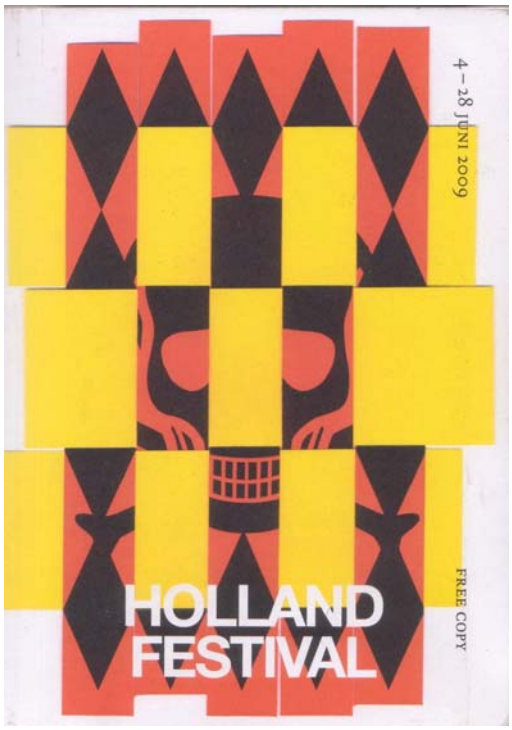
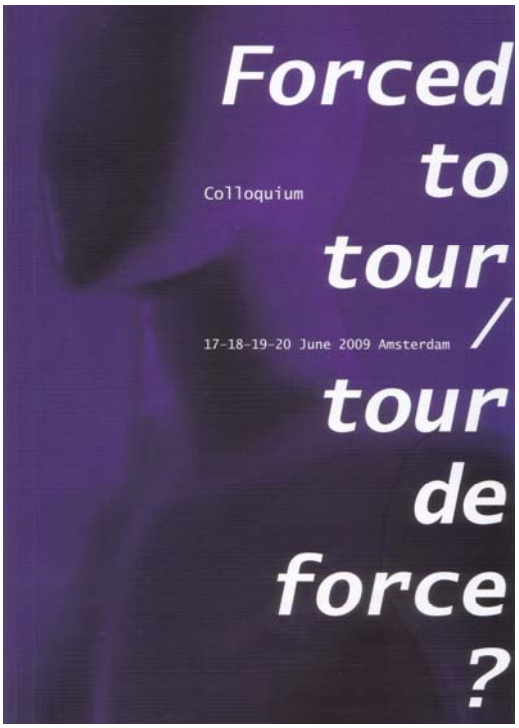
International Training Seminar for New Professional Theatre Critics
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 16-20 June 2009, within the frame of the Holland Festival and the Forced to Tour / Tour de Force colloquium





The AICT/IATC promoted an International Training Seminar for New Professional Theatre Critics in Amsterdam, Netherlands, between 16 and 20 June, initiated and hosted by the Holland Festival and the Circle of Dutch Theatre Critics (Kring voor Nederlandse Theatercritici), and co-organised by the Theatre Institute of the Netherlands (Theater Instituut Nederland) and the Domain for Art Criticism (Domein van de Kunstkritiek).

This seminar benefited from the joint efforts of Lucia van Heteren, Annemieke Keurentjes, and Sonja van der Valk and it had the participation of 11 new professional theatre critics: Andrea Kopac (Slovenia), Askhan Ghafar Adli (Iran), Byron Laviolette (Canada), Dorota Miszek (Poland), Eva Kyselová (Slovakia), Martin Bernátek (Czech Republic), Miriam Kičiňova (Slovakia), Réka Hegyi (Romania), Robbert van Heuven (Netherlands), Rui Pina Coelho (Portugal), and Sara van der Kooi (Netherlands). The monitors of the seminar were our colleagues Hervé Guay, from Canada, and Sonja van der Valk, from the Netherlands.

The brief feed-backs sent by most of the participants all suggest a very well organised and rich experience. In spite of some minor logistical problems connected with the venue used for the seminar and the meals, everything worked perfectly and IATC has to be very thankful to all the local organisers as well as to the two very professional and committed monitors, Hervé Guay and Sonja van der Valk.

This document gathers the report written by Hervé Guay (in French), some photographs of the whole experience as well as some reviews written by the participants.

Paulo Eduardo Carvalho

RAPPORT DE STAGE

Hervé Guay (Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada)

J'ai eu le plaisir d'animer le stage d'Amsterdam en compagnie de Sonia van der Valk du Domaine pour la critique d'art, atelier interdisciplinaire et plateforme pour les nouvelles générations de critiques d'art et attachée au Theater Instituut Nederland. La collaboration fut excellente avec ma collègue néerlandaise et nous avons pratiqué l'alternance dans l'animation des séances, nos expériences réciproques étant très complémentaires. Une rencontre supplémentaire s'est tenue le vendredi pour permettre aux stagiaires d'assister un peu au colloque *Forced to tour/Tour de force*. Je l'ai animée seul, dans le hall de l'hôtel, Sonja étant prise ailleurs. Bien que situé un peu loin de l'hôtel, notre lieu de réunion était fort convivial et nous permettait de déjeuner tous ensemble avec les stagiaires, moment de pause bienvenue au début de l'après-midi. En outre, les stagiaires en profitaient pour échanger durant la promenade d'environ 25 minutes qui menait de l'hôtel à notre lieu de réunion. En principe, nous nous rencontrions chaque jour de 10 à 14 heures. Mais les échanges étaient si nourris et si intéressants que nous avons plutôt terminé la plupart de nos séances vers 15 heures. En outre, le niveau d'anglais des stagiaires, langue dans laquelle s'est déroulé le stage, était, sauf exception, très bon.

Le séminaire s'est en quelque sorte organisé de lui-même : la moitié du temps fut employé à discuter des spectacles et de la profession, l'autre moitié fut dévolue à la présentation de l'activité théâtrale propre aux pays ou aux régions dont venaient les stagiaires. Deux thèmes principaux ont fait surface en parallèle de ces deux sujets de discussion : celui de la mondialisation et celui de l'interdisciplinarité. L'avenir de la profession est aussi une question qui préoccupait les stagiaires et qui est demeuré en filigrane de nos discussions. La plupart des stagiaires ont non seulement présenté un exposé des activités théâtrales dans leur tradition particulière, mais ont indiqué de quelle manière la mondialisation avait exercé et exerçait toujours une influence sur les pratiques en vigueur dans leur pays. Les discussions sur les spectacles ont mis en relief la part importante d'interdisciplinarité entrant dans quelques-unes des productions que nous avons vues. L'importance déclinante du texte dans certains des spectacles auxquels nous avons assisté a également déclenché des questionnements féconds quant aux approches critiques à privilégier. En outre, la question des a priori culturels s'est posée à plusieurs reprises et peut être elle aussi reliée à la mondialisation.

Ce stage s'est démarqué des trois autres que j'ai animés par le formidable esprit de groupe qui s'est créé ainsi que par la variété des personnalités et des cultures représentées (Canada, Iran, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Portugal, République tchèque, Roumanie, Slovaquie, Slovénie). Notons la présence d'un participant en provenance d'Iran dont les propos et l'expérience furent vraiment appréciés de tous. Une fois de plus, la présence de stagiaires en provenance du pays hôte s'est révélée déterminante pour la bonne compréhension des spectacles néerlandais. En effet, ces deux stagiaires nous ont fait bénéficier de leurs lumières sur les artistes néerlandais et nous ont prodigué une mise en perspective historique très profitable des pratiques théâtrales de leur pays. Les discussions se sont généralement passées dans un climat de respect et la bonne humeur, ce qui n'a pas empêché les prises de position et les dissensions sur certaines questions. C'est tout à l'honneur de ce groupe composé d'individus à la fois curieux, cultivés et, dans la très grande majorité, ouverts d'esprit.

Je regrette cependant que mon nom n'ait pas été inclus dans le programme du colloque dans la section consacrée au de stage de l'AICT pour les nouveaux critiques de théâtre aux côtés de celui de Paulo Eduardo Carvalho et de celui de Sonja van der Valk. La prise en charge de mon séjour et de mon billet d'avion m'a aussi causé certains soucis qui auraient pu être évités. Heureusement, l'expérience dans son ensemble a été non seulement très enrichissante sur le plan intellectuel, mais vraiment chaleureuse sur le plan humain. Je suis reconnaissant à l'AICT ainsi qu'aux organisateurs de m'avoir permis de vivre cette expérience inoubliable.

FRAS
CATI

Productions reviewed

The Sound and the Fury ("April Seventh, 1928"), by Elevator Repair Service
medEia, by Oscar van Woensel, directed by Dood Paard
Orfeus, by Third World Bunfight, directed by Bret Bailey
The White Body, by Ea Sola
Antonioni Project, by Toneelgroep Amsterdam, directed by Ivo van Hove
Hiob, after Joseph Roth, by Münchner Kammerspiele, directed by Johan Simons

medEia

Byron Laviolette (Canada)

If there are numerous complications involved in reviewing works created by/for different cultures, then Dood Paard's *medEia* is, simply put, a real problem. What makes it a fitting subject, however, is that the concept of a stranger in a strange land is core to this ancient Greek legend, and thus allows one to find in it a reflection of self.

Told in a stark, bare-bones, front-facing manner, this work is perhaps closer to story-telling than it is to traditionally staged theatre. That said, what makes the original 1998 text come alive is just this starkness, this insistence on direct communication despite character and context and convention. Using (and eventually abusing) four, massive crate paper backdrops suspended above the playing space, and adopting the Dutch distanced acting style, the piece seems to eschew the avant-garde for a look at the here and now.

Developed through a combination of ensemble-style and script-based creation, *medEia* rigorously reworks the tragic tale of priestess/witch Medea and her murderous break with husband/hero Jason – the man who forsakes her to feast on younger flesh and greater power. Performed as an ever-shifting, role-swapping pronouncement by three actors, it is the chorus' voices who figure most into the piece's narrative. It is their inability to act that we hear most of, and of the jokes, jibes and judgments levied towards the foreigner in their (read: our) world. For those living in places full of outsiders, the dangers of a story like this hit home.

What *medEia* misses most, perhaps, is a sense of urgency. While its initial run over ten years ago was probably a charged event, the piece seems to have lost some of its *raison d'être*. While still probably speaking to its hometown crowd in the Netherlands – especially about their collective fear about possible Arab or Chinese invasion – the original energy which drove this work has, like its titular character, left town.

Let's Talk About Love

Réka Hegyi (Hungary)

Medea is the only tragedy where the heroine does not have to pay with her life for her faults or for the sins of her family. There must be something that makes this myth so different. The answer of the Dood Paard company is that desperate love drives her actions. And of course, love cannot be punished, not even by the gods.

Good for us, travelling critics: instead, through an elevated Dutch translation, love can be expressed in a so called Euro-English (see the flyer). That means simple grammar and not too rich vocabulary, with many well-known pop-song lines. The edge between the commonplace and the real aim of bringing a deeper meaning closer to present-day consumers is very sharp, so it is hard to know if the performance was more powerful and innovative when it was staged, 11 years ago. The dust of times is visible in the way they decided to bring into the production the media (the spelling of the title, *medEia*, is not accidental). In the breaks between the four parts of the performance there are projections of slides, but even if they are shown very fast, today this is no more an uncomfortable media bomb (while the music, the opera aria in the beginning and then the pop songs are really slobber). The raising then the ripping of the paper curtains definitely have nothing to do with this media-story, so let's accept: they are focusing only on the devastating love

This story has many layers, so it can be contemporary in many ways. The directors (nowadays together with the author of the script or the dramaturge) chose the one they need for their purpose: Medea can be The Stranger, The Immigrant, the whole tragedy can be told from the perspective of her boys (as it is in Suzane Osten's version), and so on. As shown above, the Amsterdam-based company, together with Oscar van Woensel (who signed the text) focused on the theme of love. But as they worked in team, without a director, they decided to tell the story from the perspective of the chorus: „I cannot act, because I am not an actor", they say all the time. This trick allows them to change roles, and also to explain the acting stile of Kuno Bakker, Gillis Biesheuvel and Manja Topper: they stay in front of the audience and tell the story in the most simple way.

The Flora and Faulkner

Rui Pina Coelho (Portugal)

Are theatre performances like plants? Do theatre performances develop better in their own habitat? Do they only reach their splendour in its own atmosphere – like plants? Are international circuits biased by the inevitable lack of previous knowledge about the diverse cultural circumstances of the assemblage of a performance? These questions, rather than peripheral to contemporary theatre criticism, are, more and more, at its core: can we critically access a performance by Vietnam, South Africa, Iran or the United States with the same tools that we – theatre critics – use in or own local reviews?

All these questions are raised by the performance *The Sound and the Fury* by the New York based group Elevator Repair Service, performed in Amsterdam in the Holland Festival, June 2009 (and subsequently discussed by a collective of New Critics from Canada, Slovenia, Romania, Iran, Slovakia, Poland, Portugal, and Holland). In Amsterdam is this bold adaptation of Faulkner's groundbreaking text simply an example of exotic flora?

This performance follows the stunning performance *Gatz* in which the cast read the entire Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*, word by word. That seven hour astonishing theatrical experience was the locus to anatomize 21st century America's view on the American way of live and, most especially, to exorcize the ever-present ghost of 9-11. Thus, the set depicted an aged and decrepit office, where computers didn't work and folders were misplaced. The Roaring Twenties struggled with the Pulverized Noughts: a gloomy view on America's way of life. *The Sound and the Fury* pursues the same interest and the same debate on *Americana*. Here, it is read the first chapter of William Faulkner's novel, "April Seventh, 1928", where the story is told by the viewpoint of Benjy Compson, a thirty-three year old man with mental retardation. All the narrative develops randomly, just like Benjy's thoughts. Ingeniously, all the performance apparatus serves this stream of consciousness technique. Thus, the impressive soundscape (with music, jingles, sounds…) portrays all the sounds that Benjy hears. The set immediately creates an expectation of a realistic approach: it is depicted a traditional southern house, designed with naturalistic care and plenty of furniture and small props. But, suddenly, the first scene where two actors perform a pervasive choreography (that will punctuate the all performance) clearly betrays that expectation – even if the set is created with detail, we will inhabit that space with a non-realist cartography. So, the performance fluctuates between logic and randomly lined up materials (just like Benjy's mind). In effect, all dramaturgical architecture is linked to Benjy's stream of consciousness. Actors shift constantly of character, using a dress, a hat, a prop to signal. This causes a playful relation with the audience and it is almost a game to understand the narrative.

At this level, Elevator Repair Service's performance is close to Faulkner's novel, but also to the company's agenda, set to debate *Americana* and USA's own memory. It is a potent piece that instigates to a further debate on the nature of non-dramatic elements and reading aloud, creating new ways to (re)present body and words on stage. Although the outcome is dramaturgically effective and very impressive, it somehow results slightly artificial – the striking effect of *Gatz* staging in *The Sound and the Fury* seems lost and dependent on the admiration of an ingenious formula. Even though, it promotes is a marvellous theatrical experience.

Death Drinks Cola

Martin Bernátek (Czech Republic)

Products you consume mark your gestures and your flesh becomes a subject of ideology. In *The White Body,* the Vietnamese-French choreographer Ea Sola juxtaposes *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* by Renaissance thinker Étienne de la Boétie and the tremulous and clockwork dance movements to demonstrate the spread of consumerism from the West to the East. Together with Sasha Waltz and Alain Platel, Sola's performance sharpened the critical edge of the dance program of the Holland Festival 2009.

Asian performers first appear behind semi plastic curtains whose transparency was modulated by the changes of light, from bright shopping windows to a glittering kind of aluminum walls. One could guess, if the two men in the opening scene, constantly garbling the shiny pieces of metal from sack to sack, were counting down the time of global capital crash with its glaring coins, or the upcoming ecologic catastrophe of Asian electronic wastelands.

Two readers of Boétie's accusation of tyranny sat by the side near the audience, opposite to laptop musician Nguyen Xuan Son. Paradoxically, Boétie as the forerunner of modernism is used to criticize its actual progress. A woman came and all three performers started to move like in a catwalk, grabbing pieces of clothes from the ground and showing up in a curtain. They stuck to it, starting to vibrate their limbs and move around at their side, like in a terrarium. Their walks were those of automatons, their bodies glimmered.

Next to more expressive and purely energetic corporeal expression, the dancers played also mimetic locomotions and cultural gestures. Their dark brown trunks adapters got on with the fashion products and the western body language, overtaking all *gestus* of consumerism. After the curtain was ripped of, they invaded a frontal space and exhibited again.

Just like the style of performers, the production was also divided in two parts. After the white back-drop flashes in white – the Vietnamese color of death – the light got brighter and the curtain fully disappeared. Coming from the back, a woman slowly moved on diagonal on an empty stage. They stopped in the middle. A man shaped and turned a girl's hands and legs. He wanted to be touched by her, which was hardly possible with a puppet-like woman body. The vital energy had vanished, only a numb white plastic figurine was brought on stage.

There was no conflict on stage, no direct thread, no pain, and the performance just demonstrated what may be an obvious truth and what was already stressed in Boéthie's title: Western consumer culture enslaves individuals into a voluntary servitude.

That may be obvious and Ea Sola might be accused of being shallow, but as the impact of Western consumerism is mediated through symbolic form, the performance deals with the representation of reality and any direct comparison to reality itself may be misunderstanding. The praxis of consumerism is stratified into niche groups. Sola sticks more to an Adornian model of passive consumer, showing the glamour consumerism, and skips its everydayness and its cyclic structure, in which the consumers also play an active role.

The White Body: The White Mentality?

Andreja Kopac (Slovenia)

The White Body, a piece from the French-Vietnamese choreographer Ea Sola, is a performance that combines dance, theatre and live music and uses a text from *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* by French philosopher Étienne de la Boétie, in order to question the place of individual freedom in turbulent times. An attempt to catch this statement is also clearly seen on the stage, where three dancers on the "dance floor," two "left-wing" French speakers and two "right-wing" designers (sound and light), together with a plastic curtain create a totally unique, self-generating space, well prepared for intervention, re-articulation or artistic creation.

Even if you are not a Dutch or a French speaker, the atmosphere of the space is so uninhibited, that all kinds of codes and signs become understandable enough and play important roles, co-existing within a *discourse of globalization*. What I would put into question is overcoming specific obstacles, boundaries, not between spoken word, music and movement, which was thoroughly done, but on the stage itself, stage in the sense of dance-floor, where the traces of movements of three dancers are constantly crossing over. The main stage obstacle, plastic boundary, divides dancing space into a clear and blurry space, into visibility and assumption-based non-visibility. Regarding moving images, created in front or behind this "world-humanism curtain," is, what is not understandable enough, exactly the space in-between; this tiny, physical and mental space, which has a potential to reflect the question of globalization from another perspective. What do boundaries mean today? What is our relation with them? Boundaries, according to the scene and setting of *The White Body*, have a strictly aesthetical function and not a contextual one. Since a philosophical text is placed on the centre of performance, there were no discursive functions on the main stage elements. On the one hand, a pure *aesthetic* function perfectly fits with the visual and codifying function of performance (sound, move and light); on the other, the other hand "objectifying" of scenic elements (plastic curtain, Marlboro cigarettes, tones of clothes) provoke at least two dangerous consequences. First, for this reason, the performance could be read as an example of a naïve codifying system of capitalistic emblems, according to the use of certain "objects of global world." And second, moving actions, perceived as fusing repetition, could easily lose its narrative potential – which they certainly have – especially in the main scene that represents the impossible relationship between men and woman, nationalities, and human beings.

A certain lack of questioning "boundaries" provokes the "global" question, if *The White Body* performance, done by French-Vietnamese choreographer, is done also by *white mentality*, mainly constructed by the category of lack, imposing *desire* on one hand and *expectation* on the other. The discursive question of spacing limitations is also connected to director's decision on how to deal with individual freedom (in the age of consumerism), where limits are extended to its limitations.

On the verge of non-communication

Ashkan Ghafar Adli (Iran)

Antonioni Project is a tragedy of the lack of love, in addition to non-communication. The plot of the performance concerns loneliness as a modern concept and also the impossibility of making communication with others as a sad fact of life in the modern era.

The performance is an attempt to analyze and criticize the bourgeois middle-class lifestyle and to depict the fragility of human relationships. Boring parties, shallow love affairs and forbidden sexual relationships are signs and symptoms of this non-communication syndrome which are indicated and emphasized in the performance.

In other words, the performance explores the relationships between people who pretend to communicate with others but in fact are disconnected from each other. The performance depicts stories of people who live in a "fake world" and are lost in the vicious circle of dead-end relationships to show the different aspects of the modern life.

Antonioni Project is based on the stories of three films by Michelangelo Antonioni which are interwoven together to expose the whole idea of non-communication completely. According to Antonioni‘s films, this theme is a specific sign of the modern era in which man is alienated from other men.

Moreover the director, Ivo Van Hove, uses different sophisticated cinematic techniques to create some sort of *hyperreality* on the stage. Consequently the performance combines two mechanisms to develop the plot: a first one on the stage and a second one on the screen. On a blue stage, which is occupied by cinematic apparatus, actors play their roles and simultaneously they are spread out at different places on the screen. In fact characters and also the setting are created digitally on the screen. They are shot in front of a blue screen and superimposed (projected) on ready-made images. This situation helps the audience to imagine them in several locations. Thus the combination of these images and pictures – on both stage and screen – dominates some sort of *hyperrealism* that demolishes borderlines between what is reality and what is not. When Jean Baudrillard claimed that "hyperrealism is a simulation of something which never really existed", he meant that the inability to distinguish reality from non-reality is a result and one of the most significant aspects of the age we live in, and this has changed our views and our understanding on life and also has modified our approaches to life itself. In the state of *hyperreality* people live in a fake world or a copy world in which there is no possibility of real communication; the same for the performance’s characters.

In addition to hyperrealism, shifting and jumping from one story to another as a form of narrative is another evidence of this disconnection; because metaphorically "discontinuity of narration" depicts the reality and the quality of people’s communication in today’s world which according to Antonioni and also the director of the performance, is on the verge of non-communication.

In portraying modern identity as a crucial concept, and in response to a lack of curiosity, irresponsibility and perplexity as modern manners, *Antonioni Project* creates a world that questions the existence of human beings in a controversial fashion. It goes without saying that the performance is willing to play a positive role in solving the problem by introducing and also criticizing the whole aspects of the current situation.

Antonioni Project as a Concept of Seeing

Miriam Kičiňová (Slovakia)

It could be interesting to write about the essence of Antonioni's films, which appeared in the *Antonioni Project* by Dutch director Ivo van Hove. It was the essence of form and also content from Antonioni's films. An essence which came from way of work with film facilities and theatre tools.

The story was directly inspired or a quotation of films such as *L'Avventura, La Notte,* and *L'Eclisse*. It was a combination of stories of people from high society, who live in blue boxes, and conduct their interpersonal love affairs as a reflection of their feelings of empty and boring lives. *Ennui* is here as illness and at the same moment, as a result, a way of life. *Antonioni Project* was looking for a sense of love on the background of decadent and empty lives. Ivo van Hove created his characters (and it's really very difficult to use the word heroes here), describing individual views on love in a wide age-group. Love, which is not life anymore, which became only a habit. Behind this habit there's still the need to fulfill himself/herself through love. This anxiety for fulfillment leads to the constant change of partner in hope to find the right one, where emptiness and *ennui* will be not so strong as with the last one. Therefore this *Antonioni Project* emerged as a delicate and intimate analysis of the act of loosing and searching love; there was a sense of a type of life with a constant flow of music, emphasizing not only the life of high society, but also becoming an individual element in performance.

The generation of the 60's from Antonioni's films is here transformed into new managers from glass buildings, who can expect "last warnings" and "punishments", here depicted through the use of pictures with the fall of the Twin Towers. This was explicit and simplified and director used different stage languages for a while as till now and it was not useful. It was not useful as others film mechanisms.

Ivo van Hove developed a system of film blue box as background for scenes created by computers to the poetical blue and white set design which cumulated poetical atmosphere (balloons, lamps, live music). Showing of mechanisms of preparation film and serials (cameras, jimi jip, mix desks and a lot of time with jokes, which belong to this work) provided the director with space to divide reality into more spaces. Space as a "whole" on the stage, line of TV machines and workers, half of screen up the stage, and small TVs with four parts, from four cameras, which gave the chance to see the situations in different contexts. In this created world of multi reality each part was able to exist separate and was able to have own meaning independent and totally different in relationship to the whole.

This using of media has very strong and specific function in performance. It was also possible to see change of work with them. From classical function – shooting film, or better to say soap opera sometime - where media had role more practical and public, to the system of their private using – self-recording, self-shooting. It was strong message to the perversity of media from I see to I want to be seen. Therefore was performance also about concept of seeing and changes of seeing. And what everything can change our own concept how we seen things, how we are seen - all the time in detail and in unity.

Mendel Singer Wants to Greet the World Again

Robbert van Heuven (The Netherlands)

At last the poor Jew Mendel Singer is at peace with the world. He greets the world as if it were new. Because in the end he understands that the world revolves foremost around love, not suffering. But before he gets this insight Mendel has indeed a lot to suffer. *Hiob*, performed by the Müchner Kammerspiele under the direction of Dutch director Johan Simons, is based on Joseph Roth's novel written in 1930. Both novel and show tell the story of the poor teacher Singer, who tries to live his life in his little Russian village as piously as possible. But his faith does not prevent his youngest son being born with a handicap, his wife being always unhappy, his sons being forced in the military or his daughter being in love with a complete cohort of soldiers. When one of his sons flees to America to avoid the army and to build a new American life for himself, Mendel also gets the opportunity to emigrate and start his life anew. He takes his chances, although this means leaving handicapped Menoechem in Russia. But his new life turns out even more disastrous: his sons get killed in the war, his wife dies of grief and his daughter goes insane. These events crush pious Mendel's faith in God. But in an end which is as happy as in a fairytale, Mendel gets reunited with Menoechem again, who got cured and became a famous director and composer. *Hiob* is foremost the story of the little human who tries to understand his place in the big world. In Russia Mendel looks for a better life, but in America, the land of opportunities Mendel just wants to go home to Russia.

It is the human being who is, against the odds, struggling to find a better life for himself, which is the most important subject for director Simons, as it was in his interpretations of the *Leenane Trilogy* or Kieslovsky's *Ten Commandments*. Mendel's little struggle takes place in front of a merry-go-round adorned with colourful curtains and the words 'life', 'death' and 'love' on the upper rim. The merry-go-round of life so to speak, on which side Mendel is gloomily sitting and of which the other side is at all times invisible to him.

Simons has found a way to get straight to the essence of Roth's story with a transparent, simple but precise *mise-en-scène* which leaves out all that is unnecessary for the story and its main themes. By doing so he relies mostly on the brilliant acting of his actors. Especially André Jung (Mendel) is *hors catégorie*. For example when his Mendel renounces God and he sighs like a big load just came off his shoulders. Or when he tries to describe what America is like and he stumbles over his words, because his language can not fathom this new world. When in his whole appearance shows the love for his children and the gloom which is always part of him. And when, in the end, he looks at the wildly spinning merry-go-round which his life has been and he decides that it was love, not suffering around which his life revolved.

It is not only the brilliant acting that creates the haunting experience that this *Hiob* is. Behind this acting creeps the beautiful, exciting and sometimes eerie music composed by Paul Koek. It gives a musical form to the suffering, the melancholy and the love which spin around in Mendels head. It stays with you for a while. As will the performance as a whole, which shows all over again that Simons is one of the most important directors of his time.

Dutch Hand in Hand with Deutsch

Eva Kyselová (Slovakia)

The title of the novel by Joseph Roth can raise an impression of biblical narration but it is not true at all. The novel talks about life and its cycle and "lottery". In this case there is an individual hero, the biblical Hiob, called Mendel Singer, an average man, teacher, father and husband, but first of all, a deeply faithful person. His faith is the centre of every part of his life and relationships, of his action and the results of situations in which he takes part.

But what can happen when the faith is becoming weaker and weaker? Or when the faith is just not enough? The German production of *Hiob* directed by the Dutch Johan Simons is from one point of view focused on one's faith, the power of it and also on human weakness and lack of patience.

The performance is the perfect rendition of German acting, almost no psychology and emotional waterfalls; on the other hand, the stage is full of truthfulness and tension. Also the set design is built on the same level, in the same rhythm, an empty space and in the centre of it a big traditional kitschy children carousel, which is the place where the main scenes are presented. It is not only the house of the Singer´s family in Russia or Sam´s american house but as well as the place where Mendel thinks about his life, where he asks for the justice of the world and where he tries to deal with his own loneliness and the loss of his wife and children and finally recovering his lost son, Menuchim. The titles on the carousel, like Love, Death, Birth, are in some way symbols of everyone's life journey and are shown by rotation of the carousel, also functioning as something like mementos: between birth and death there is nothing else except love and through love man can gather faith or happiness, even if one does not know the exact definition of love.

The whole visual aspect of the performance looks like something ordinary or even cliché, but on it provides an important message of the play and its staging, some kind of *supertemporality*, by watching at the jumper with dear and outfits from the 80´s you would not say that it is a story from the Second World War but that this story can happen any time and to any man.

One of the important issues that is discussed by the performance is also the crisis of the family and the disruption of family relations, the disability of communication between parents and their children which develops into generation gaps and conflicts of traditions.

The most valuable part of the production is the acting, especially the effort of André Jung and his presentation of Mendel Singer, although sometimes it falls too much into „one-man show" and the other characters are somehow put in the cold. Jung´s Mendel is a modest and simple man and that is shown by using minimalist means of acting. However, through them he can post such a big amount of strength and importance of the thought that can force the audience to think about its own life questions. Not only Jung but everyone from the cast builds an unique personality and what is more interesting, by doubling the characters, they can divide and separate different characters without any fitting of the same patterns.

Johan Simons proved he can work with this ensemble and create specific works of art with valuable artistic and even philosophical statements.