

SANTIAGO, 23-27 OCTOBER 2007

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR FOR YOUNG THEATRE CRITICS

BRIEF REPORT

Following a suggestion from our good colleague and friend Manuel F. Vieites, the International Association of Theatre (IATC) has organized an International Seminar for Young Theatre Critics in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, between last 23 and 17 October, during the “Feira Galega das Artes Escénicas”, a five day show-case for the Galician performing arts. The festival, that is already in its 15th edition, is promoted by the “Consellería de Cultura e Deporte” and by the “Instituto Galego das Artes Escénicas e Musicais” (IGAEM) that worked as the generous hosts for this initiative of the IATC, which has also had the support of the Theatre Studies section of the “Asociación de Directores de Escena” and of the “Escola Superior de Arte Dramática de Galicia”.

The seminar was monitored by Paulo Eduardo Carvalho (member of the board of the Portuguese Association of Theatre Critics and assistant to the director of the young critics’ seminars within the IATC, Margareta Sörenson) and by Mark Brown (theatre critic of the Scottish national newspaper the *Sunday Herald* and Scottish critic of the London-based paper the *Daily Telegraph*) and it has counted with the participation of 12 young theatre critics (between the ages of 21 and 33), coming from 9 different IATC member countries: Anna Håkansson, from Sweden; Borbála Sebők, from Hungary; Celia Ledoux, from Belgium; Constança Carvalho Homem, from Portugal; Daria Feherova, from Slovakia; Elitsa Mateeva, from Bulgaria; Florin-Rares Tileaga, from Romania; Gálné Papp Tímea, from Hungary; Jan Petružela, from the Czech Republic; Johan Hilton, from Sweden; Katherine Fournier, from Canada; and Kremena Dimitrova, from Bulgaria. In their very enriching diversity, all the participants, without exception, revealed an extraordinary theoretical and applied critical training, as well as the maturity and good sense necessary to deal with a theatrical reality that was completely foreign to them.

Besides the extraordinary opportunities offered by the magnificent city of Santiago de Compostela – among which we should single out the very advantageous vicinity and walking distance of all the spaces and venues where we worked and the shows of the festival were taking place –, it is important to say that the working conditions assured by our Galician hosts for this seminar were close to ideal: from the quality and urban situation of the hotel where all the participants were accommodated to the quality of the meals that were offered to us, from the adequacy of the room where the seminar took place (a room in the second floor of the Salón Teatro) to the repeated gentleness and efficiency of everyone connected to the organization that supported our work. The coincidence of all these elements contributed for the smooth development of a very productive seminar.

The seminar included 5 daily sessions of around 3h30m each, dedicated to the discussion of the productions seen the day before and to the presentations that the different participants made about the theatrical realities of their own countries and the situation of criticism in those same countries, that revealed themselves to be of impeccable quality and extremely interesting. The single exceptions to this distribution of our work happened in the first session, the one of the 23rd – dedicated to the personal presentation of each of the participants, but also including the presence of Manuel F. Vieites and Miguel Martín Fernández, this last one on behalf of IGAEM, and a visit to an exhibition celebrating the 125 years of the Galician theatre, displayed at the Gonzalo Torrente Ballester – and in the final session, the 27th: its second half was dedicated to a more general discussion and it included the participation, again, of Manuel F. Vieites

who kindly answered to many questions from the participants, curious to know more about Galician theatre and the situation of theatre studies and artistic training in Galicia.

Among the abundant programme of the festival – 4 to 6 shows a day, in a total of 26 productions in 5 days –, we've decided to select two shows a day that all the participants were supposed to attend, because those were the ones to be discussed the following morning. The participants were free to attend any other of the remaining shows. The selection was made taking into account, especially, the apparently less “textual” dimension of some productions, in order to overcome the linguistic barrier that conditioned the reception from most of the participants. The “obligatory” list of productions for all the participants has included the following shows: *Truenos & misterios* (Matarile Teatro), *Cloun Creolus Dei* (Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português – Instituto Camões Mindelo), *Sen título 4x8x6* (Os Monicreques de Kukas), *Margar no pazo do tempo* (Sarabela Teatro), *O burgués fidalgo* (Teatro do Morcego), *30.000* (Pisando Ovos), *Kamikaze* (PistaCatro) and *Corpos disidentes* (Nut Teatro). Some of the participants still attended some other productions, sharing, although in a briefer way, with the other colleagues their impressions on those experiences.

The experience was regarded as extremely positive by all the participants, monitors and trainees alike, both from the strictly training and educational point of view and from the more broad cultural benefits. Two critical observations emerged during the sessions and again at the end of the seminar that we would like to share hopefully to better the functioning of such an experience in the future. First, everyone felt that it would have been extremely useful to have some of the materials concerning the festival that were distributed to the participants translated into English in order to facilitate the understanding and the knowledge of some of productions and companies included in the Festival. Secondly, it seems highly advisable to insist on the participation of two or more young Galician or Spanish theatre critics, not only for their own personal benefit, but also for the benefit the foreign participants that would thus have a more informal access to information on the cultural and theatrical local reality.

On behalf of IATC, Paulo Eduardo Carvalho







“FEIRA GALEGA DAS ARTES ESCÉNICAS”: SOME FOREIGN REACTIONS

Between 23 and 27 October 2007, the “Feira Galega das Artes Escénicas” hosted an International Seminar for Young Theatre Critics, organized by the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC), monitored by Paulo Eduardo Carvalho (member of the board of the Portuguese Association and assistant to the director of the young critics’ seminars within the IATC, Margareta Sörenson) and by Mark Brown (theatre critic of the Scottish national newspaper the *Sunday Herald* and Scottish critic of the London-based paper the *Daily Telegraph*). The Seminar had the participation of 12 young theatre critics (between the ages of 21 and 33), coming from 9 different IATC member countries: Anna Håkansson (Sweden); Borbála Sebök (Hungary); Celia Ledoux (Belgium); Constança Carvalho Homem (Portugal); Daria Feherova (Slovakia); Elitsa Mateeva (Bulgaria); Florin-Rares Tileaga (Romania); Gálné Papp Tímea (Hungary); Jan Petružela (Czech Republic); Johan Hilton (Sweden); Katherine Fournier (Canada); and Kremena Dimitrova (Bulgaria).

Among the abundant programme of the festival – 4 to 6 shows a day, in a total of 26 productions in 5 days –, the group decided to select two shows a day that all the participants were supposed to attend, because those were the ones to be discussed the following morning. The selection was made taking into account, especially, the apparently less “textual” dimension of some productions, in order to overcome the linguistic barrier that conditioned the reception from most of the participants. The “obligatory” list of productions for all the participants ended up including the following shows: *Truenos & misterios* (Matarile Teatro), *Cloun Creolus Dei* (Grupo de Teatro do Centro Cultural Português – Instituto Camões Mindelo), *Sen título 4x8x6* (Os Monicreques de Kukas), *Margar no pazo do tempo* (Sarabela Teatro), *O burguês fidalgo* (Teatro do Morcego), *30.000* (Pisando Ovos), *Kamikaze* (PistaCatro) and *Corpos disidentes* (Nut Teatro).

This article presents, first, a brief summary of the general critical discussions on those productions and, second, some individual reviews of those same productions contributed.

I. The general critical exchanges, by Mark Brown and Paulo Eduardo Carvalho

Of all the shows our group attended *Sen título 4x8x6* (*técnica mixta sobre o cenário*), by the company Os Monicreques de Kukas, received the most universally and unambiguously negative reaction. It would not be putting it too strongly to say that there was a consensus that the production failed in almost every conceivable department, and that it was, in fact, impossible to discuss it as a work of professional theatre.

It was felt that the show – in which Kukas himself plays the role of an artist whose creations on paper come magically to life – exhibited a complete lack of awareness of developments in puppetry, children’s theatre and children’s entertainment more generally. Criticisms of the piece included: an out-of-date attempt to treat theatre for children as educational instruction; an inability to properly manipulate puppets; an attempt to ascribe to puppets movements which were inconsistent with their physical characteristics; a failure, in the lighting, to either properly light puppets or in any way obscure the black-clad, masked puppeteers (who the show clearly intended to obscure); poor use of electronic media; and a gratuitous attempt (in the closing sequence) to invoke the masters of modern art in a show which was far more likely to alienate children from art than attract them to it.

Another unfortunate example of a truly amateurish approach, according to everyone's opinion, was *O burgués fidalgo* that managed to devoid Molière's original of both its comedy – it was noticed that during the show there were rarely any laughs from the audience – and its critical edge. The use of gaudy costumes and music – the presence of a harpsichord on stage found no real “motivation” – was not enough to disguise the total absence of a coherent artistic approach, particularly noticeable in the set design and in the acting. Some people also experienced some uneasiness about the way the “Turkish” characters were portrayed.

The main problems most of the participants had with *Cloun Creolus Dei* regarded the way that production handled its inspiration on the tradition of the clown – for some the simple use of a red nose was not enough to summon a much wider gamut of possibilities – and the extremely slow pace of the action, that risked making the show more boring than apparently intended.

In the case of *Margar no pazo do tempo*, the group was, in general, a great deal more enthusiastic. There was general agreement that the story of Margar's discovery of this new and highly unusual therapeutic environment was drawing strongly (and, for most participants, positively) upon the tale of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Among the majority who were well disposed towards the production, there was praise for what was considered to be a grotesque, burlesque acting style which gave the piece a decadence and sensuality. It was observed that in the representations of the various characters – both medical staff and patients in the mental health institution – there was a pleasing diversity in the different kinds of madness portrayed.

In contrast with many (perhaps most) of the other productions reviewed, there was general agreement that there was a harmony between the acting and the directorial vision for the play. In particular, one participant observed (drawing upon the ideas of Meyerhold) that the piece achieved the goal of presenting on stage events and/or images which can only exist in the theatre.

Among the minority who were more critical of the show, there were those who observed: a heavy-handed, sometimes unprofessional, use of electronically projected images; an overly simplified presentation of matters of mental ill-health; and a lack of development in the characters, with the exception of Margar herself. There was disagreement over what was termed “the Antigone chess scene”; with some participants thinking it was an incongruous theatrical reference in the context of the play, whilst others were of the view that it fitted well with the drama's themes.

In spite of the language barrier, *Truenos & misterios* was considered to be a visually stimulating production, although some questions were raised regarding its structure – some people suggested a certain lack of fluency – and the apparently “contrived” use of movement in its more ostensible choreographic moments. However, it was generally acknowledged that the impossibility of following most of the spoken parts inhibited a more balanced assessment of this very peculiar and, at times, also very moving creation.

The two productions more obviously connected to dance and to the use of other technologies were respectively *30.000* and *Corpos disidentes*. The first of those two shows was probably the one that raised a larger debate, due both to the difficulty in the identification of a clear narrative or “dramaturgy” and to the apparent lack of relation between the different sequences: basically it was everyone's impression that the production missed some fluency and a clearer enunciation of its true concerns.

Corpos disidentes, by contrast, benefited from little in the way of support from our group. Those who comprehended the spoken text suggested that it was very poorly written, lacking in subtlety and poetry, and failed to contextualise the character who

appeared to the non-Spanish speakers to be the narrator. The piece was criticised for its clichéd symbolism (such as in its use of the naked female body and of a character receiving morphine) and serious technical problems (especially in the loud electronic buzzing which disturbed the show). There was, by consensus, an extreme disappointment in the use, in the opening of the show, of Henryk Górecki's third symphony (*Sorrowful Songs*). It was agreed that the use of such a powerfully emotive piece of music was at no point justified by the show which followed. The metaphor which was applied was of a blancmange which falls flat.

There was, among some participants, also some shock and surprise to discover that a piece which appears to be such a personal reflection by women on matters relating to women's experience and the politics of the female body should be directed by a man. It was not suggested that male directors should not direct shows with such avowedly female themes (after all, the great feminist play *The House of Bernarda Alba* was written by a male author); however, there was confusion as to why this piece, collectively devised by a female cast, was not directed by a woman from within the company.

Pistacatro's *Kamikaze* was, without question, the most well received of the shows reviewed by our group. Whilst it was widely accepted that the company has not yet achieved a real integration of circus skills into a truly theatrical narrative – in the style of European “new circus” – the show was praised for its achievement of an upbeat festival atmosphere and a contagious sense of fun between performers and audience.

It was agreed that the story of the commemoration of the life of Mr Kamikaze was a thin cover for what was, essentially, a succession of circus acts. Some participants commented on a number of failures in the performance of circus skills, especially juggling; but all agreed that the performers dealt with such shortcomings with an admirable and entertaining good humour. The creation of diverse characters – built out the physicalities and personalities of the performers – and the creative, and varied, use of live music received particular praise.

There were some misgivings about the show, nevertheless. Some felt that the anarchic element of the piece was left under-developed; it was suggested that this was a matter of poor or too lightly applied dramaturgy. Ultimately, however, the production was warmly received; particularly the scenes in which the Olympic Games and a fictional country (rivalling Galicia) were invoked.

Participants appreciated the breadth and diversity of the festival programme. However, again and again, the issue of quality was raised. The general quality was felt to be low for what was intended to be a showcase of the best in Galician theatre. The issue of the “dangers of pluralism” was raised; which is to say that in choosing, perhaps out of a misplaced sense of “democracy”, to give a platform to poor quality shows, the programmers of the festival were, unintentionally, acting against the interests of Galician theatrical scene.

II. Some individual short reviews

Sen título 4x8x6 (técnica mixta sobre o escenario), by Jan Petružela

If a puppet theatre company exists since 1979, we can expect experience and certain knowledge. The production by the Monicreques de Kukas pretended to convey in “gran formato” and “técnica mixta” the process of making art.

On stage we could see a studio of the painter and musician interpreted by Kukas – who was the only character. Master is bouncing along his studio gurgling his only

sounds “ay, ay” and trying to make “some art” using a giant sketch-book, an easel or a piano. Around him three hidden animators in black were “dancing” with puppets and objects, trying to demonstrate different techniques of puppet animation in pretended interaction with their creator.

Unfortunately, what they all showed us was the lack of basic knowledge of manipulation and animation of puppets together with a lack of any sense of theatricality and even worse a total absence of fantasy – and that’s a true disaster for an artist. Movements of puppets, we couldn’t talk about any expression here, because it was limited only to shaking and twisting puppets, moving them from left to right, without any surprise or any idea of what they were doing. There were no situations, no development, no point in the actions. Puppets themselves seemed to be drawn out from a theatre store, from different performances, not allowing any possibilities for animation. The animators themselves were lost on stage and everything was put in a confused heap of badly accomplish actions. In the scenes with computer animation we could even see the “hands” of the animator (mouse pointer)! Are they really so naive and inept?

This show was announced to be for everybody, including children. But no child in the audience seemed to be interested in these Kukas’s “magic”. You can’t teach if you have nothing to teach. It might be even counterproductive to show this kind of shows to children. This performance reminds me of purely commercial shows which are trying to earn money from the pretended ignorance of children.

Present some painting “without title“ offer to spectator larger field of interpretation and employment of his fantasy but at least we have to have use our fantasy *on* something, but where is no fantasy and basic knowledge there can’t be a response from spectator even if he tries. Dear Mr. Kukas, scrawl remains scrawl even without title.

***O burgués fidalgo*, by Florian-Rareş Tileagă**

One of the most awkward moments of the festival was *O burgués fidalgo*, a production of Teatro do Morcego, directed by Celso Parada and performed at Teatro Principal. Let us see why this show was poor in its attempt of gaining trust from the audience.

Declaring itself a contemporary textual adaptation of Moliere’s comedy, the show lost itself, however, in an ambiguous search for actual references, which ruined the elementary chances of humour from Moliere’s play. This idea of formally adapting the play to the context of 2007 was, in fact, a way to misinterpret the stake of *O burgués fidalgo*, because the ethical context of the monarchic french epoch – with all its manners, excesses, clichés and ridicule – was an anhistorical one, as in the case of shakespearean drama. But the thing was that the director did not even bring this adaptation to an end, so that, visually, the show was not even a synthesis; it was a sort of arbitrary and incompatible mixture of cultural signs (to be seen in costumes, set and musical score). Thus, it was clear that, in spite of good intentions, the show had no trace of vision, looking like something made collectively, with loose ambitions.

There could be seen lots of stage accessories (harpsicord, candles, etc.) whose presence could only be little justified. Nevertheless, they were kept there all through the show, with no sense of predication, probably for the sake of filling the stage with things that seemed interesting. This way, the scenography showed a total lack of knoweldge regarding motivation, which could have made minimum sense on stage. Moreover, the actors could be seen passing behind the set, before entering the performance, but this cheap metatheatrical exercise had no meaning within the logic of the whole.

As for acting, the artists were so eager to be “funny”, that everything turned into a hysterical, accidental, clumsy fight for drawing attention; they were fooling around, becoming really tired and loud, repeating clichés, without any determination and performativity. This abuse actually canceled that charm of characters and lines from Moliere’s play (very funny though), so the audience could feel no comical tension or development. Not to mention the obvious racist references of the show, concerning Far East. Yet, their indecency was harmless, due to the lack of subtlety. The show only managed to produce sympathetic and confused laughters, obviously due to its weak performative shape...

***Margar no pazo do tempo*, by Daria Feherova**

“Free your mind and the rest will follow”, are the words of the popular song from the female quartet En Vogue. In *Margar no pazo do tempo*, by Sarabela Teatro, we hear mostly classic music, strong and emotional (Mozart, Carl Orff). Music is primary among the elements which are used to free the mind of the main character, Margar.

Margar comes to the stage as Alice comes to Wonderland. Suddenly she appears at a place full of strange people, dressed in strange and colorful costumes and her task is to understand them – which means to become one of them; a process which is achieved by her participation in a variety of activities, or “acts”, with her new companions.

Margar is sometimes an active participant, sometimes an observer. She is – like a child – watching what is going on around her. And there is a lot going on: people singing, dancing, performing, eating and, of course having sex. Everyone is, somehow, different, sometimes showing his / her oddness, sometimes hiding it. At the end, Margar decides to join the group without hesitation.

Margar’s change from an observer to a member of this odd club is well hidden from the public. We do not see other emotions in her face; except surprise, which she shows with her eyes wide open and a slight smile. She announces the freedom of her mind at the end of the show, and she does it verbally. There is no transformation visible during the performance. We believe her because she says so.

Other actors maintain their characters throughout, performing with a professional exactness and a palpable pleasure. They employ exaggerated gestures and face-play, often successfully creating a sense of the grotesque. The actors are very thoughtful, consciously and deliberately using their entire body and concentrating on the performance; one feels that one can rely on them to maintain their roles until the end.

There is, intentionally, no obvious “logic” to the play. However, through this lack of logic, the drama succeeds in creating a fascinating combination of the inspired and the banal.

For someone, such as myself – who does not understand the language – the production was full of funny situations and visually interesting moments. However, in discussion with others, I have discovered that – to, at least, some of those who speak Galician or Spanish – *Margar no pazo do tempo* reveals a poor plot and a lack of originality.

***Margar no pazo do tempo*, by Johan Hilton**

Sometimes you are really lucky being Swedish, not knowing any Galician at all. When, after the show, I discovered, from a friend, what *Margar no pazo do tempo* was really about, I realized I would not have appreciated it as much if I knew what the actors were saying.

If I got it right, *Margar* addresses matters of time, sex and sanity from quite a philosophical angle. Set in some kind of mental hospital, the play seems, at first glance,

to have some similarities with the German playwright Peter Weiss's classic *Marat/Sade*. There is the same discussion about what it is to be "normal" and "abnormal" – on the basis of the behaviour of so-called "fools" in a society characterized by its fixation on "normality". There are also some references to sexuality as a potential revolutionary force.

The closest theatrical and aesthetic relative to *Margar*, however, would most definitely be 70's camp classic *The Rocky Horror Show*. For example, the main character – the new doctor at the institution, Margar, played by Nate Borrajo – goes through the same phases of sexual and moral corruption as the young Republican couple in the queer musical.

In the end of the play there is, in short, no way for Margar to get back to her former, chaste life. She has to succumb to her emotional and sexual impulses together with her doctor colleagues and the patients in a, supposedly, on-going never-ending orgy.

The set design is a large star-shaped metal wall, flanked by stairs leading to different doors, in their turn leading to the different wards of the institution. Sadly, the stage of Salón Teatro is far too small for such an advanced set. The decoration looks quite overdimensioned, and gives an almost claustrophobic impression.

However, this shortcoming has a counter-balance in the numerous inspired characterisations by the different members of the cast; the performances of Xosé A. Porto and Fernando da Costa, in particular, are quite seductive. This is very appropriate, I would say, in a play where sexuality and attraction are such prominent ingredients.

***Truenos & misterios*, by Katherine Fournier**

The show started before the show started: the five performers are already exposed as the audience trickles in. "Exposed" is perhaps the best word to describe this piece; from its onset, the actors – I use this term loosely – expose themselves in order to be more fully revealed. Be it the blunt exposure of a naked body or a deeper exposure of the nebulous world of artistic creation, this performance stirs the audience by toying with our expectations.

The stage is quite simple: a long table stretches across the stage, parallel to the audience. On top, a few objects are strewn: a typewriter, a record player. A piano sits behind it, vaguely lit. A pianist silently lingers nearby throughout the production. Upstage, there is a chalk board. It is not clear exactly where we are; a perfectly mysterious locale for what we are about to witness.

The roles of the characters are also quite elusive. On one hand they are themselves. On the other, they are defined by their professions. But any attempt to piece together their identities is destabilized by the constant transformations that the performers enact. A realistic conversation, for example, is suddenly disrupted. Ana Vallés, who is loosely defined as the director, exits the conversation by climbing onto the table. As she crawls across it, a nostalgic melody oozes from the record player. Vallés' slow and twisted movements destroy the conventionality of the exchange in which she was just engaged.

Seemingly a collectively devised production, it is structured as a series of vignettes, the names of which are often scrawled onto the chalk board. This meta-theatricality is met by contortions of the body through movement and costuming. The pace becomes quite captivating; the vignettes flow seamlessly into one another, always culminating in some sort of visually discordant image. As the scientist soliloquizes, he slowly becomes clothed in vegetables until he appears to become the very plants he studies. The image is rich and incongruous.

However, it is just here that the performance's impact is diluted. Given that this show relies so heavily on a series of chaotic images, there is something noticeably tame about the movements of the performers. The performances tend toward the bizarre, but never reach the point of shock. Despite these moments of inhibition, this show is quite captivating. The performance's skilful play on our expectations is both intriguing and memorable.

***Truenos & misterios*, by Elitsa Mateeva**

This was my first *rendezvous* with the world of director Ana Valles. A *rendezvous* that I will remember with excitement because for quite some time that I was not presented with such a performance, incarnating a text and a moving body and letting them try to interpret death and life like a part of a surrealistic picture. Five actors around one table, one piano and a black board in a search for the most powerful monologue, which answers the question "where is the sense, wherefore we live?"

Probably to be the motive power for the play like an idea and text is a practice of the director. Probably this is theatre influenced by the fine arts, by the world of Miró, Dali, the dreams... Sometimes the idea to be multiform in the means of expression and narration overexposes the cleanness of the form, anyhow this happened with some actors' physical actions – the movement of Ana Valles on the table, for example, but this was not the problem, because in the play there are many interesting scenes like the interviews of Ana's character with different actors/characters – this sequence even reminded me of some episodes from Pedro Almodovar's cinema and his curious and ambitious women journalists.

The performance functioned like a jazz piece, one in which the melody is based on the fantasy, on the desire to create, suggesting different metaphors, sometimes tired like syncopes, sometimes naive like a lullaby. This production seemed possessed by some kind of retro nostalgic memory, he has the spirit of something already seen, in spite of all, the presented did not disappoint, even when his eclectic surpasses the acceptable proportions at several moments. Because to be excited, while you observe closely the actor's work is a sign, that somewhere, somehow the real faith and love of this, that they create is happened in them. And for me this kind of love makes sense for the work in the theater.

***30.000*, by Celia Ledoux**

Place some lights on a scaffold in an industrial space. Attach a high-voltage spot to a rotating metal arm. Then retire for a few months of reflexion and pop out a dramaturgic baby that immerses the audience in a mesmerising physical, emotional and sensorial immersion bath. That is Ruth Balvin and David Loira's answer to "What would you do with 30 000 €?", also the questioning subtitle on the lavish goldcoloured leaflet to their new play: 30 000.

With that subtitle, a baroque play or a political statement on subsidising could be suspected. None of that, though, and that's only the first of many mental *trompe l'oeils*. In a scarce set at the industrially bare "Sala Nasa", the two makers, ex-students at the London Contemporary Dance School and professors at Vigo academy carry out their own, seemingly equally scarce choreography.

Though their corporeal dialogue may seem simple, it never bores. They are supported by a soundtrack going from Purcell-ish arias over poppish ballads to triphop, techno and hardrock and build on their minimal scene to transform the room in a dehumanised clubbing scene, bedroom, rock concert or golf lawn. Mostly though, the audience's imagination is their tool. Staying completely emotionally void in their

physical dialogue, the music takes over the role of emotion conveyor. Distortion is used as a musical sign of confusion, lyrics speak what the robotlike doubtfulness of the dancers shields, and reverbs stretch out to an all too realistic post-clubbing earbuzz. Finally, some unsuspected sensory attacks challenge the audience even physically to become part of the experience.

Like Alice In Clubberland, we're catapulted into an experience where the dancers are depersonalised as every clubber is, even wearing uniform glitter dresses. Any uniform is acceptable if it makes you fit in. Reduced to merely puppets, symbols for the viewer's own experiences, they need only follow the rules of music, lighting and the few props. In such a universe, it's no wonder that real emotional moments represent the biggest void, the greatest clumsiness and silence. Concerning feelings nothing could dictate the dancers – and it renders their bodies speechless.

The atmosphere is dark and loaded with sense and sensorial experiences. Nevertheless, this performance succeeds in walking the line between exclamation and sterility, a line sliced thinner yet by their jagged evocation of contemporary life in the fast lane.

30.000 euro, by Kremena Dimitrova

In this production, it was all a question of the dangerous fantasies and unconsciousness wishes of women: an overlapping of thoughts about sexuality, fear of violence, desire of not-ordinary experience presented on the stage organized by a controversial and exciting choreography. The company Pisando Ovos put two human bodies (male and female) in an attractive empty space with amazing light design resembling a the big concert event. Both dancers wore the same extravagant silver dresses and high heels – signs of the peep show costumes. The body wants to strip all rules of behaviour, social and gender laws, regulations of normality. The body and consciousness wants to be free.

Life is a series of ordinary and unexpected supreme and not-ordinary moments – as violence, as explosion, as smashing...The choreography shows different slow and erotic movements, follow by contrasted explosions. This two bodies looks and movies like two parts of one and the same divided body. The character performed by Rut Balbis seemed to be a person with its alter ego – the dark part of unconsciousness life, performed by David Loira. The two both wonderful performers respect us with good trained bodies, well sculptured muscles and expressive way of dancing.

The whole performance used irony and eroticism in an attractive way. Although it didn't have any logic storyline assuring a more solid structure, the show followed an exact and very well invented number of tricks. But a more precise structure of particular pieces would have improved the main idea. In some moments it lost some dynamic and the energy fell down. My favourite sequence was the imaginary applause of the big star show in which both performers pretended that they were on a stadium. They looked at the audience and imagined real excited reaction of the spectators who seemed too tired and plunged in apathy. They really needed to be awaked, with the smash of the poor porcelain at the very end.

Corpos dissidentes, by Constança Carvalho Homem

Corpos dissidentes is, in broad terms, a reflection on female identity. The first actress to come on stage, an avowed *voyeuse* and exhibitionist, records herself on video and acts as a sort of conductress for the whole show, introducing the three remaining players; "así que mira me", she says repeatedly, inviting the audience to take a longer stare. Once these players are allowed to come out of their glass cells (or should I say bell

jars?), they begin to show the stuff they're made of and to map out the circumstances of their own existence. Unexpected as those circumstances might be, the text is, however, too confessional and at times a little too obvious. On the other hand, it could have benefited from a slightly less conventional delivery.

Let us go back to the "the stuff they're made of". It's true that the show greatly relies on the plasticity of the performers' bodies and its ability to convey meaning. At a given moment, the body becomes a canvas, in a clear citation of certain exemplary performance art practices. But why is the body on display so explicitly? In itself, nudity is not a statement: it needs to be put into context and into perspective. I believe one of the show's major flaws is precisely the usage of nudity to make up for a poor text – one that gives everything away without questioning.

While the show displays some interesting imagery, and I'm specifically thinking of the bathtub and glass cells sequences, the main recognisably choreographed moments, it fails to provide a suitable overall frame. There is no narrative development or accumulation, only a succession of unconnected verbal and visual landscapes. In fact, one might feel that most elements on stage are quite striking but, oddly enough, neither purposeful nor pertinent. Surely, the fact that *Corpos dissidentes* was written and devised by the performers themselves partly accounts for the fragmental nature of the show, but given the fact that there was a designated director, one would've expected a more effective spatial management and a more mature weaving of text and movement. Moreover, there should've been a more careful establishment of the fair length for each physical action. The locking of the three naked bodies, for instance, was painfully long and, what's more, uncalled for in terms of stage and action balance. At that point, I could not help myself from feeling that there was some amount of objectification, one or two degrees of overexposure that really hampered the show. All in all, *Corpos dissidentes* is not yet ripe, but could well be, in due time, after some serious dramaturgical rethinking.

***Corpos dissidentes*, by Anna Håkansson**

Corpos Dissidentes is an attempt to create a feministic performance. Unfortunately it doesn't succeed. The form is a combination of different media; performance, installation, dance and text. The use of technique is central; when we enter the auditorium a camera is already present on stage. The characters – three young, beautiful women – are presented dancing in hi-tech glass boxes, reminiscent of transparent phone booths. The boxes are being pushed around by a fourth performer, just as young and "ravishing" as the other women, equipped with a headset. Following the opening sequence, in which there is a very clear focus upon the bodies of the women in the boxes, the fourth woman delivers a monologue, with a video camera pointed at her face, which is projected onto a screen in the front of the stage. Our attention is drawn to the image rather than her actual presence, creating a distancing effect. Her gadgets make her appear as the hostess of the performance, leading us in and out of the stories being told.

The first performer in the trio of female characters enters pulling a bathtub. Performing a strange, but fascinating dance, she lets herself sink down in the tub, her legs, which are left in the air, are the only part of her body still visible to the audience; thus, they seeming detached from the rest of her body. It is a surreal image, which seems incongruous, given the predictability of the rest of her appearance. The second woman is dressed in a hospital robe. Laying down on a bed being given morphine the woman wearing the headset starts to rotate the bed, faster and faster, in an attempt to illustrate the drug running through her veins. The scene could have been efficient, were

it not for the obvious resistance in the movements. The last character to appear is a woman with a more violent approach, her anger directed out, rather than inwards. The audio supposed to accompany her performance malfunctions, but somehow this is compensated by her sincerity and she becomes the one character that is actually believable.

The ambition of the performance is overshadowed by the fact that it never reaches below the surface, even though the actors desperately try to take us under their skin. Rather than challenging clichés and stereotypes, the performance is burdened by a flat use of them. This impression is aggravated by the fact that the director turns out to be a man. Knowing this, the importance of the issues dealt with, is subordinated the awkward exposure of the women's bodies and souls.

When the women are once again dragged upon the stage in their glass cages, covered with words written all over their, now only partly-clad, bodies, the performance reaches a level that is, in a double sense, too literal.

Kamikaze, by Borbála Sebők

First of all, I would like to say that to me, *Kamikaze* by Pistacatro was the most interesting and enjoyable performance at the Galician Theatrical Festival. I felt elated from the first moment I entered the door of *Salon Teatró*. The majority of the audience consisted of young people, and already from the ambience of buoyant anticipation, you could feel they were really waiting for the performance, which made them remarkably different from the other audiences I saw at the festival. Besides, the first-class live music that accompanied the performance gave enough reason to rejoice in its own right.

It is a great challenge in contemporary theatre to blend circus, dance and theatrical elements together. *Kamikaze* gave one possible and positive answer for the question of using the medium of circus in theatre.

The performance took a theatrical situation, but didn't chronologically order it from the beginning to the end. It started with what was revealed to be the yearly celebration of Kamikaze's death. The guests were continuously arriving, and more and more curious things were happening.

The stage had two levels, each with two or three separated boxes covered with white curtains. Whoever drew a curtain would always find something surprising behind it: a live musician or a lost guest, for example. *Kamikaze's* dramaturgy reminds me to Tarantino films. The narrative is not ordered by logics or reality, but rather by surreality and brutal associations. In this case, it is stylized and complicated with the elements of circus. There were small narratives, but they didn't complete each other in one big narrative. The best small story was the Olympic games parody with one of the actors carrying the Olympic flame as in a slow motion film.

The stunts sometimes constituted a part of the given theatrical situation, but at other times, acrobatics and stunts stopped the performance and had no dramaturgical justification except for the actors to show the audience how skilled they are at jumping or somersaults.

I am sorry to say that the performance is perhaps a half hour longer than it should be. At the end, it started repeating the earlier tricks and got more and more boring. Having said that, we can conclude that it was a really valuable performance which made the medium of circus work like a charm in the theatre.