

Few Things

Direction & choreography: Grace Ellen Barkey

Dancer-actors: Kosi Hidama, Misha Downey, Tijen Lawton, Muriel Hérault and Simon Versnel.

Set & Costumes: Lot Lemm

Light design: Dries Vercruysse

Production: Needcompany, in collaboration with Brussel/ Bruxelles 2000, Cultural Capital of Europe, Bellone-Brigittines (Brussels, Belgium), Die Tanzlandschaft Ruhr/ Choreographisches Zentrum NRW (Essen, Germany) and BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen, Norway)

Needcompany is supported by the Ministry of the Flemish Community and the National Lottery.

With special thanks to Kunstencentrum STUC Leuven

'Few Things' is a reworking of a piece that was already previewed in New York a year ago. This was 'The Miraculous Mandarin', based on the pantomime by the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók. The New York press greeted it with enthusiasm:

Barkey's entire visualisation of this piece was strikingly original. It rocked. In fact, it punk rocked –not by a massive infusion of punk music, but by choreography, characterizations, and performances that highlighted the punk element. A true, one-time only never-to-be-repeated-in-this-lifetime gift to the audience.

With these words, Paul Ben-Itzak of *The Dance Insider* expressed an unwitting prophecy: after a long copyright struggle with Bartók's heirs, an emphatic ban was placed on performances of 'The Miraculous Mandarin'.

Barkey did not leave it at that. She reworked the piece, banished Bartok and created a nastier and more extreme work in which the Mandarin is transformed into Mr Poodle and humour ultimately gains the upper hand.

*"It is with roses and locomotives that my "poems" are
competing.
They are also competing with each other, with
elephants, and with El Greco."*

(e e cummings)

The girl stands at the window
Doing the job.
When she's doing the job
There is a poodle that always stares at her.
One night Mr Poodle climbs the stairs.
"If you marry me, I will give you all my money and gold!"
He begs, he desires, he insists.
He insists night after night.
The girl wants the money
Two pimp-brothers want the money.
The girl is afraid
Two pimp-brothers are afraid.
The girl remembers the story of a Mandarin.
He asked a courtesan to marry him.
The courtesan demanded he wait for a hundred nights.
For 99 nights he came to wait for her
but when the 100th night came,
he did not appear.
The courtesan never saw him again.
So the girl asks for half Poodle's money and gold
and demands that he wait a hundred nights.
So he comes to wait night after night after... 99 nights.

But the girl is not a courtesan.
And Poodle is not a Mandarin.
Poodle comes back the 100th night,
With a huge desire to be fulfilled.

(Grace Ellen Barkey)

Extracts from conversations between Grace Ellen Barkey and Jan Grosfeld

Bergen, Brussels & Rotterdam, June to September 1999

You have been favoured with a hump throughout your life; it is unpleasant and improper to show it.

I am always surprised when the work I have created with the others turns out to have become a choreography. I do not think explicitly about the medium of theatre. Doubt and questions take first place, but that does not mean I will sit at a kitchen table thinking. My pieces contain ideas but are not about them; my work is too physical for that.

If the relationship formed with the medium has led to a performance it drives me into a ghetto in which I feel only fear of making a new piece. It is the relentlessness of the way fruit is arranged on a plate, the pain of it. The fruit has cashed in its anecdotal and everyday connotations. I do not actually accept unification in theatre. I would prefer not to agree to anything in advance, then no reproach is possible and a play can always carry on without being finished off. I yearn for things to remain unfinished; I am looking for the limitlessness of the moment.

In this respect the material in *The Miraculous Mandarin* was a problem, precisely because it has such an overwhelming unity, a piece with a head and a tail, divided into parts. Lengyel's story and Bartok's musical interpretation of it. I could not refrain from making the structure more complex by adding poems by e.e.cummings ('the boys I mean are not refined/they can not chat of that and this/they do not give a fart for art/they kill like you would take a piss'), music by Can, Tricky and The Velvet Underground.

What touches me deeply is the antiquity of the idea behind this story; literature can conceal such an overwhelming antiquity of reflections. The story of the Mandarin is a parable based on the classical idea that one dies as soon as the longing has been fulfilled. What intrigues me about it is not touching upon 'the small death' as Bataille does, but the movement of falling. The movement *towards* death. The tumult of the longing and the events prior to death. The conclusion of death is not reached just like that. It is a move in which desire and death are localised; they are stated precisely in terms of rituals of seduction and murderous deeds.

It was all about creating a good relationship between metaphoric thinking and literalness. I could not do without either in the performance. The whole of the second part deals with the breaking and destruction of the Mandarin. To me what counts is the solitude of the body and the violence it undergoes. The violence that is indefinable, that knows no bounds. The body has to put up resistance against something non-physical. It is precisely in this that I find the beauty of a movement.

I look for it in the body. In the case of Muriel it lies in the whiteness of her neck, in Misha the androgynous sculptural quality, the tenderness and violence that Tijen summons up, Simon's elegant and fragile solidity, and Kosi's smile and the mysterious gleam of his manhood. But I do not show this beauty, it is the means by which I express myself, otherwise I would be showing vanity. The form should only surprise us in order to let us recognise what is beautiful. In that sense my position with regard to content and form has changed. I now allot a much more important part to form. As Rutger Kopland wrote,

'It isn't crying, it's rain and skin'.

Credits

Few Things

Direction & Choreography: Grace Ellen Barkey

created and performed by : Kosi Hidama
Misha Downey
Muriel Hérault
Simon Versnel
Tijen Lawton

Set & Costumes: Lot Lemm

Lighting concept: Dries Vercruysse

Production manager: An Van der Donckt

With special thanks to:

Eduardo Torroja, Rombout Willems, Rudi Laermans

Text: Grace Ellen Barkey

Poems: e e cummings

Music mixed by Grace Ellen Barkey: Tricky, Ligeti, Sonic Youth, Stockhausen, Rombout Willems, Hole, Kammerflimmerkollektief, Velvet Underground, Berio, CAN, Godspeed, This Heath, Do Make Say Think, Village of Savoonga, Bellini

“First Love” mixed by Rombout Willems

Production Needcompany:

Technical director:	Joris De Bolle
Dramaturgy/ press officer:	Vjera Somers
Production manager:	Carl Gydé
General assistance:	An Van Der Donckt
Business manager:	Christel Simons

Production: Needcompany, in collaboration with Brussel/ Bruxelles 2000, Cultural Capital of Europe, Bellone-Brigittines (Brussels, Belgium), Die Tanzlandschaft Ruhr/ Choreographisches Zentrum NRW (Essen, Germany) and BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen, Norway).

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About her previous work:

The image of the woman in the Asian world (Barkey's origins) embodied in a gently sensual and hipswinging dance (Ballet International, 12/98, on 'Rood Red Rouge')

A finely-meshed theatrical fabric which becomes less and less susceptible to unequivocal interpretation (De Standaard, 3/97, on 'Stories (Histoires/Verhalen)')

CV's

Grace Ellen Barkey

1992: One

(première: 26 November, Theater Am Turm, Frankfurt)

1993: Don Quijote

(Première: 28 October, Theater Am Turm, Frankfurt)

1995: Tres

(première: 18 October, De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam)

1997: Stories (histoires/verhalen)

(première: 19 March, Kapel van de Brigitinnen, Brussel)

1998: Rood Red Rouge

(première: 5 October, Stuc, Leuven)

Grace Ellen Barkey

Was born in Surubaya in Indonesia, studied dance expression and modern dance at the Theatre School in Amsterdam, and after her training worked as an actress and dancer.

She choreographed several productions including *De Laatste Tijd*, *Lalilo* and *Yerma*.

In 1986 she joined Needcompany and became the company's permanent choreographer. She was responsible for the choreography for *Need to know* (1987), *ça va* (1989), *Julius Caesar* (1990), *Invictos* (1991), *Antonius und Cleopatra* (1992) and *Orfeo* (1993). She also acted in several of these productions, as well as in *The Snakesong Trilogy - Snakesong/Le Voyeur* (1994) and *Needcompany's King Lear*.

In 1992 she presented the first of her own productions, entitled *One*, at the Theater Am Turm Probebühne in Frankfurt. This was followed by *Don Quijote* (1993), inspired by Cervantes' novel and Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Barkey's major source and starting point for performances is literature. *Tres* (1995) is based on the writings of Jean Genet and is a quest for depravity in love, the pain of love and the loss of innocence. *Stories (Histoires/Verhalen)* (1996) is a piece about happiness based on the novel *Anna Karenina* of Tolstoj.

In *Rood Red Rouge* (1998) Barkey interweaves two 'notions'. Her original idea of staging a sort of family chronicle, with her father as its leading character, is merged with a second, related 'notion', that of 'the lonely man without memories'. As in her previous productions, literature was an important source of inspiration here too (Paul Auster, Jeroen Brouwers, etc).

The choreographer Grace Ellen Barkey plans to make a new dance production by the year 2000, *Few Things*. It will be her sixth production and enjoys the infrastructural support of Needcompany.

Simon Versnel

He trained as a classical singer under the Rotterdam singing teacher Dini Erkens and since 1979 has often performed as both singer and actor. He has given several song recitals, operatic concerts, chamber music concerts and so forth, in both the Netherlands and France. He has played a number of varying parts including Don Andres in *La Périchole* by Offenbach (1989-92), Shakespeare in Sondheim's *The Frogs* (1990), Sam in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and Petruccio/Fred in Cole Porter's *Kiss me Kate* (1990).

He has also acted in various short films, including a Japanese-English film shot in 1992 and intended for the Holland exhibition in Japan.

In 1992 he toured the Netherlands and Belgium in Maarten van der Put's play *Untitled Cowboys*. Up to now he has performed in five Needcompany productions: *Don Quijote* (1993; revived in 1995), *Tres* (1995) and *Rood Red Rouge* (1998), all by Grace Ellen Barkey, *Macbeth*, the two-part *No beauty for me there where human life is rare* and *Needcompany's King Lear*, directed by Jan Lauwers.

Misha Downey

Was born in Leicester in England in 1973. He trained at the London Contemporary Dance School from 1989 to 1992. Afterwards he co-founded the Bedlam Dance Company, which was led by the choreographer Yael Flexer. Misha Downey worked with the Adventures in Motion Pictures dance company on *The Nutcracker* and danced for the Harlemations Dance Company led by the choreographer Bunt Matthias. In January 1994 he joined the Rosas dance company in Brussels, where he took part in the creation of *Kinok* and *Amor constante más allá de la muerte*, as well as being involved in the revival of *Toccata*. Before he joined Needcompany, he also danced *Swan Lake* for the choreographer Matthew Bourne (performances in London and Los Angeles).

The first Needcompany production Misha Downey danced in was Grace Ellen Barkey's *Rood Red Rouge* (1998). He also performs in Jan Lauwers' two part *No beauty for me there where human life is rare: Caligula* and *Morning Song*. He also is part of the cast of *Needcompany's King Lear*.

Tijen Lawton

Lawton, who was born in Vienna of a British father and a Turkish mother, was raised in Austria, Italy and Turkey and ended up in Great Britain. She took dance and music courses at The Arts Educational School in London from 1984 to 88 and at the London Contemporary Dance School from 1988 to 91. During the latter course she was an exchange student for a year at the Julliard School in New York. She then took additional short courses in Paris and Istanbul. In 1991 she co-founded Foco Loco, a company concentrating on research and development in all areas of dance. In 1992 she joined Emma Carlsson & Dancers and toured Great Britain and Germany in *Inner Corner*. In 1996 she came to Brussels to work in several productions by Pierre Droulers: *Le Beaux jours* (1996), *Lilas* (1997) and *Multum in Parvo* (1998), followed by international tours. In the meantime she had also created the first two choreographies of her own: *Je n'ai jamais parlé* (1997) and *Plus forts que leurs voix aiguës* (1998).

Her first work with Jan Lauwers & Needcompany was as an actor and dancer in the revival of *Caligula* and in *Morning Song* (1999). She also is part of the cast of *Needcompany's King Lear*.

Few Things is her first production with Grace Ellen Barkey

Muriel Hérault

Muriel Hérault was born in 1965 in France. She studied dance from 1983 to 1986 in the Faculté de Danse at the Paris IV Sorbonne and then took courses at the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers from 1986 to 1988. She moved to Belgium and performed in several productions by Ultima Vez under the choreographer Wim Vandekeybus. She danced in *What the body does not remember*, *Les porteuses de mauvaises nouvelles*, *The weight of a hand*, and in the film *Roseland*. She then worked for Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and until the end of 1992 danced for Rosas in *Achterland* (revival), *Rosas danst Rosas* (revival), *Erts* and *Mozart-Concertarias*, "*Un Moto di Gioia*".

Since 1993 she has been working for Needcompany and appeared in Jan Lauwers' *Orfeo* (1993), *Snakesong/Le Voyeur* (1994) and *Needcompany's King Lear*, and Grace Ellen Barkey's *Tres* (1995) and *Rood Red Rouge* (1998).

Kosi Hidama

After a 6 years career in the Tokyo Ballet, Kosi Hidama came to Belgium to join in the Company Michelle-Anne De Mey. He danced in *Sonata 555* and was involved in the creation of *Pulcinella*. In 1994 he started dancing in Rosas, the company of Anne-Teresa De Keersmaeker. He took part in the creation of *Amor Constante Màs alla de la Muerte*, *Verklärte Nacht* and *Woud*. He also danced in the revivals of *Kinok* and *Mozart Concert Arias*, *un moto di gioia*. In 1998 he danced for the Company Pierre Droulers in *L'air, du vent*.

As a choreographer, Kosi Hidama started in 1995 with *3 pieces for Clarinet Solo*. The last years he works basically in Yokohama, Japan. In the frame of the workshop A.S.K., organized by the prestigious Kanagawa Arts Foundation, he created his first group choreography *Present Present* (1997). Soon after he made *L.S.D.S.*, with music of George Van Dam and Ryoji Ikeda written to the performance. From this project he originated a second one *with Violence of gravity, elegance of fall* (1999) as a result.

Tour calendar

STUC (Leuven, Belgium)
2nd October 2000 (preview)

The première took place on the 7th of October at BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen, Norway).

Other performances:

BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen, Norway):
8 October 2000

Brigittinenkapel (Brussels, Belgium):
15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 and 25 November 2000

Lantaren/ Venster (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)
30 November, 1 and 2 December 2000

De Brakke Grond & Stichting Nesttheaters (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
6, 7, 8 and 9 December 2000

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