

## BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 2014

Dear friend,

I recently received a mail from the extraordinary Idan Hayosh, the Israeli artist who uses 'ten thousand bombs and grenades', and who at our invitation put on an incredibly entertaining firework performance in Antwerp several summers ago. He gave us a glimpse into his correspondence with his father on the world and art.

Having seen his son's latest work of sculpture, his father wrote:

*"Idan... The work itself is quite impressive, I've checked the construction and it is very clean and well made. Also the name plate helped a lot.*

*However, for your next big piece, I suggest you might want to draw inspiration from more extreme cases of the "fear factor", with topics such as:*

...

*Animal abuse; cars and drivers getting carried away by floods; illegal immigrants getting violently apprehended by the authorities; unchecked terrorists wandering around the world looking for a target; countries pointing nuclear missiles at each other; loaded weapons in domestic homes; kids going to school carrying knives; alcoholics leaving bars with broken bottles in their hands; death by lightning; a tree falls down crushing a house with its tenants; exposed electrical wires as a cause of death in pools; a drunk driver who runs pedestrians over; teenage*

*suicides because of unfulfilled love or social pressure; accessible bridges as suicide spots; the vandalising of public property; death by tsunami; death by radioactive substances; death by avalanches... Maybe we can leave some for our next correspondence, what do you think?"*

In an inimitably comical way, this mail summarises what is being discussed in virtually all public dialogues, colloquia and art forums in Europe. Art and the intolerably heavy responsibility it bears for the world in which it exists.

The question raised by the father, who seems to me just as extraordinary as his son, is very relevant and the answer is not simple. After all, at a time of great uncertainty, the call for clarity is a signal that cannot be ignored. The demand for a hierarchy of subjects is absolutely classic and recurs again and again: the portrait of the king is more important than that of his lackey, a landscape more worthwhile than a still life, etc. But the big difference is that it is now a matter of social topics as opposed to the autonomous image. In times when everything is connected, and social media have in an extremely vulgar manner taken upon themselves the role of moral conscience, the autonomous image is the new taboo. Yet the autonomous image is ultimately the true aim of every artist. Why are reactions to it so condescending and

even hostile? Has the autonomous image become unnecessary in an age when nothing may any longer exist in its own right, when everything has to be interactive and people only want to see what they have learnt to see? And is the hope that the autonomous image might be subversive a vain notion?

Or is art here being confused with presentation? When the means become the end, is autonomy superfluous and even dangerous because of its seemingly worthless return? Or is the call for a complete change of life and thus also of art not so futile after all?

So that's what the correspondence between the father and son is all about. It is comforting that this sort of conversation is taking place all over the world. Comforting because it is a small sign that the autonomous image is always essential and so hard to achieve.

I find it perfectly alright for artists to compromise themselves if the aim is a better world. But I know for sure that the only true artist is the uncompromising artist. I find compromise much too fashionable and thus worth no more than the marching rhythm of an advancing army. This marching rhythm is fine for the morale and so is just as quickly forgotten when the spoils of battle are abundant.

This is not cynical, but quite realistic.

I recently experienced an extremely intense moment of real emotion on seeing a piece of work headed by Matthias Hartmann at the Burgtheater; called *Die letzten Zeugen*, it is about the uncompromising union of Austria with Germany in 1938. A hundred-year-old Jewish man who comes to the front of the stage and says: *'Survival is a privilege, and that creates obligations.'* The thirteen hundred members of the audience gave the old man and the other final witnesses a standing ovation lasting several minutes. The old man looked at them, casually showed the palms of his hands, shrugged his shoulders as a sign of submission, and went off. I know for sure that this play will be performed for years to come. Perhaps until the last witnesses have died. This emotion was real and had nothing to do with art.

Well, well, I would so much like to have an influence on the world and its history. I would also like to listen to all those sociologists, philosophers and politicians who know which way art should go in this world. But it is so hard. The quest involved in every work I do has until now never led to a solution. The questions I ask myself have still not been answered. The world still remains too much outside. I am afraid a great many artists will agree with me that the search for the autonomous image is terribly hard. And that the autonomous image always changes the world but never gives an answer to all those questions. And this contradiction is the real problem.

JL

## AGENDA

### BEGIN THE BEGUINE

*John Cassavetes*

WORLD PREMIERE

Director: Jan Lauwers | With: Sung-Im Her, Falk Rockstroh, Oliver Stokowski, Inge Van Bruystegem

Production: Burgtheater in collaboration with Needcompany

**1, 9, 10, 29 March 2014**

Akademietheater, Vienna  
+43 1 513 2967

### WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT DO YOU MEAN AND OTHER PLEASANTRIES

*Maarten Seghers*

With: Maarten Seghers

Production: Needcompany | Commissioned by FIDENA 2014 (Bochum)

**21, 22 May 2014**

FIDENA, Bochum  
+49 234 4 77 20

### MARKETPLACE 76

*Jan Lauwers*

With: Grace Ellen Barkey, Anneke Bonnema, Jules Beckman (replaces Emmanuel Schwartz), Hans Petter Dahl, Julien Faure, Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Romy Louise Lauwers, Maarten Seghers, Mohamed Toukabri (replaces Yumiko Funaya), Catherine Travelletti, Jan Lauwers, Elke Janssens

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: Ruhrtriennale, Burgtheater (Vienna) and Holland Festival (Amsterdam)

**7 May 2014**

Tanz und Theater, International Festival, Freiburg  
+49 761 49 68 888

### MUSH-ROOM

*Grace Ellen Barkey*

Concept: Lemm&Barkey | Created with/performed by: Julien Faure, Romy Louise Lauwers (replaces Yumiko Funaya), Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers, Mohamed Toukabri, Catherine Travelletti

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: PACT Zollverein (Essen) and Internationales Figurentheater-Festival (Erlangen)

**6 March 2014**

De Velinx, Tongeren  
+32 12 800040

**12, 13 March 2014**

Vooruit, Ghent  
+32 9 267 28 28

**15 March 2014**

CC Strombeek  
+32 2 263 03 43

**26, 27 March 2014**

Monty, Antwerp  
+32 3 238 91 81

### ODD? BUT TRUE!

*Lemm&Barkey*

Created with/performed by: Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers, Mohamed Toukabri, Catherine Travelletti

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: Bronks

**4 March 2014**

Krokusfestival, CCHA, Hasselt  
+32 11 22 99 33

**23 March 2014**

Storm op Komst, De Warande, Turnhout  
+32 14 41 69 91

### THIS DOOR IS TOO SMALL (FOR A BEAR)

*Grace Ellen Barkey*

Choreography: Grace Ellen Barkey | Visual concept: Lemm&Barkey | Music: Rombout Willems | Created with/performed by: Misha Downey, Julien Faure, Yumiko Funaya, Benoît Gob, Sung-Im Her, Maarten Seghers

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: ImPulsTanz (Vienna), PACT Zollverein (Essen), künstlerhaus mousonturm (Frankfurt) | In collaboration with Kaaitheater (Brussels)

**16, 17, 18, 19 April 2014**

Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Bogotá  
+57 2174577 1070

### ISABELLA'S ROOM

*Jan Lauwers*

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

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: 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 collaboration with Kaaitheater (Brussels)

**19, 20 March 2014**

International Festival of Contemporary Theatre Homo Novus, Kipsala International Exhibition Center, Riga  
+37 167228477

**29, 30 April 2014**

PACT Zollverein, Essen  
+49 201 289 47 00

### THE OHNO COOPERATION CONVERSATION ON THE O.H.N.O.P.O.P.I.C.O.N.O. TAUTOLOGY

*OHNO Cooperation*

With: Maarten Seghers and Jan Lauwers

Production: Needcompany | Commissioned by FIDENA 2014 (Bochum)

**21, 22 May 2014**

FIDENA, Bochum  
+49 234 4 77 20

### 18 VIDEOS

*Lemm&Barkey*

**11, 12, 13, 14, 15 March 2014**

**19, 20, 21, 22 March 2014**

**25, 26, 27 March 2014**

Monty ABN, Antwerp  
+32 3 238 91 81

**21 February – 17 April 2014**

The Ever Changing Body deel II, CC Strombeek  
+32 2 263 03 43

NEEDCOMPANY

## ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

BURGTHEATER SINCE 2009

## THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AT NEEDCOMPANY

In **Needlapb XX**, Needcompany kicked off a manic year. Those who were there in Frankfurt witnessed the first intimations of new work by Jan Lauwers, Maarten Seghers, MaisonDahlBonnema and Grace Ellen Barkey with the Needcompany ensemble.

These creations will be let loose on you over the next few months. The first day of rehearsals for **Begin the Beguine**, the new Burgtheater production directed by Jan Lauwers, was on 9 December 2013, which was also the birthday of the late John Cassavetes. It was this legendary film director who wrote *Begin the Beguine*, which was named after Cole Porter's evergreen. It is a brilliant but deeply dark allegory of love and death, Eros and Thanatos, written just before his death. The project never went beyond the preparatory stage. German publisher S. Fischer Verlag asked Jan Lauwers, with the agreement of Faces Distribution,

to take on the creation of this masterpiece now, 25 years later. Lauwers is not a repertoire director whose merit lies in reproducing a Cassavetes script. His approach is concerned with creating something new and he pays respect to Cassavetes' brilliance in a way entirely his own. You will find out how at the premiere – with its consummate cast featuring Sung-Im Her, Falk Rockstroh, Oliver Stokowski and Inge Van Bruystegem – on 1 March.

*“The most difficult thing in the world is to reveal yourself, to express what you have to. As an artist, I feel that we must try many things - but above all, we must dare to fail. You must have the courage to be bad - to be willing to risk everything to really express it all.”*

- Cassavetes

The next Needcompany premiere will rest on the shoulders of Maarten Seghers. **What do you mean what do you mean and other pleasantries** is a solo lasting 65 minutes and 42 seconds that is midway between pure stand-up comedy, performance art and visual art. The Frankfurt audience were in stitches and saw only a fraction of the madness that Seghers will be spreading at the premiere in the FIDENA Festival on 21 May. Seghers wittily and inimitably exposes artistic practice by way of seeming absurdity. In this inviting fantasy world, the sculptures around him transform into actor, instrument and witness. You don't want to miss this.

MaisonDahlBonnema rounds off the series of premieres with the concert performance **Rhythm Conference feat. Inner Splits**. Its makers, Hans Petter Dahl and Anna Sophia Bonnema, unfold a concentrated, hypnotic conference on stage, together with the Swiss performers Nicolas Field and Catherine Travelletti. Bodies vibrate, fired up by Field's live drumming. Voices and vibrations sustain the space and put you in a trance.

*“We say no to existing forms and conventions, and seek out the monstrous, the unrepresentable, in an attempt to escape the prevailing capitalist consensus, whether it be the aesthetics of the beautiful and new, or the codes of social communication.”*

– Dahl and Bonnema

In March, Grace Ellen Barkey & The Residents will give the order for the **MUSH-ROOM** invasion. It's going to get pretty lively at some places in Flanders, when this dance performance calls in at Tongeren, Ghent, Strombeek and Antwerp. The music the American art collective The Residents wrote specially for this production has now been issued on vinyl as well as on CD.

*“You hallucinate without eating a single mushroom. Commedia del funghi, for sure.”*

– De Morgen

CC Strombeek and Monty will be showing the video work of Lemm& Barkey. Images are constructed and deconstructed almost in passing. Human figures turn into forms, material turns into a part of the body, hesitation turns into eroticism. At Strombeek it is part of the exhibition *The Ever Changing Body*, a three-parter headed by the curator Luk Lambrecht in which the artists Thomas Ruff, Marie-Jo Lafontaine and Jacques Charlier are also represented.

**Odd? But true!**, also by Lemm&Barkey, is well on its way to conquering young hearts in Hasselt and Turnhout. In this dance performance for all ages, Grace Ellen Barkey puts laughter to the fore, in a weird and wonderful set by Lot Lemm. Jan Lauwers' **Marketplace 76** and **Isabella's room** will be on in Freiburg, Riga and Essen. Grace Ellen Barkey's **This door is too small (for a bear)** is going intercontinental, with performances in Bogotá.