Elka. Myth of Elka that would steal a child while the birth is taking place was so powerful in Turkey in the past that the mothers-to-be were guarded for three days in order for Elka not to come and

steal the baby. This primitive fear and explanation of miscarriage that evolved into a story about baby-stealer was introduced by Leyla Nazli and developed throughout the vibrant character Elka who comes to the main character Selma, that just had a miscarriage, and tells story about her life and journey. While Selma is desperately trying to wake up without success, her husband Mark, talks to the Nurse about Selma and their marriage. This small-scale story that is practically made out of one dream and the conversation that is happening in the *real time and space* is that *localized* only at the first glance.

Out of many different ways in which it could be *read*, one of the obvious ones is to see it as a struggle of one woman to cope with the myth from the past. It also implies Selma's personal doubt in her decision to become a mother, for Elka is ambivalent character, an enemy of settling down but as well as obeying any rules. Female rebel, who travels through time and space, Elka is presented on the one hand as murderer and a cheat, but someone who utterly enjoys freedom in every aspect of the word: she is timeless, faceless traveler that knows no boundaries. In that sense, Selma who dreams about "kicking Hitler in the head" reveals her one real fear and that one is not Elka, but concentration camps.

Moreover Leyla Nazli, in that way, subtly raises highly important question(s): does the notion of concentration camp belong to the history, or it still exists? How does it appear, is it like Elka, in the form of a myth or a ghost or is it our reality?

- CONCLUSION

Looking for an overall impression of the workshop, I will go back to the Jonnas Hassen Khemiri's play, *I call my brothers*:

I call my brothers and say:

Okay.

There is a war.

There are several wars.

But not a war the way they say there is.

The war is about our brains.

The war is about our fear.

And when fear settles itself inside us, airplanes turn to missiles and bags turn to bombs.

Cell phones become remote triggers, baby food becomes C4.

All liquids are potentially explosive.

All black-bearded men are potential carriers of bombs.

All blond men are potential racists.

And when fear settles itself in us we start to fear the future and long for yesterday.

We start to wish that we could turn back the clock.

It was so much better before, when men were men and women were women and no one was gay.

When we had fax machines instead of the internet and the pillory instead of a legal system.

*With nostalgic expressions we remember spettekaka and folk dancing, small villages and corporal punishment.
It was so much simpler then.
When borders were clear and the enemy had one (and only one) face.*

Along with the variety of themes, stories and different points of view that came from all theaters involved, this abstract from the play *I call my brothers*, conveys one similar notion for all the plays that we talked about. And that is to, in many different ways, and from various perspectives, implicitly or explicitly raise a voice against *Othering* and to provide a platform for an exchange and discussion-aiming to strengthen belief of Intercultural Europe.

Plays that were presented in Arcola Theater in September 2011, most certainly gave an optimistic view on the future of further development of the Europe Now project.

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