

CONCERT
BY A
BAND
FACING
THE
WRONG WAY

**A NEEDCOMPANY PRODUCTION BY MAARTEN SEGHERS
IN COLLABORATION WITH NICOLAS FIELD AND ROMBOUT WILLEMS**



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Humour and the absurd have played a fundamental role in Maarten Seghers's previous works, as has the questioning of dominant artistic practices. His intelligent, inimitable creations use beauty and humour to lovingly and brutally demonstrate the contradiction of the artist on the stage, dominated by his desire to please — a desire that also determines the public's attitude to his works, creating a vicious circle.

The band in 'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way' repeatedly collides against the wall in a constant effort leading to nothing, a portrayal of the powerlessness felt by the audience itself, who move from complicity in the comical moments to negation and discomfort. The audience weren't sure how to react, to the point that the laughs in the funniest moments were hesitant, and they didn't know whether to get up and applaud at the end of a song or not, looking around to see what others were doing. In this way the show worked perfectly, revealing the attitude of an audience in need of and accustomed to patterns of behaviour, wanting to know what to expect, which is detrimental to artistic creativity. It's not just that the artist wants to please, but that the audience wants to be indulged and guided. Once again, fascinating.

Juan Carlos Romero (NAU NUA ARTS MAGAZINE)

CONCERT BY A BAND FACING THE WRONG WAY

'**Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way**' is a portrait of a group of Western artists who run endlessly onward. It is unclear whether they are fleeing from all the misery in the world that is not theirs or racing towards it. This performance is a pressure cooker bursting with boundless effort, which leads to an exuberant optimism that has lost all sense of direction. The 'Band Facing the Wrong Way' consists of Maarten Seghers and Rombout Willems as guitarists and singers and Nicolas Field on drums.

The effort made to communicate in this concert is boundless, but wrongly directed. Something is shouted that is entirely audible but not necessarily comprehensible. '**Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way**' is a performance about effort. About the effort it takes.

The lightning-fast composition and the choreography for men storming endlessly onward: their sounds, light and gestures reverberate off the rear wall of the theatre. This reverberation of effort becomes the tragedy in itself.

'I am searching for the potential tragedy in the attempts of pop musicians to communicate and of artists to be heard. This is where tragedy and entertainment come together. They are not presumed to belong together; they do not exist without each other.'

The performance of pop music as a metaphor for humanity, of society, of coming together and being together (or at least the desire and the attempt to achieve this), or for the difficulties inherent in getting people together. This metaphorical potential makes music and sound political and of the people. Entertainment's inherent optimism is a tragedy of unperceived poetic and political significance.

My attraction to the image of a concert expresses the wish to please. And the rejection of the image expresses the desire to be wiser than that. It was John Cage who persuaded me that being wise can be entertaining. He created silence so as to be able to hear the coincidence of reality.

For 'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way' I exclude chance and leave not a moment's silence. All the sounds of reality become material to be used and manipulated for this new composition. Without exception, all the sounds that refer to all possible ideas, people, occurrences, problems, dramas and tragedies are to be blown into the concert hall like a nail bomb. An action that is as compact as possible, with the greatest possible impact.

When on tour in Mexico I ran into a cactus. It was much bigger than me and had brown patches and lots of upright spines. The ground was hot beneath its feet and it was thirsty. It had stood there a long time and still had long to stand there. In front of it, and very close to it, a wall had been built a long time ago. The cactus grew straight through the wall. It was as if the wall wasn't there. Or at least, it was as if, to the cactus, the wall did not signify an end.

The 'Band Facing the Wrong Way' ignores the wall of the theatre against which it is bellowing. It sings past the wall. Or else it gets through it. Or else the wall moves aside. Or not, and everyone and everything crashes into it. What counts is the effort it takes.'

Maarten Seghers



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DIRECTION, COMPOSITION, INSTALLATION: Maarten Seghers

FROM AND WITH: Nicolas Field, Rombout Willems

ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR: Morgane Benyamina

SOUND DESIGN: Pierrick Drochmans

LIGHTING DESIGN: Ken Hioco

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Marjolein Demey

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Saul Mombaerts

IN COLLABORATION WITH: Lot Lemm

PRODUCTION: Needcompany

COPRODUCTION: L'Auditori & Festival Grec de Barcelona, Malta Festival Poznań

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Première MALTA Festival Poznań – 18, 19 June 2018

L'Auditori & Festival Grec de Barcelona – 11, 12, 13 July 2018

Actoral festival international des arts Marseille – 11, 12 October 2018

EXPLO Needcompany Brussels – 25 October 2018

Dear Maarten,

A reality show on television. An ordinary man in the countryside talks about the prolonged drought. He makes it brief and is clearly not impressed by the interest. He speaks in halting phrases. As dry as the earth beneath his feet. He says: 'The problem is the solution'. He doesn't say: 'The problem is finding a solution'.

The problem is the solution. That is the definition of your quest as an artist.

The problem does not have to be solved. The problem is the solution. If art were to solve the problem, art would no longer exist. Art is a problem.

In his version of the myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus writes that the thing is not to fetch the stone again immediately and push it back up. He says: 'Just let the stone roll. Take your time to go back down the mountain. Go and sit under a tree to read a book. Or spend a bit of time fucking. That's life. The simple life.'

But not for you. At this moment, pushing the stone is exactly what life is: the stone is the problem. The problem is the solution. We don't want a simple existence. We want a complex existence. Life is a problem that we have to cherish. The stone is the solution.

'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way': looking in the other direction. Not to turn away from the problem, but to magnify the problem; the heavier the stone, the more intense and interesting life is. You seem to think that if life is a problem, art must be too.

Back to that drought. That's another way of describing your images: as dry as dust. Your visual installations consist of dry material. Then the music you write: behind it lies a bone-dry counting, in which many a drummer has got stuck. Fritz Welch as a cow, dry as dust, in a bare meadow. Even time becomes a drought that spares nothing. Rombout Willems ramming through a wall. The bone-dry stone dust in 'Glory Hole'. The dry boxes in your bone-breaking solo. Nicolas Field with no hands.

Art with a sledgehammer.

Jan Lauwers

Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way

Text by Alan Quireyns

The art practice of Maarten Seghers emerges from the desire to escape any form of definition, to refute and contradict any sort of stigmatisation. In 'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way' Seghers does not offer fine stories or seductive illusions, but grasps the link with the audience in other ways. He understands the art of welcoming confusion and embracing chaos. This gives rise to a rough-hewn use of language that appears to go back as far as the beginning of all things.

Seghers creates this language use out of a self-imposed paucity. The stage setting is minimal. Each object is employed in the performance in such a way that it transcends its own functionality. A cable is given a sculptural value. A drum kit is the main sculpture in an installation that continuously changes shape. Electronic effects interfere with intelligibility. They abolish the rules of causality. Difficulties and obstacles are sought out rather than avoided. Each element acquires new content. The repetitions display blind doggedness. A quest where the least trace of any final result is imperturbably questioned yet again.

Maarten Seghers provides sound and images for the notion of effort. Three members of the band, groping behind their backs, try to find each other. Limbs fail, paralysed legs drag along behind a torso. Without direction. A scream is answered like an echo bouncing off a rock face. Action and reaction. The search itself takes on a character, a nature, of its own. Recognisable phrases slowly bubble up out of the chaos. Singing emerges, in spite of all the physical restrictions. But it consists mainly of dissonances that together form a canon. Similarities appear again amidst the contrasts. The urge to do things differently opens up new registers. 'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way' conveys the trouble it takes to get something said and obstinately stares straight into the theatre spots. We see the black dots on the retina, the alienation and the final scrambling to the feet.

At the heart of the tornado the image turns black. At the moment the cameraman gets the sniper in his sights and looks straight down the barrel, the image vanishes. The essence is impervious. At the moment when the myth is about to be unmasked, it always goes wrong. Yet we must still keep on trying. Everyone uses everything he has. Maarten Seghers raises the mask, but it sticks to the face so hard that he pulls the skin and the hair off with it. What we see are the rough outlines of it, a tooth, a piece of the pale jaw bone. Recognition comes in no more than scraps. We are challenged, enticed into helping, to become an accomplice. 'Does anybody want to say anything?' We stay seated. No one intervenes. We watch, frozen. 'What will you do? What have you done?' A push towards action. The question that everyone avoids but can never be asked often enough. Our world, that screams out more and more for participation, but which receives less and less of it. Mankind is itself its greatest threat.

'Concert by a Band Facing the Wrong Way' creates a visual idiom for the general hysteria we are surrounded by. It is a provisional answer to all questions at the same time. 'Maybe the problem problem problem doesn't need solving.'

Maarten Seghers makes objects, installations, performances and music. He has been an integral part of Needcompany since 2001.

In his solo, 'WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT DO YOU MEAN AND OTHER PLEASANTRIES' (2014) he smartly and inimitably exposes art practices with apparent absurdity and with beauty and hilarity ploughed through the inevitability of our woes. This feast of feelings contains a human life full of love and tragedy. For this production he was nominated for the 2015 Prix Jardin d'Europe for choreographers in Vienna.

In the performance 'O or The Challenge Of This Particular Show Was To Have Words Ending In O' (2016) Seghers confronts himself with the artists, musicians and dancers Fritz Welch, Simon Lenski, Nicolas Field and Mohamed Toukabri, for whom he wrote an invocatory song about the noisiness of comforting.

The sculpture 'Fountain (Late-Pornographic Equilibrium) I' (2010) is now in the permanent collection at FRAC Nord - Pas de Calais.

In 2006 Maarten Seghers set up OHNO COOPERATION in association with the artist Jan Lauwers and the musician Elke Janssens. Together, they create performances, video works, installations and music. OHNO COOPERATION also invites other artists and musicians to join, and presents these joint ventures in series of international exhibitions and concerts, including 'The Tragedy of the Applause'.

Needcompany is an artists' company set up by the artists Jan Lauwers and Grace Ellen Barkey in 1986. Lauwers, Barkey and Seghers form the core of the company, and it embraces all their artistic work: theatre, dance, performance, visual art, writing, etc. Their creations are shown at the most prominent venues at home and abroad. In addition to the presence of Maarten Seghers as a performer in the work of Jan Lauwers & Grace Ellen Barkey, his compositions make a substantial contribution to their productions.

NEEDCOMPANY

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