

VIVIANE DE MUYNCK & NEEDCOMPANY

ALL IS VANITY

A Needcompany production

Coproducers: Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), Festival d'Avignon and Théâtre Garonne (Toulouse).

With the cooperation of Kaaitheater (Brussels) and deSingel (Antwerp).

With the support of the Flemish authorities.

ALL IS VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT

ECCLESIASTES I :14

“I am now aware that nothing is to be expected from man or his history. Depending on the circumstances, he is either cruel or magnanimous, mean or loyal, is unfaithful to his wife or steals from his friends. The dearest husband may one moment be cuddling his children and the next throwing bombs at children in a neighbouring area. And that is relatively positive; there are after all people who are so thoroughly perverse that their hearts are not moved in any circumstances, for example my mother.”

Claire Goll

Claire Goll was born in Nuremberg as Clara Aichmann in 1890. After an unhappy childhood, a brief marriage and the birth of a daughter, she abandoned everything and departed. In 1916 she left Germany, driven by her pacifist ideals, and settled in Switzerland where the circles she ended up in included many artists in exile. She there met her future partner in life, the German poet Yvan Goll. In 1918 she published her first poetry and stories. In 1921 she and Yvan Goll moved to Paris, where they became the confidants of countless artists and authors in the bosom of dadaism and Surrealism. Claire Goll became a muse and lover to several of them. In 1939, like many other artists, the Golls immigrated to the United States, but in 1947 returned to Paris, where the ailing Yvan died in 1950. Claire Goll then lived in relative poverty at the Hotel d’Orsay for many years. She remained an active ‘femme de lettres’ and died at the age of 86 in 1977. In addition to her poems, novels and correspondence with Rainer Maria Rilke, she gained the greatest renown for *All is Vanity*, the controversial memoirs she wrote at the end of her life.

Viviane De Muynck is known above all as one of the leading actresses in Needcompany. Since the early nineties she and the artistic director Jan Lauwers have been following a common course. De Muynck has received special praise for her performance in the title role in *Isabella’s Room* (2004). While creating that play, she and Lauwers came across the memoirs of Claire Goll, another strong woman who tells the remarkable story of her life against the background of the 20th century. The result is a new and inspiring joint venture, this time in the form of a monologue.

VIVIANE DE MUYNCK PERFORMS CLAIRE GOLL

In *Isabella's Room*, Viviane De Muynck plays the character Isabella Morandi, a strong woman who tells the remarkable story of her life against the background of the 20th century. Isabella Morandi spent much of her life in Paris, and one of her female friends was the poetess Claire Goll, an indefatigably vain woman who left us some sensational memoirs that have been published in several languages.

Claire Goll is a new challenge for Viviane De Muynck. This time she is alone onstage. Starting from Goll's memoirs, she portrays a person who took a much talked-about approach to the legendary artistic and literary scene in the first half of the 20th century. Claire Goll was the muse, lover or confidante of a whole series of famous writers and artists at a time when Dadaism and Surrealism were in full development and when, because of the permanent threat of war, colonies of artists were constantly moving from Berlin and Zurich through Paris to New York and back.

Isabella Morandi and Claire Goll: two strong personalities with fundamentally different attitudes to life. Isabella Morandi displays an infectious and overwhelming lust for life, while rancour and frustration are utterly alien to her. By contrast, in her quest for great emotions and great art, Claire Goll often appears quite vicious and destructive. What they do share is a complex family history, a fascination for men, tremendous greediness and a long life of searching during the great upheavals of the 20th century.

'One's own experience does not correspond with the image the memory recalls or what is captured in the *camera obscura* of history.'

In this monologue, through the ageing Claire Goll, Viviane De Muynck seeks out the relationship between reality and one's personal experience of it, the way images and truths overlap each other, and the fiction of historical truth, the lie of acted reality.

Using the artists who figured in Goll's life, from Joyce, Rilke and Breton to Léger, Dali and Chagall, she demonstrates that literary significance and human value do not always coincide, just as Goll's privileged testimonies often become perverse exposures of what is intimate and fragile.

But Claire Goll does not spare herself either, and speaks openheartedly about her hatred of her mother, her search for protection and authority, her opinion that women are inferior creatures, and her discovery of true sexuality with a young lover at the end of her life.

Directed by Jan Lauwers, Viviane De Muynck threads her murmuring way through the great history of the 20th century.



Photo © Maarten Vanden Abeele

CREDITS

Text

Claire Goll, *All is Vanity*

Adaptation

Viviane De Muynck

Directing, design and lighting concept

Jan Lauwers

With

Viviane De Muynck

Costume

Lot Lemm

Dramaturgy

Sigrid Bousset

Lighting

Joris De Bolle

Technical support

Frank Van Elsen

Set designer

Herman Sorgeloos

Sound Adviser

Dré Schneider

Assistant

Eva Blaute

Production Management

Luc Galle

Production

Needcompany

Coproducers

Théâtre de la Ville (Parijs), Festival d'Avignon en Théâtre Garonne (Toulouse)

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PERFORMANCE CALENDAR SEASON 2006-2007

Théâtre Municipal, Festival d'Avignon (FV)*	8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 July 2006
Automne en Normandie, Le Havre (FV)	21 October 2006
Kaaitheater, Brussels (DV)*	16, 17, 18 November 2006
Le Lieu Unique, Scène Nationale de Nantes (FV)	28, 29 November 2006
Théâtre Garonne, Toulouse (FV)	5, 6, 7, 8, 9 December 2006
CC Brugge, Stadsschouwburg (DV)	12 December 2006
Stadsschouwburg, STUK, Leuven (DV)	10 January 2007
Le Grand Théâtre, Lorient (FV)	17, 18 January 2007
Wolubilis, Woluwe (FV)	13, 14 February 2007
Théâtre de Namur (FV)	15, 16 February 2007
CC De Werf, Aalst (DV)	23 February 2007
Rotterdamse Schouwburg (DV)	26 February 2007
De Velinx, Tongeren (DV)	28 February 2007
Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam (DV)	2 March 2007
deSingel, Antwerpen (DV)	9, 10 March 2007
Stadsschouwburg Groningen (DV)	17 April 2007
Les Abbesses, Paris (FV)	3, 4, 5 May 2007
New Drama Action, Vilnius (FV)	18 May 2007

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR SEASON 2007-2008

Festival Temporada Alta, Girona (FV)	27 October 2007 (annulled)
National Theatre Festival Bucharest (FV)	11, 12 November 2007
Théâtre de Sartrouville (FV)	19, 20 February 2008

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR SEASON 2007-2008

Le Théâtre Scène Nationale de Poitiers (FV)	9, 10 February 2009
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* FV=French version

* DV=Dutch version

WORK FOR THEATRE – JAN LAUWERS & NEEDCOMPANY

- 1987** **Need to Know**
Opening: 24 March, Mickery, Amsterdam
- 1989** **ça va**
Opening: 18 March, Theater am Turm, Frankfurt
- 1990** **Julius Caesar**
Opening: 31 May, Rotterdamse Schouwburg
- 1991** **Invictos**
Opening: 18 May, Centro Andaluz de Teatro, Seville
- 1992** **Antonius und Kleopatra**
Opening: 14 February, Teater am Turm, Frankfurt
- 1992** **SCHADE/schade**
Opening: 21 October, Theater am Turm, Frankfurt
- 1993** **Orfeo**, opera by Walter Hus
Opening: 23 May, Bourschouwburg, Antwerp
- 1994** **The Snakesong Trilogy - Snakesong/Le Voyeur**
Opening: 24 March, Theater am Turm, Frankfurt
- 1995** **The Snakesong Trilogy - Snakesong/Le Pouvoir (Leda)**
Opening: 11 May, Dance 95, Munich
- 1996** **Needcompany's Macbeth**
Opening: 26 March, Lunatheater, Brussels
- 1996** **The Snakesong Trilogy - Snakesong/Le Désir**
Opening: 6 November, Kanonhallen, Copenhagen
- 1997** **Caligula, No beauty for me there, where human life is rare, part one**
Opening: 5 September, Documenta X, Kassel
- 1998** **The Snakesong Trilogy, reworked version with live music**
Opening: 16 April, Lunatheater, Brussels
- 1999** **Morning Song, No beauty for me there, where human life is rare, part two**
Opening: 13 January, Lunatheater, Brussels
- 2000** **Needcompany's King Lear**
Opening: 11 January, Lunatheater, Brussels
- 2000** **DeaDDogsDon'tDance/DjamesDjoyceDeaD**
Opening: 12 May, Das TAT, Frankfurt
- 2001** **Ein Sturm**
Opening: 22 March, Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg
- 2001** **Kind**
Opening: 21 June, Het Net, Bruges
- 2002** **Images of Affection**
Opening: 28 February, Stadsschouwburg, Bruges
- 2003** **No Comment**
Opening: 24 April, Kaaitheater, Brussels
- 2004** **Isabella's room**
Opening: 9 July, Cloître des Carmes, Festival d'Avignon
- 2006** **All is Vanity**
Opening: 8 July, Théâtre Municipal, Festival d'Avignon
- 2006** **The Lobster Shop**
Opening: 10 July, Cloître des Célestins, Festival d'Avignon

PUBLICATIONS IN BOOK FORM BY OR ABOUT JAN LAUWERS

- LAUWERS, Jan, *Leda*, Bebuquin (Antwerp), a coproduction with IT&FB publishing company (Amsterdam), 1995.
- VANDEN ABEELE, Maarten, *The Lucidity of the Obscene*, Needcompany in cooperation with IT&FB publishing company (Brussels/Amsterdam), 1998.

- LAUWERS, Jan, *La Chambre d'Isabella* followed by *Le Bazar du Homard*, Actes Sud-papiers, 2006.
- STALPAERT, Christel, BOUSSET, Sigrid, LE ROY, Frederik, (eds.), *No Beauty for Me There, where Human Life is Rare. On Jan Lauwers' theatre work with Needcompany*, Academia Press (Ghent), IT&FB publishing company (Amsterdam), 2007.

PRIZES

- Mobil Pegasus Preis, Internationales Sommertheater Festival Hamburg, for the best international production, *ça va*, 1989.
- Thersitesprijs, Flemish theatre critic prize, 1998.
- Obie Award in New York for the play *Morning Song*, 1999.
- *Kinematrix Prize* for Digital Format, International Film Festival Venice 2002, *Goldfish Game*, 2002.
- Grand Jury Honor for Best Ensemble Cast, Slamdance Film Festival, *Goldfish Game*, 2004.
- Le Masque, prize awarded by the Académie Québécoise du Théâtre in Montréal, Canada, for the best foreign production, *La Chambre d'Isabella*, 2005.
- Prize awarded by the Syndicat Professionnel de la Critique de Théâtre, de Musique et de Danse in France, for the best foreign production, *La Chambre d'Isabella*, 2005.
- Culture prize awarded by the Flemish Community 2006, theatre literature category, for the *De kamer van Isabella* and *Ulrike* scripts.

JAN LAUWERS (short version)

Jan Lauwers (Antwerp, 1957) is an artist who works in just about every medium. Over the last twenty years he has become best known for his pioneering work for the stage with *Needcompany*, which was founded in Brussels in 1986. Over the years he has also built up a substantial body of art work which was shown in an exhibition at BOZAR (Brussels) in 2007.

Jan Lauwers studied painting at the Academy of Art in Ghent. At the end of 1979 he gathered round him a number of people to form the *Epigonenensemble*. In 1981 this group was transformed into the *Epigonen theater zlv* collective. Jan Lauwers disbanded this collective in 1985 and founded *Needcompany* (1986).

NEEDCOMPANY

Jan Lauwers *needs company*. He founded *Needcompany* together with Grace Ellen Barkey. They together are responsible for *Needcompany's* larger-scale productions. The group of performers they have put together over the years is quite unique in its versatility. Their associated artists are MaisonDahlBonnema (Hans Petter Dahl & Anna Sophia Bonnema), Lemm&Barkey (Lot Lemm & Grace Ellen Barkey), OHNO Cooperation (Maarten Seghers & Jan Lauwers) and the NC ensemble, which includes the inimitable Viviane De Muynck. They create work of their own under *Needcompany's* wing.

Since *Needcompany* was founded in 1986, both its work and its performers have been markedly international. From that moment onwards both its operations and its company of performers became distinctly international. Its first productions, *Need to Know* (1987) and *ça va* (1989) were still highly visual, but in subsequent productions the storyline and the main theme gained in importance, although the fragmentary composition remained.

His adaptations of Shakespeare are: *Julius Caesar* (1990), *Antonius und Kleopatra* (1992), *Needcompany's Macbeth* (1996), *Needcompany's King Lear* (2000) and, at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, *Ein Sturm* (2001). After directing *Invictos* (1996), the monologue *SCHADE/Schade* (1992) and the opera *Orfeo* (1993), in 1994 he started work on a major project called *The Snakesong Trilogy: Snakesong/Le Voyeur* (1994), *Snakesong/Le Pouvoir* (1995) and *Snakesong/Le Désir* (1996). In 1998 he staged the reworked version of the whole *Snakesong Trilogy*. In September 1997 he was a guest in the theatre section of Documenta X, for which he created *Caligula*, after Camus, the first part of a diptych called *No beauty for me there, where human life is*

rare, with *Morning Song* (1999) as the second part. In May 2000, at the request of William Forsythe, Lauwers, in co-production with Ballett Frankfurt, created the piece entitled *DeaDDogsDon'tDance/DjamesDjoyceDeaD*. He then created *Images of Affection* (2002) on the occasion of Needcompany's 15th anniversary. Jan Lauwers presented three monologues and a dance solo under the title *No Comment* (2003). In 2004 he was invited to the Avignon Festival for the first time, where he presented the highly successful production *Isabella's room*, which won several prizes. In 2006 Lauwers created two productions for the Avignon Festival: *The Lobster Shop* and *All is Vanity*, a monologue performed by Viviane De Muynck.

The Salzburger Festspiele has invited Jan Lauwers to make a new production, *The Deer House*, for summer 2008. After *Isabella's Room* (2004) and *The Lobster Shop* (2006) this new production is the final part of a trilogy on human nature called *Sad Face / Happy Face*.

SIDESHOWS

Needcompany has several sideshows on its programme. **Needlapb** (since 1999): presents the early stages of various projects. **Just for ...** (since 2006): installations and performances by Needcompany's associated artists. **Deconstructions** (since 2007): museum installations composed of Jan Lauwers art work, in which he encapsulates his conceptual world in a six-hour marathon performance with the permanent members of NC. Jan Lauwers founded the **OHNO Cooperation** together with Maarten Seghers, to put a name to their artistic cooperation.

FILMPROJECTS

Jan Lauwers also has a number of film and video projects to his name, including *From Alexandria* (1988), *Mangia* (1995), *Sampled Images* (2000), *C-Song* (2003), *C-Song Variations* (2007) and *The OHNO Cooperation Conversations on the O.H.N.O.P.O.P.I.C.O.N.O. Ontology* (2007). During the summer of 2001 Lauwers shot his first full-length film, *Goldfish Game* (2002), whose premiere took place at the Venice Film Festival.

VISUAL ARTS

At the request of the curator Luk Lambrecht, he took part in the Grimbergen 2002 exhibition together with 8 other artists (including Thomas Schütte, Lili Dujourie, Job Koelewijn, Atelier Van Lieshout, Jan De Cock and Ann Veronica Janssens). In spring 2006 his work was included in the DARK exhibition at the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam. In 2007 Jan Lauwers had his first solo exhibition at BOZAR (Brussels), curated by Jérôme Sans. At the Artbrussels art fair (2007), Lauwers was invited to make a site-specific work for BOZAR. Since 2007, *Deconstructions* has invaded several museums (BOZAR, haus der kunst).

VIVIANE DE MUYNCK

Viviane De Muynck is best-known as one of the principal actresses in Needcompany. In the early nineties she met Jan Lauwers, artistic director of Needcompany, with whom she has since done much captivating work.

She studied drama at the Conservatory in Brussels, where she was a student of Jan Decorte. From 1980 she was a member of the Mannen van den Dam collective and acted in Strindberg's *De Pelikaan*, Feydeau's *Het laxeermiddel*, Bernhard's *De macht der gewoonte* and Strauss' *Het Park*. In 1987 she won the Theo d'Or Prize for her performance as Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, which Sam Bogaerts directed for the De Witte Kraai company. After that she joined Maatschappij Discordia and performed in Alfred Jarry's *UBU ROI*, Judith Herzberg's *Kras*, Handke's *Das Spiel vom Fragen*, and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *Twelfth Night*.

Collaboration with three theatres in the Netherlands resulted in *Count Your Blessings* with Toneelgroep Amsterdam, directed by Gerardjan Rijnders, *Iphigenia in Taurus* with the Nationaal Toneel in The Hague, directed by Ger Thijs and *Hamlet* with Het Zuidelijk Toneel, directed by Ivo Van Hove. She also acted in two Kaaithater productions: in 1994 in *Pijl van de Tijd* (Martin Amis), directed by Guy Cassiers and in 1995 the

part of Odysseus in *Philoktetes Variations* (Müller, Gide, Jesuren) by Jan Ritsema, alongside Dirk Roofthoof and Ron Vawter. She also made guest appearances with The Wooster Group in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and other plays. She acted in *Relazione Pubblica*, a choreographic piece by Caterina and Carlotta Sagna. In 2007 she played the leading part in *Ein fest für Boris*, a creation for the Salzburger Festspiele.

Viviane De Muynck also works with musicians, such as on *La Trahison Orale* (oratorio by Maurizio Kagel) with the Schönberg Ensemble (conductor Rembert De Leeuw), *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte* (Arnold Schönberg) with *Zeitklang* (conductor Alain Franco) and the Spectra Ensemble (conductor Philippe Raté), *Lohengrin* (Schiarrino) with Neue Musik Berlin (conductor Beat Furrer and director Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski). She collaborated with Eric Sleichim and the Blindman Saxophone Quartet on *Men in Tribulation* (May 2004). In 2006 she took part in the production *Walking in the Limits*, a joint venture with Franz Krug & Heiner Reber.

She makes regular appearances in film and TV productions. She acted in *Vinaya*, a film by Peter van Kraaij and Josse De Pauw and in *De avonden*, directed by R. Van den Berg, after the book by Gerard Reve. Two other notable film parts have been in *Vincent and Theo* (directed by Robert Altman) and *The Crossing* (directed by Nora Hoppe). She was twice nominated for the 'Gouden Kalf' at the Utrecht film festival: for the film *De avonden* and for the TV-drama *Duister licht* by Martin Koolhoven. In 2005 she acted in the first full-length film by Fien Troch, *Someone else's happiness* and also appeared in Geoffrey Enthoven's film *Vidange Perdue* (2006).

Viviane De Muynck is much in demand internationally as a guest lecturer on theatre courses and workshops. In addition to this she has taken to stage directing in Germany. In 2000 she directed the first performances of *Die Vagina Monologe* at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, and *As I Lay Dying* (2003), an adaptation of William Faulkner.

Since the opera *Orfeo* (1993) by Walter Hus and Jan Lauwers, she has acted regularly with Needcompany. Over the years she has appeared in *The Snakesong Trilogy* (*Le Pouvoir*, *Le Désir* and the full version), *Macbeth* (1996), *Caligula* (1997), *Morning Song* (1999), *DeaDDogsDon'tDance/DJamesDJoyceDeaD* (2000), *Goldfish Game* (2002), *No Comment* (2003), *Isabella's room* (2004), *All is Vanity* (2006) and *The Deer House* (2008). For *DeaDDogsDon'tDance/ DJamesDJoyceDeaD* she joined Jan Lauwers in writing the script. For *All is Vanity*, she adapted Claire Goll's book of the same title herself. In 2006 she was awarded the Flemish Community Prize in the performing arts category.

THE PRESS ABOUT ALL IS VANITY

A firmament sparkling with precious stones and a stage like a remote rock put De Muynck in the unsettling backlight of the wings of a cabaret performance. The relaxed grandeur of an actress who is capable of saying everything, of embodying someone, of making the audience laugh, of moving them and, quite simply... of having fantastic presence.

Fabienne Arvers & P.S., Les Inrockuptibles, 25/7/2006

With at the forefront the unrivalled Viviane De Muynck, an exceptional actress with whom the broad theatre-going public became acquainted as Isabella in the play by Jan Lauwers. Portly, with a deep voice, carrying her age with dignity, a virtuoso in every language, she is an immediate presence when she enters the stage entirely alone at the Théâtre municipal in Avignon. ... She is marvellous in this part. And Jan Lauwers has devised an effective stage setting for her.

La Libre Belgique, Guy Duplat, 14/7/2006

One of the queens of the festival, Viviane De Muynck of Jan Lauwers' Needcompany. ... Like a fairy, Viviane makes time and distance disappear and gives Claire Goll a new life, a new presence. ... A balanced and powerful staging, with spots that move back and forth, a platform in light wood that looks crooked (all of which, like the directing, is the work of Jan Lauwers) and the actress alone, who has made the play outstandingly her own. Apparently the only thing she adopted from the real person was the rectangular spectacles, but her entire being is like Goll. With her stirring voice she reconstructs her for us, the woman of whom only memories remain, chased by the wind. It is poignant. Often humorous and heart-rending. Theatre of a very high standard.

Armelle Héliot, Le Figaro, 12/7/2006,

This play, staged by Jan Lauwers and adapted by Viviane De Muynck, who played Isabella and also plays this part, is overflowing with venom and surges of love, and deals with extremes and injustices. ... Impressive, planted firmly on her feet, with a voice that can caress or deliver a blow, Viviane de Muynck personifies the writings of a woman who has been pushed onto the sidelines by literary history. Her performance leaves nothing to be desired: one listens to her without batting an eyelid. ... She makes people laugh, but also discharges the surfeit of hate, desperation and, according to some, misery.

Marie-Christine Vernay, Libération, 13/7/2006

Like the great actress she is, Viviane de Muynck gives this woman everything, first and foremost love. The portrait she paints of Claire Goll is undoubtedly one-sided, but it expresses the wish to live at any price. And that means a lot.

Brigitte Salino, Le Monde, 11/7/2006

Viviane de Muynck, who has been the beating heart of *Isabella's Room* since 2004, is now immersing herself in the memoirs of Claire Goll. ... With all manner of phrases and her husky voice De Muynck sculpts Goll's words, simultaneously sober and forceful, jovial and despairing. A splendid monster directed by Jan Lauwers.

Michèle Friche, Le Vif/L'Express, 11/8/2006

There is just this one – impressive – actress who portrays this strong and surprising woman, merciless towards those whom she does not love, full of admiration for others, and who only rarely shows her feelings. But the poignancy is proportionately greater when at the very end she tells about the final hours of the one man in her life.

Jean-Marie Wijnants, Le Soir, 12/7/2006

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