

Dampfzentrale Kesselhaus

FR 1.5. | 18:15 | 21:30

SA 2.5. | 15:30 | 17:30 | 19:30

SO 3.5. | 14:15 | 16:15 | 18:15 | 20:15

BERLIN (Antwerpen)

Perhaps All The Dragons

Mit: Derek Blyth, Sergey Glushkov, François Pierron, Juan Albeiro Serrato Torres, Rinat Shaham, Shizuka Hariu, Shlomi Krichely, Jonas Jonsson, Nirman Arora, Suneet Chhabra, Luci Comincioli, Roger Christmann, Regina Vilaça, Pat Butler, Walter Müller, Adela Efendieva, Andrew Mugisha, Ramesh Parekh, Nico Mäkel, Wim Mäkel, Tamas Sandor, Philippe Cappelle, Romik Rai, Brecht Ghijselink, Vladimir Bondarev, Andrei Tarasov, Matsumoto Kazushi, Bob Turner, Geert-Jan Jansen, Kurt Lannoye, Robrecht Ghesquière, Laura Fierens, Patryk Wezowski, Hilde Verhelst, Christina Davidsen
Konzept: Bart Baele, Yves Degryse Szenografie: BERLIN, Manu Siebens Text: Kirsten Roosendaal, Yves Degryse, Bart Baele

Schnitt: Bart Baele, Geert De Vleeschauwer, Yves Degryse Soundtrack,

Mixing: Peter Van Laerhoven

Kamera: Geert De Vleeschauwer

Technik: Robrecht Ghesquière

Produktionsleitung: Laura Fierens Research,

Dramaturgie: Natalie Schrauwen

Management: Kurt Lannoye

Diffusion: Kathleen Trier

Koproduktion: Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, KunstenfestivaldesArts Brüssels, le Centquatre Paris, Dublin Theatre Festival, Centrale Fies Dro, Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival Groningen, La Bâtie – Festival de Genève, Zomer van Antwerpen, NXTSTP mit der Unterstützung des Culture Programme of the European Union und ONDA - Office national de diffusion artistique

Mit der Unterstützung der flämischen Regierung

Sprache: mehrsprachig mit deutschen und englischen Untertiteln

Dauer: 1h 15min

Eintritt: 35.–/25.–

«Vielleicht sind alle Drachen unseres Lebens Prinzessinnen, die nur darauf warten, uns einmal schön und mutig zu sehen. Vielleicht ist alles Schreckliche im tiefsten Grunde das Hilflose, das von uns Hilfe will.» (Rainer Maria Rilke)

Die Belgische Künstlergruppe BERLIN hat weltweit die Leute hinter kleinen und grossen Geschichten aus Zeitschriften, Zeitungen, Webmagazinen oder Youtube getroffen: Die berühmte Pianistin, die auf der Bühne merkte, dass sie das falsche Konzert vorbereitet hatte, ein Neurochirurg, der die Köpfe zweier Affen getauscht hat, eine japanische Hikikomori, die sich seit sieben Jahren in ihrem eigenen Schlafzimmer einsperrt. Die Theorie von den «six degrees of separation» hält die Geschichten zusammen.

Die 30 Episoden über private Entscheidungen mit grossen Auswirkungen werden von ihren Protagonisten an einem runden Tisch auf 30 Bildschirmen erzählt. Jeder Zuschauer und jede Zuschauerin erhält seinen eigenen Parcours durch einen Teil der Aufnahmen und somit seine eigene Dramaturgie. Und doch sitzen alle in einer gemeinsamen Aufführung.

ANKÜNDIGUNG DER GRUPPE

Perhaps all the dragons Horror Vacui [#3]

[...in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage]

One round table

with thirty seated screens at one side of the table
and thirty audience seats at the other side.

Thirty one-on-one narratives.

The spectator can choose five he would like to see.

A famous pianist realizes on stage that she studied the wrong concerto – a neurosurgeon swaps head and body of two monkeys, they stay alive – in Japan there are 700 000 people living as hikikomori, withdrawn in their sleeping rooms for at least a year, away from social life - Six degrees of separation, a theory that everyone is six or fewer steps away from any other person in the world. A large array of dispersed stories will be offered to the audience.

Berlin will encounter the people behind the little or great stories in international magazines, newspapers, specialized internet sites, youtube. The themes brought up in these stories will be eclectic: from a philosophic proposition, over a scientific detail, to an anecdote...

Thirty stories, transformed to thirty filmed monologues with a dramaturgy that gives them a certain coherence. The duration of each narrative will be exactly the same and multiple interactions will intervene at different moments.

A one-on-one performance for 30 spectators, around one round table.

Perhaps all the dragons [...in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage]

I want to ask you something first. It is not a riddle; it's a question for those of you who are reading this. You have to choose someone. One person. One person from the seven billion inhabitants of the world. Someone, somewhere, it doesn't matter where. You do not know that person personally. It can be a sheik in Saudi Arabia, a seal hunter in Iqaluit, a prison guard in Kotido, or an Israeli fighter pilot. Anyone. Now the question is: how many steps do you think it will take for you to reach that person? How many steps, how many people are needed, for someone to make contact with someone he knows personally, someone who you speak with on familiar terms and not formal terms. How many do you think?

Now, you don't have to remember it or write it down. You already know the answer, it was told to you at the table just now by a professor of social psychology.

As of 2014, Berlin has been working on documentary-based performances situated between theatre and film for 10 full years, and has had the good fortune to be able to create and show these performances in various places in the world.

Along the way, we continued to come across new and exciting stories and people, and the desire grew to show the public a collection of these narratives that were found for the new creation *Perhaps all the Dragons*; to let them enter into dialogue with one another.

We started by listing the special stories that have wafted our way, articles we had kept, items we had encountered while researching and that had attracted our attention, and searched further based on this material. With the only guideline being that we would like to interview the protagonist. Without a predetermined dramaturgy or storyline. Just because they are interesting stories or people.

During the research process, some common themes inadvertently surfaced: remembering and memory, concentration and choice, research, specialisation.

We selected 30 one-on-one stories of an eclectic nature: from a scientific detail, to a philosophical proposal, to news items and anecdotes. Thirty documentary stories about wilful choices, courageous decisions, and irrefutable occurrences; about humour, acceptance and resistance, about forgetfulness, remembering, and love for the word.

The one story led to the other, and seemingly disparate people and events showed more similarities than we at first thought.

An opera singer who played only one single role during her entire career – a known pianist who while on stage realises that she has rehearsed the wrong concerto but can dig up the right concerto from memory, on the spot – a Russian man who only at the age of 25 realises that his inability to forget something is exceptional – a neurosurgeon who successfully transplants the head and body of two living apes – a Ugandan prison guard who on a certain day directs his attention to a fleeing rabbit – a brave little matador – a Jain nun who chooses to systematically phase out her worldly life – a Japanese woman who has lived in the privacy of her bedroom for 10 years – the scientist behind the theory that everyone on this planet is only a few steps removed from each other.

That last story served as a guide and unifying factor between the stories. Sometimes a character knew one of the other protagonists, or had heard of his story; in other cases, there were substantial similarities, geographic proximity, a shared interest.

But we also noticed that the entire working process of *Perhaps all the Dragons* was itself permeated by this small-world phenomenon.

From the search for stories, translators, décor items, film material, and locations, to the most impossible props; via person x who knew person y who again referred us to z, improbabilities were possible.

Looking back on 10 years of Berlin, this principle has seriously driven and coloured our work from the beginning.

We arrive in a city, as in a real fictional environment, and immerse ourselves in a world that is alien to us. With the eye of an outsider who wanders through the meandering streets of the city. By losing ourselves, we make our way to its very heart. One that can be found in every one of its inhabitants, rumbling metro lines, crumbling buildings. In the stone that is cast and shatters the windowpane to

smithereens, the silent boats in the frozen bay; in the gossip of neighbours, the discipline of a military parade.

Berlin makes documentary portraits of cities and situations like a writer works on a book. By searching for lines, threads, clusters; by creating characters in a not yet defined environment. We collected a palette of fragmented voices, perceived by kaleidoscopic eyes, and put our story together.

We let ourselves go from street to street, from the one human to the other, until we collected an expanded database of images.

And then, back home, we again lay out a path in the collected material, between all four corners we visited, and therein write our story.

The one thing leads to another, and to more and wider still. It is not only like this with people and their stories. We catch ourselves not just playing the game of six degrees with people, but also with things, with everything. The chain starts with a thing, a person, an issue, and with the last link it comes back to us.

And so we move from Jerusalem to Iqaluit in the Arctic, Bonanza, Moscow, the Ruhr district, the Westhoek, to a roundtable conference with people from all over the world. There is always something or someone that pushes us further-along to the next place. Lisbon. Rio. Zvizdal.

Six, that was the answer. On average. Six steps between you and anyone in the world you can imagine. But six intermediate steps separate you from, say, a French assassin, a Russian circus director, the seven residents of a small village in the Rocky Mountains, and the people who sat in front of you today. Before today then. As of now, it's only one step.

ÜBER BERLIN

The starting point of each performance of BERLIN is located in a city or a region somewhere on the planet. Characteristic is its documentary and interdisciplinary work methods. Focusing on a specific research question, it engages different media depending on the content of the project.

Bart Baele and Yves Degryse founded BERLIN in 2003 together with Caroline Rochlitz. They started the series Holocene [the Holocene is the current geological era] with the performances Jerusalem, Iqaluit, Bonanza and Moscow. A few years later BERLIN started a new cycle Horror Vacui [the fear of emptiness] of which Tagfish, Land's End and Perhaps All The Dragons are the first three episodes.

BERLIN is currently working on new performances in both cycles. The number of projects is not defined but the Holocene cycle will end in Berlin for the creation of a fiction-docu project with different inhabitants of the former cities of the cycle.

www.berlinberlin.be

Pressematerial (Fotos in druckfähiger Auflösung und Pressedossiers zu den einzelnen Produktionen) stehen auf <http://www.auawirleben.ch/medien.html> für Sie zum Herunterladen bereit.

Für weitere Auskünfte, Unterlagen zu den Produktionen, Bild- und eventuell Videomaterial wenden Sie sich bitte an +41 (0) 31 318 62 16 resp. nicolette.kretz@auawirleben.ch. Wir stehen gerne zu Ihrer Verfügung. Spezielle Wünsche wie Interviews oder Porträts melden Sie bitte frühzeitig an.

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Brighton Festival: Perhaps all the Dragons...

Published Friday 23 May 2014 at 10:05 by [Bella Todd](#)

Inspired by the six degrees of separation theory, this UK premiere (full title: Perhaps all the Dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage) from Belgian company Berlin occupies a coolly compelling hinterland between theatre and film, fiction and fact, a mass act of storytelling and a social science experiment. You take a seat at a round table, facing one of 30 screens, and meet the pre-recorded eyes of a real person with an unusual tale to tell. You switch five times, hearing apparently unrelated stories from around the globe. Gradually things happen to give the illusion that these encounters are live, and the not entirely misleading impression that they are linked.

The stories are appealing. I 'meet' an opera singer who's only ever played Carmen, a mayor of an empty village, a man with an extraordinary memory. Then come the technical and philosophical sleights of hand that distinguished Berlin's 2012 Brighton Festival show Land's End. But this is also devised as a slightly unsettling, and at times oddly slight, experience.

You keep getting distracted. Your eyes flick to your neighbours' subtitles. You find yourself wanting to talk, instead, to the boy with the Simpsons poster who appears to have discovered ancient cave paintings.

Bombarded by stories from all sides, you struggle to give each present encounter meaningful attention. It's just like being on the internet.

Crucial to the effect is the precise unit-by-unit sound design: slouch or lean and your video is subsumed in a sea. Beneath the stained glass of St Mark's Chapel, the 30 stories babble simultaneously like trapped prayers. As one prerecorded voice puts it, who is listening to whom?

Flanders Today, 30.04.2014

BERLIN: TALKING TO STRANGERS

Every new project of the Antwerp-based collective Berlin starts with Yves Degryse and Bart Bael's arrival in a city or a region. With curiosity, cameras, interviewing techniques and patience galore, they subsequently attempt to film a portrait of the place by allowing selected residents to speak for themselves.

The result is typically a colourful and original perspective, created with a critical eye, subtlety and finesse. *Perhaps All the Dragons* [in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage], the third part of their *Horror Vacui* (fear of emptiness) series, premieres at KFDA.

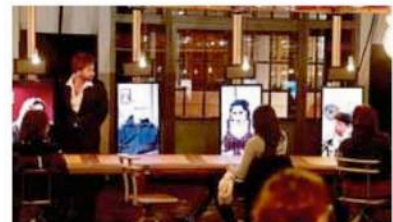
"It's a great festival," says Degryse. "Being there before with our productions *Bonanza* and *Moscow* changed our company to some extent. It introduced us to new audiences and opened doors for international touring. But our work has always had an international dimension; we choose to work in cities across the globe."

Their interdisciplinary style places audiences in different configurations with multiple screens. "Spectators often tell us they spend a long time

reflecting on the experience afterwards," Degryse says. "They also ask if we use actors or real people. It's impossible to tell. We allow interviewees time to express themselves, starting with a list of 40 annoying questions from Max Frisch's diaries – things like 'Do you have a sense of humour when you're alone?' Then the real stories slowly start to emerge."

“Visitors ask us if we use actors or real people. It's impossible to tell

Perhaps All the Dragons places the audience around a table, the screens situated directly opposite each chair. "The format for the audience is usually a reflection of the city, its story," Degryse says, adding that the art collective likes to blur the boundaries between fiction and



Antwerp-based collective Berlin present the remarkable true stories of strangers in *Perhaps All the Dragons* at KFDA

reality. "Dragons has 30 stories we went back and collected from people and situations that interested us. Some of them are re-enacted, but 29 of them are true. Which one is the lie?"

Degryse says that collaborations are critical in Berlin's work because the collective can spend as much as 18 months on a project and also have to find interviewees. "It's good to be back at the Kunstenfestival," he says. "They provide mental as well as financial support and are always interested in future projects. That's important."

The Guardian, 26.05.2014

In theatre, fiction is being underrated

by Lyn Gardner

Verbatim plays are lauded, but they are no more true as theatre than fiction, or even a combination of both: it's story that matters.

One of the errors that verbatim theatre often makes is to conclude that because something is true, it is more interesting. Or rather, more interesting than something that has been made up. It's like those Hollywood movie openings that tell you the film you are about to see is "based on a true story". Why should that give it any more currency than a story that has been entirely made up and yet feels as if it's real – or more real than real? After all, imagination is the currency of all writers and theatre-makers.

The interest in *London Road* – revived next week by Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, in what is a very brave choice – is not merely in the fact that it is based on interviews with people living in Ipswich in the wake of the murders of several young women, but in its musical form. *The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma's Life and Times* is fascinating as a theatre experience, not because it is based on 16 hours of phone conversations with a young woman called Kristen Worrell, but because of the way it shapes and presents that lived experience in multiple formats from country house murder mystery to illuminated manuscript.

Both shows recognise that even when based on somebody else's words, the truth exists not inherently in the words themselves but in the way they are offered up to us, in what is unspoken or lies beneath them.

One of the things that made Tamasha Theatre's play, *My Name Is ...*, so fascinating was a recognition by Sudhar Bhuchar of the sheer power of the playwright as editor. And as verbatim pieces such as *Sochi* often prove, even when the veracity of every quote used is carefully catalogued, what comes out of people's mouths is often less illuminating and complex than what comes from the writer's pen or laptop.

Yet people still get hung up on truth in the theatre, as if seeking an authenticity of experience that can only be conveyed by fact, not fiction. It's odd for an art form which sees its participants routinely pretend to be a mad old king on a blasted heath or a mass murderer, or a woman who realises that her marriage and life are a sham.

Shakespeare's *Richard III* is no less fascinating or watchable because we know it is historically inaccurate. It may not be true, but it is wonderfully truthful about ambition and guilt. *Handbagged* is clearly a fiction but one that questions the very nature of history and truth by honing in on real people – one recently dead, (Mrs Thatcher); the other still alive (the Queen) – and presenting them in a playful meta-theatrical package.

In their early work Frantic Assembly often blurred the boundaries between the performers' real lives and their stage personas. A few years back the very brilliant Dennis Kelly produced a play, *Taking Care of Baby*, which neatly strung the audience along as it presented a fiction as a fact and in the process explored the way truth can so easily be compromised, not just in the theatre but in everyday life. Rather than undermining the experience it made it all the more powerful. It made us more alert and questioning.

I felt rather the same in Brighton on Thursday night watching Berlin's new video piece **Perhaps All the Dragons**. The piece takes its name from Rainer Maria Rilke's suggestion that "perhaps all the dragons in our lives are just princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage". Those of you who were in Edinburgh last summer may recall seeing *Bonanza* at Summerhall, a film about a largely abandoned mining town in Colorado. That too was made by Berlin (who actually hail from Antwerp).

This show – loosely inspired by the six degrees of separation theory – also uses film footage, but in a particularly intriguing way, creating a one-on-one experience in which personal testimonies become increasingly reflective of each other, rather than staying as standalone stories. In the way these individual narratives are curated with an increasingly staged element to their presentation, I found myself questioning the veracity of what I was being told, perhaps even to question whether those presented to us – a woman involved in the transplant of monkey heads; a Japanese woman who hasn't left her bedroom for seven years; a female Jain monk committing slow suicide – might actually be actors reading from a script after all.

Apparently all the stories are indeed true bar one (I don't know which one). Aside from the show's obvious point that we are all connected, this raises an intriguing spectre: that it's not the fact that these individual stories are authentic that matters, but that storytelling is something we all share, and is part of what makes us human whoever we are, and wherever we live.

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2014/may/26/verbatim-theatre-fiction-stories-london-road>