

BRUSSELS, SEPTEMBER 2014

Dear Friends everywhere,

I was standing watching the manoeuvring of a gigantic cruise ship through a bend between Giudecca and San Marco with Fabrice Murgia and the president of the Venice Biennale, Paolo Baratta. The president said: 'Look at the rearmost tugboat. That's the most important one. It has to generate a huge counterforce to keep the ship on course. Look at the forces at work on those cables. If one of those cables snaps it's the end of San Marco. Marinetti would shoot himself in the head from pure euphoria if he could watch so much futuristic decadence. Marinetti was another one of those artists who wanted to save the world.' The president turned away, laughed cheerily, mumbled something about it being 'holiday-time at last' and left us, the silver and golden lion, like two lonely Belgians without a mother country, surrounded by a horde of Italian paparazzi. The silver lion said: 'There's not a single fuckin' Belgian journalist to be seen'.

The golden oldie replied: 'Anonymity is every artist's highest goal'. The little lion looked at me pityingly. 'The president said something about saving the world, didn't he?' He suddenly swapped my golden lion for his silver one and ran off. 'You just stay anonymous!'

Can art save the world? What kind of a question is that? First of all, it's been a long time since we knew what art itself actually is, let alone whether it can save the world. Even Jan Hoet, at the end of his life, said that he still didn't know what art was. (Throughout his life he did bad paintings which he considered worthless as art, but he had to keep on painting them. Interesting.) Picasso said that art scraped the everyday dust off the soul. Muddled and woolly. Duchamp once said that art had replaced God and that God was a much better idea. That's actually a notion that's heading the right way. For the moment God's making quite a mess of things too.

One requirement for saving the world is power. Art and power are two more of those things that will never go together. A fighter pilot has more power. A nurse has more power. Even a politician has more power. Some artists have a lot of power in the art world, but this power has no significance at all outside it. Is this a problem? Not at all. Art doesn't have anything to do with power or politics. If the Belgian painter Michaël Borremans goes to Tel Aviv, it only increases his power in the world of the arts itself. Since artists sign their work, this power is essential to their survival. But artists are by definition powerless and in the best cases they are anonymous creatures who know no fear. Anonymity is the highest goal.

What about if Borremans had his paintings copied by a bunch of skilful Chinese students and then exhibited them unsigned in Tel Aviv?

With heartfelt greetings,
JL

PS. I would just like to mention this:

1. Needcompany still lives in Brussels, that obstinate capital of Europe. Belgium has just had elections and in Flanders the nationalists have won. The axes are being whetted, the borders will be closed more tightly and art is being viewed with greater suspicion. The new Minister of Culture, Sven Gatz, will have to go to extremes to defend our culture and to protect the arts in Flanders, which are constantly gaining in international significance, against the shortsightedness of a great many of the new people in power.

2. For many years Needcompany has had one of the largest permanent ensembles in Flanders, with full-time actors. Since there are tough times ahead, most of the actors are now working freelance. Taking as our motto 'everything is always changing', this offers new opportunities and we shall be better adapted to the new era.

3. The close cooperation with the Burgtheater in Vienna is being brought to a close after five marvellous years. The intendant Matthias Hartmann has been dismissed, and since he was the initiator of the idea of Needcompany as an artist-in-residence, this is where the story ends for us. We shall however remain in contact with the Burgtheater, and the last production we made there, 'Begin the Beguine', remains on their repertoire. We would here also like to thank Matthias Hartmann for his dedication and his profound support of Needcompany and wish him all the best.

AGENDA

JUST FOR BOZEN | BOLZANO

With: Grace Ellen Barkey, Jan Lauwers, OHNO COOPERATION, ~~Maison~~Dahl-Bonnema, Needcompany
Production: Needcompany

10 September 2014
Transart, Bolzano

JUST FOR SARAJEVO

With: Grace Ellen Barkey, Jan Lauwers & Needcompany
Production: Needcompany

12 October 2014
International Theater Festival MESS, Sarajevo

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

Concept: Jan Lauwers & Grace Ellen Barkey | With: Needcompany & guests
Production: Needcompany | Commissioned by Steirischer Herbst

26 September 2014
Steirischer Herbst, Helmut List Halle, Graz

RHYTHM CONFERENCE FEAT. INNER SPLITS ~~Maison~~DahlBonnema

With: Anna Sophia Bonnema, Hans Petter Dahl, Nicolas Field, Catherine Travelletti

Production: ~~Maison~~DahlBonnema & Needcompany & M-A-P | Coproduction: BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen) with a residency in PACT Zollverein (Essen) | With the support of Norsk kulturråd

19 December 2014 World premiere
Kaaistudio's, Brussels

20, 21 February 2015
BIT Teatergarasjen, Studio Bergen (NO)

26 February 2015
ARTDANTHE, Theatre de Vanves, Paris

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT DO YOU MEAN AND OTHER PLEASANTRIES

Maarten Seghers & The Horrible Facts

With: Maarten Seghers

Production: Needcompany | Commissioned by FIDENA 2014 (Bochum)

27 November 2014 French premiere
théâtre des 13 vents, Montpellier

19 December 2014 Belgian premiere
Kaaistudio's, Brussels

28 February 2015
ARTDANTHE, Theatre de Vanves, Paris

NEEDLAPB 21 & 22 Jan Lauwers

With: Needcompany

26 November 2014
théâtre des 13 vents, Montpellier

17 December 2014
Kaaistudio's, Brussels

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)

4, 5 October 2014
Korea Performing Arts Center/Seoul Performing Arts Festival, Seoul

4, 5, 6 December 2014
Théâtre Garonne, Toulouse

15 January 2015
CC Bruges

17 January 2015
KORZO, Den Haag

31 January 2015
Scène Nationale de Sète et du Bassin de Thau, Sète

MARKET PLACE 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)

4, 5 February 2015
NTGent, Ghent

7 February 2015
CC De Grote Post, Ostend

3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 March 2015
T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers, Paris

11, 12 March 2015
La Halle aux Grains, scène nationale de Blois, Blois

17 March 2015
TEFAF – Theater aan het Vrijthof, Maastricht

ODD? BUT TRUE!

Lemm&Barkey

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

Production: Needcompany | Coproduction: Bronks

26 October 2014
Rode Hond, Minnepoort, Leuven

29 October 2014
Aggloscènes Fréjus Saint-Raphaël, Fréjus

16 November 2014
CAMPO, Ghent

18 November 2014
Le carré Sainte-Maxime, Sainte-Maxime

14 December 2014
December Dance
Stadsschouwburg, Bruges

10 January 2015
Schouwburg Kortrijk

18 January 2015
CC De Werf, Aalst

26, 27, 28, 29, 30 January 2015
Scène Nationale de Sète et du Bassin de Thau, Sète

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

John Cassavetes

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

Production: Burgtheater in collaboration with Needcompany

14, 19 September 2014
13, 21 October 2014
Akademietheater, Vienna

THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AT NEEDCOMPANY

Needcompany is opening the new season with one world premiere, two French premieres and three special projects, in addition to a busy tour that will take us to various corners of the world. We kick off with **Just for Bolzano** at Transart and then pull out all the stops for **All Tomorrow's Parties**, an evening full of unexpected twists and turns, to open the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz. Conceived by Grace Ellen Barkey and Jan Lauwers, who will be inviting a whole crowd of people.

“While nature aims for chaos, art was invented to find a certain equilibrium in the chaos. In spite of the fact that, after war and cannibalism, art is the most hysterical expression of civilisation. Beauty is an aspiration. Ugliness a lack of thought. Anything we do not want to share is worthless. We show images that do not explain themselves and are made for a group of people who do something that another group of people are unable to do. In this way something unique is accomplished. We never know what the final result will be or should be. We call it an endless party for tomorrow.”

– Jan Lauwers

Just for Sarajevo is a performance at the MESS festival that is linked to the commemoration of WWI.

In October, **MUSH-ROOM** will be going intercontinental. Grace Ellen Barkey's performance with specially-written music by The Residents will be on at the Seoul Performing Arts Festival. In December it will have its French premiere in Toulouse, followed in January by Bruges, The Hague and Sète.

The wondrous world of Lemm&Barkey's **Odd? But true!** will be unleashed on young and old in Leuven, Saint-Raphaël, Ghent, Sainte-Maxime, Bruges, Aalst, Kortrijk and Sète in the next few months.

In November, Needcompany will be presenting a **Needlapb** in Montpellier, where Maarten Seghers' **WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT DO YOU MEAN AND OTHER PLEASANTRIES** will have its French premiere the following evening. This production is an everlasting pop song, a sculptural dance, a sound installation, a stand-up comedy show and a performance. A portrait of mankind, persevering beyond all logic and beyond the absurd. Sisyphus, who wants to continue going up and down come what may. In short, singing the praises of misery and celebrating the absurd.

This piece premiered at the FIDENA Festival in May 2014, where the audience was wildly enthusiastic.

“Maarten Seghers succeeds with bravura in desalting the clown's tears.”

– Focus Knack

THE OHNO COOPERATION CONVERSATION ON THE O.H.N.O.P.O.P.I.C.O.N.O. TAUTOLOGY also premiered at the FIDENA Festival.

Seven years after **THE OHNO COOPERATION CONVERSATION ON THE O.H.N.O.P.O.P.I.C.O.N.O. ONTOLOGY**, Maarten Seghers and Jan Lauwers met once again for a second conversation. Their latest encounter was composed so that words and sounds occurred in the silences of the old conversation, so that the two conversations together became a piece of music and their content took on new meaning. Like black silhouettes, the two performers danced a new interpretation of their artistic dialogue and thus reinterpreted their conversations for 17 min. 46 sec.

Begin the Beguine, a play by John Cassavetes that was directed by Jan Lauwers for the Burgtheater, remains on the bill.

“Begin the Beguine is the best classic of this century and a crowning glory for Needcompany, which deserves a place in all the palaces of the theatre world and its festivals, and not only in Vienna.”

– Focus Knack

At the end of December we shall be bringing the year to a festive close with a *Needlapb* in the Kaaistudios, followed by the world premiere of **Rhythm Conference Feat. Inner Splits** by ~~Maison~~DahlBonnema. For this piece, Hans Petter Dahl and Anna Sophia Bonnema are collaborating with the musician Nicolas Field and performer Catherine Travelletti.

In *Rhythm Conference Feat. Inner Splits*, ~~Maison~~DahlBonnema is taking a decisive new direction, away from anthropocentrism, away from parts and characters. It will be an examination of rhythm and expression, a trip on which a live drummer urges on three performers. A celebration of life leads to a summing-up that cuts across everything, in the realisation of having to take leave, in an attempt to respond to the feeling that there are always more things; that we live in an era suffering from ‘an epidemic of things’ (freely adapted from Tristan Garcia).

Maarten Seghers' piece *WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT DO YOU MEAN AND OTHER PLEASANTRIES* will also have its Belgian premiere on that same evening.

Two new publications have appeared over the last few months: the Polish translation of the book of essays **No beauty for me there where human life is rare. On Jan Lauwers' theatre work with Needcompany** was published by Ha!art, and the Spanish translation of Jan Lauwers' **Sad Face | Happy Face trilogy** was published by Papeles Teatrales.