

Hooikaai 35,
1000 Brussel

NEEDCOMPANY

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Brussels, May 2010

Dear Friend,

We have just completed a long tour. I have been looking at my diary entries.

Moscow: The Belgian ambassador and his amiable wife give us a warm welcome. To survive in the hard world of diplomacy they have armed themselves with a razor-sharp sense of humour. Their Angolan assistant no longer travels on the underground. He is fed up with the monkey noises. We are performing *Isabella's room*, a piece about Africa. No monkey noises from the audience. But no blacks either. We are nominated for the Stanislavski Prize and are grateful to the Russian public. At the entrance to the underground a man is selling his kidneys. Russians drink as if their lives depended on it.

Bogota: 2.2 million people on

the run in their own country. Soldiers are posted outside our hotel day and night. The director of the festival says that Colombia has been in a state of war forever. We perform *The Deer House*, a piece about war. Standing ovation. Colombians dance as if their lives depended on it.

Granada: In a booklet about the Alhambra I read that in the 7th century the Catholics could not endure the emancipation of Muslim women. They found it a threat. Who would have thought it? We perform in the Alhambra theatre, a volcano erupts and we don't get back up north on time. So let's watch a bullfight. El silencio de la Maestranza. Spaniards keep silent as if their lives depended on it.

Marseille: Free on Sunday afternoon. We play a petanque tournament with the wonderful public of Le Merlan. Pastis and sardines on the beach. What a

miserable life. Grace wins. As always. Julien, our 'wandering star', sees a prostitute lying bleeding and unconscious on the ground as he walks to the hotel. He calls an ambulance, gets pepper spray in his face and is beaten up. We perform *This door is too small (for a bear)*, a piece about the power of the imagination, one that puts you in a good humour.

In the taxi to the station the driver asks how things are in Belgium and whether the Flemish really are so racist. I think about this and remember a news broadcast on Flemish television: the newsreader enthusiastically reported an item on the colonial past of the Flemish writer and leftist bourgeois Jef Geeraerts. I see the old man talking proudly about how he abused his power in the Belgian colony. His hobbies were beating people with sticks and fucking. Only in Flanders could such a person

be given prime time exposure. The excuse is 'he doesn't really mean it'. Try explaining that to the taxi driver. The TGV is on strike. The French strike as if their lives depended on it.

Brussels: Back home, I read a Flemish newspaper. In the Belgian parliament Vlaams Blok (extreme right-wing party) sings 'The Flemish Lion'. The Flemish whine as if their lives depended on it.

All the best,
JL

The next few months at
NEEDCOMPANY

This door is too small (for a bear), the new dance production by Grace Ellen Barkey, having shaken up Brussels and Marseille, is continuing on its victorious march to Frankfurt, Gijon, Mons (B), Strombeek, Bruges, Leuven, Tongeren and Essen. This is how Luk Lambrecht put it: "After *Chunking* (2005) and *The Porcelain Project* (2007), *This door is too small (for a bear)* is latest of her fairytales that cling to the outer edge of the imagination. Grace Ellen Barkey unfolds a visual stage language that is clear, sparkling, expressive, effervescent, filmic, humorous, ironic and above all disarmingly appealing. (...) The implicit, virtual images in the mind of the choreographer are brought together, knitted and sewn; in

short they are made 'visual' by the way Lot Lemm provides an 'image' for 'what' the choreographer attempts to 'depict' on stage as a 'new' world."

A selection from the reviews:

The performance, chock-full of images and references, crazily fizzes off in all possible directions. (...)

It's tacky and childish at once, with these characters dressed up as bears, rabbits or mice, decked out from head to foot in brightly coloured knitted costumes. For contemporary art followers, it's reminiscent of Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy. The rest of the performance is radically different, except for the enduring sweet silliness:

young female dancers whose too perfectly synchronised movements remind us of the nautical ballets of Hollywood in the Forties, a side-splitting 'Swan Lake' is danced by the men while Julien Faure leaps around, stark naked but armed with a Magritte-like bowler hat to hide 'that which should not be seen'. A little later the three fellows seem to be shooting a 'film noir' by Tim Burton on the encounter of a bear with a mouse. A question rings out: "Do you feel alive?", and the female dancer yells: "I am alive". That's the main thing. (...)
One steps out slightly taken aback, but also elated by this merry mix borne aloft on the company's energy and the

Agenda

THIS DOOR IS TOO SMALL (FOR A BEAR)

Grace Ellen Barkey

Concept: Lemm&Barkey

Created with / performed by: Misha Downey, Julien Faure, Yumiko Funaya, Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers

A Needcompany production. Coproduced by: ImPulsTanz (Vienna), PACT Zollverein (Essen) and Künstlerhaus mousonturm (Frankfurt). In association with Kaaitheater (Brussels).

20, 21, 22 May 2010
Künstlerhaus mousonturm,
Frankfurt
Tickets +49 69 40 58 95 20

11, 12 June 2010
Teatro de la Laboral, Gijón
Tickets +34 902 106 601

4 July 2010
Festival au Carré, Le Manège,
Bergen (Mons)
Tickets +32 65 39 59 39

16 October 2010
CC Strombeek
Tickets +32 2 263 03 43

20 October 2010
MaZ, Cultuurcentrum Bruges
Tickets +32 50 44 30 60

27 October 2010
Stadsschouwburg Leuven
Tickets + 32 16 20 30 20

29 October 2010
De Velinx, Tongeren
Tickets +32 12 39 38 00

17, 18 December 2010
PACT Zollverein, Essen
Tickets +49 201 812 22 00

RICKY AND RONNY AND HUNDRED STARS – A SADO COUNTRY OPERA

MaisonDahlBonnema

With: Anna Sophia Bonnema, Hans Petter Dahl and Louise Peterhoff.

A MaisonDahlBonnema/Needcompany production. Coproduced by: Theater aan het Vrijthof, Euregionaal Opera- en Muziektheaterfestival (Maastricht), BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen) and Noorderzon/Grand Théâtre (Groningen). In association with Kaaitheater (Brussels) and Konstnärsnämnden (Stockholm). With the support of the Norsk kulturråd.

5, 6 June 2010
Operadagen Rotterdam
Tickets +31 10 411 81 10

August 2010
Noorderzon, Groningen
Tickets <http://www.noorderzon.nl>

26 September 2010
Avant Art Festival, Wroclaw
Tickets www.avantartfest.pl

SAD FACE | HAPPY FACE

Three stories on Human Nature

A TRILOGY

Part 1: Isabella's room (the past)

Part 2: The Lobster Shop (the future)

Part 3: The Deer House (the present)

Jan Lauwers

With: Grace Ellen Barkey, Anneke Bonnema, Hans Petter Dahl, Viviane De Muynck, Misha Downey, Julien Faure, Yumiko Funaya, Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers, Eléonore Valère, Inge Van Bruystegem

27, 29 June 2010
MALTA Festival, Poznan
Tickets +48 61 6465243

THE DEER HOUSE

Jan Lauwers

With: Grace Ellen Barkey, Anneke Bonnema, Hans Petter Dahl, Viviane De Muynck, Misha Downey, Julien Faure, Yumiko Funaya, Benoît Gob, Maarten Seghers, Eléonore Valère, Inge Van Bruystegem

Produced by Needcompany and Salzburger Festspiele. Coproduced by: Schauspielhaus Zürich and PACT Zollverein (Essen). With the cooperation of deSingel (Antwerp) and Kaaitheater (Brussels).

7, 8, 10, 11, 12 May 2010
Théâtre de la Ville, Paris
Tickets +33 1 42 74 22 77

18, 19, 20 June 2010
Akademietheater, Vienna
Tickets +43 1 51444-4145

3 September 2010
TANZtheater INTERNATIONAL
2010, Schauspielhaus, Hanover
Tickets +49 511 1684 12 22

17 September 2010
BITEF, Belgrade
Tickets +381 11 32 45 241

5, 7, 8, 9 October 2010
BAM, Harvey Theater, New York
Tickets +1 718 636 4100

ISABELLA'S ROOM

Jan Lauwers

With: Viviane De Muynck, Hans Petter Dahl, Anneke Bonnema, Benoît Gob, Misha Downey, Julien Faure, Yumiko Funaya, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers / Ludde Hagberg, Jan Lauwers, Elke Janssens, Lemm&Barkey

A Needcompany production, coproduced by Festival d'Avignon, Théâtre de la Ville (Paris), Théâtre Garonne (Toulouse), La Rose des Vents (Scène Nationale de Villeneuve d'Ascq), Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York) and welt in basel theaterfestival. In association with Kaaitheater, Brussels.

27, 28 May 2010
L'Arsenal, Metz
Tickets +33 3 87 74 16 16

15, 16 September 2010
BITEF, Belgrade
Tickets +381 11 32 45 241

28, 29, 30 September 2010
Burgtheater, Vienna
Tickets +43 1 51444-4145

THE BALLAD OF RICKY AND RONNY – A POP OPERA

MaisonDahlBonnema

With: Hans Petter Dahl and Anna Sophia Bonnema

A Needcompany/MaisonDahlBonnema production with the cooperation of Kaaitheater (Brussels) and ImPulsTanz (Vienna International Dance Festival).

23, 24 June 2010
Eurokaz, Zagreb
Tickets +385 1 48 47 856

13, 14, 15, 16 October 2010
Theatre Junction, Calgary
Tickets +1 403 205 2922 ext 1

28 October 2010
De Biekorf, Cultuurcentrum
Bruges
Tickets +32 50 44 30 60

THE TRAGEDY OF THE APPLAUSE - STROMBEEK

(as part of 'The Good, The Bad & The Ugly')

Group exhibition compiled by:

OHNO COOPERATION

With installations and a concert by:

Nicolas Field, Jan Lauwers (OHNO COOPERATION), Maarten Seghers (OHNO COOPERATION) and Rombout Willems

Special guest: Eric Sleichim

Produced by Needcompany/OHNO COOPERATION.

25 September 2010
CC Strombeek
Tickets +32 2 263 03 43

unusual visual beauty of the scenography.

27/02/2010 - La Libre Belgique
– Guy Duplat

These goings-on make as much sense as a crazy dream. But everything comes together again at the end. A huge, Chinese-looking screen lights up. Two screens slide back and forth across the stage. This gives rise to mysterious spaces in which the performers dance duets. Sometimes tender, sometimes rough. Suddenly all the chaos seems forgotten, especially when, smiling broadly, they all perform an oriental variety ballet. They look like the model of happiness. But after every-

thing that went before, you know this can't be true.

27/02/2010 – De Morgen
– Pieter T'Jonck

Ricky and Ronny and Hundred Stars – a Sado Country Opera, the second opera by MaisonDahl Bonnema, did not pass unnoticed either at the premiere in Maastricht or the performances in Bergen (NO) and Brussels. They are increasingly acquiring skills in a new and unprecedented opera idiom. Beware of being unsettled by the harshness of their story. Or, as Frank Vande Veire wrote: "The Catastrophe has long been a utility item, a tune in our mind, a slightly sharp perfume, a masturbation fantasy, a game, an aphrodisiac. It is not just a thing

we are afraid of because it would bring an end to our comfortable little lives. We stupefy ourselves with it so we can endure this little life. In a world with no conceivable alternative it is the final image of the True Life."

In June this production is on the programme of the Operadagen in Rotterdam and in August the Noorderzon Festival in Groningen. In September it will be on in Wroclaw.

In the beginning they sing to an ethereal soundtrack as they fly through a cloud above Paris and ultimately land in a park. The trio will in fact often return to the clouds, both in their heads and with their bodies. (...)

In the park they have some wild nights packed with sex, drugs and violence. The psychedelia takes them tumbling from one place to another, resulting in a confusion that makes indistinct leaps through space and time. It is the confusion which the characters themselves feel that also guides you agreeably through the world they are involved in. (...)

This emptiness leaves you with a remarkably contented restfulness. But if the spirit of Nietzsche is truly to be found in this piece, as Dahl hinted in the discussion afterwards, it cannot end with emptiness. Even though Nietzsche was the philosopher with the hammer, who smashed all accepted

truths and experienced the black hole several times in his own life, he was also the philosopher who repeatedly rose again and refilled the void with a message for mankind. It is to be hoped that we shall see this in the final part of Ricky and Ronny's trilogy.

24/3/2010 - www.goddeau.com
– Kjell Dupon

Summer will only really begin when Jan Lauwers' **Sad Face | Happy Face trilogy** is performed in Poznan. This six-hour theatre marathon will be performed twice at the Malta Festival there.

Jan Lauwers' production **The Deer House** continues to tour: in June it will be on in Vienna,

where Needcompany is artist-in-residence at the Burgtheater. In September it is on the bill in Hanover and Belgrade. In October it will be on for four nights during the BAM Festival at the Harvey Theatre in New York.

The Ballad of Ricky and Ronny – a Pop Opera, a MaisonDahl Bonnema production, will be on at Eurokaz in Zagreb in June and in October travels to Calgary in Canada and to Bruges.

Jan Lauwers' **Isabella's room** is to be performed in Metz at the end of May, and in September it too is on in Belgrade and Vienna.

OHNO COOPERATION has been

invited by Luk Lambrecht for part of the big project on 'beauty' at Strombeek Cultural Centre in the autumn, under the title 'The Good, The Bad & The Ugly'. **'The Tragedy of the Applause - Strombeek'** is a group exhibition put together by OHNO COOPERATION. It includes work by Rombout Willems, Jan Lauwers, Maarten Seghers and Nicolas Field. It is also accompanied by a concert with Eric Sleichim as guest.

NEEDCOMPANY

With the support of the Flemish authorities.

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