

Specifically Latvian



All My Presidents, director Valters Sīlis

A publication of Latvian Theatre Showcase 2012

Since the first Latvian Theatre Showcase held in 2003, things here have changed. Most visibly, a new generation of artists – directors, set designers, dramaturgs, and choreographers – has entered the stage, which, in terms of the artistic energy introduced, matches its counterparts of the faraway 1990ies (Viesturs Kairiņš, Gatis Šmits, Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, and Regnārs Vaivars). In between, the development of theatre has been tame and qualitative, but one without ground-shifting events, changes of the course or artistic endeavors, which would resonate for the further reaches of the public (with the exception of Alvis Hermanis and his ensemble of New Riga Theatre). The present generation of the young artists, being strong individualities each on their own, has not formed a particular artistic group, yet come across as unified by a collective spirit and the idea of mutual support, rather than by competitiveness.

Also, it is significant that previous reluctant and sporadic attempts at communicating made by the state and independent theaters finally take shape of purposeful and constructive collaboration in co-productions (the project *TEST* by Latvian National Theatre (LNT) and *Dirty Deal Teatro*), by opening theatrical spaces to experimental work (such as the New Stage of LNT and smaller stages of Dailes Theatre), by the exciting migration of directors and actors between the repertory theatres and other venues (participation of LNT, New Riga Theatre actors in independent projects), as well as by developing of international collaboration (such as Kiril Serebrennikov's productions in LNT, Jan-Willem van den Bosch's work in Dailes Theatre, and performance *Legionnaires* in ĢIT).

Not only these developments allow artists to work in ranges of creative teams and varying contexts, it is also the public, which is confused, in the best sense of the word, being forced to travel to different – including *site-specific* – performance spaces trailing its favorite directors and actors and making a lot of discoveries along the way.

The character of the theatre itself also morphs as it finds its way of breaking out of its set frames of politeness, conservative taste and aesthetics. Younger directors no longer evade harsh and potentially provocative themes, historically complicated situations or political genre, but, as opposed to the generation of their predecessors who entered the stage in the 1990ies, they are less audacious and scandalous.

It is wonderful to witness these changes and partake in them, and yet all the indicated tendencies are still very fragile and unbalanced. To a large extent, the reason for this is the drastically cut cultural spending and the mechanism of its distribution, which discriminates against the independent initiatives in favor of the repertory theatres to this day, while the subsidized theatres are forced, in turn, to maneuver between their aspirations to be contemporary and innovative and the reality demanding its share of the sold-outs.

In this edition, we have sketched the portraits of those artists and delineated those tendencies, which, in our view, render the features of Latvian theatre contemporary and engaging. Director and lecturer Zane Kreicberga analyses development of drama with our emerging dramaturgs (p. 2–3); publicists Marta Krivade, Vilnis Vējš, Gunta Sloga, and poetess Inga Gaile portray the most prominent representatives of the younger generation of directors Valters Sīlis, Viesturs Meikšāns, Andrejs Jarovojš and Vladislavs Nastavševs (p. 4–5); their own and their colleagues' voices are heard in the discussion recorded by theatre historian Inga Fridrihsone (p. 6–7); experienced theatre critic Normunds Naumanis from newspaper *Diena* reviews the artistic work of director Alvis Hermanis (p. 8–9), and NTIL producer Laura Stašāne analyses the situation of contemporary dance in Latvia (p. 10)

Gundega Laiviņa, director of New Theatre Institute of Latvia

Who is Telling What on Latvian Stage

Zane Kreicberga, theatre director and lecturer at Latvian Academy of Culture

‘Now it’s time, my friends, to change a style’, from the monologue of Finnish actor playing Swede in the performance *Legionnaires* by Valters Silis

Thesis

The last few years have brought changes to Latvian theatre in terms of dramaturgy and perception of performance. Increasingly, the spoken text of productions is generated collectively in the rehearsal period; more often than not instead of handing a completed play to director, the playwright participates in rehearsals and comes up with the text in this process, while, in contemporary dance, choreographers invite directorial collaboration, and the professional figure of dance performance dramaturge gradually emerges. Although practice of this kind has been long since approbated in Western European theatre, its way into Latvian theatre has been slow and uneven. First, it is explained by the fact that institutional repertory theatres still dominate Latvian scene, largely determined, in terms of programme politics, by the possibilities of historically formed ensembles and traditional modules of planning¹ as well as strictly limited and experiment averse rehearsal period, expected to produce a marketable play. Secondly, education available to emerging dramaturgs and directors in Latvian Academy of Culture is traditionally oriented, part of this tradition being the general conception of dramaturg’s work as playwriting (by a single traditional method, one may add) while directing as interpretation of a ready-made text.

Antithesis

Yet I have to contradict myself here, right away, and add the necessary commentary. First, the New Riga Theatre (NRT) led by Alvis Hermanis is a state theatre in its own right, differing from the rest in its sustained, ideas-based, directorial vision-guided approach to repertory building. Also other institutional theatres start to demonstrate more creative and inclusive approach, especially on their smaller stages. It seems that diversification of story-making and story-telling methods in Latvian theatre, largely, has been influenced by the approach developed by Hermanis who has generated his own authorial theatre and that of his ensemble of actors since 2003 (beginning with performances *Long Life* and *By Gorky*, and sustaining the style throughout the entire cycle of Latvian stories). Hermanis is authority for theatre practitioners and critics alike. Despite the frequently heard eulogies about NRT actors being ‘forced to play student etudes indeterminately and missing the opportunity to demonstrate their scope in ‘genuine’ (to be read as ‘classic’) drama, paradoxically, the collaboration of Hermanis and NRT actors *Long Life* – a composition of mute etudes depicting life in a *kommunalka* shared by a group of elderly people – has represented new Latvian drama in biennale *New Plays from Europe* in Wiesbaden as well as earned the award of the Best Staging of Latvian Play at home. Unwavering success of Hermanis and NRT performances, both, locally and internationally has had an effect of legitimizing the devised theatre, also silencing the advocates of classical drama as only valid literary source of performance, on the way.

Secondly, two independent theatres *Dirty Deal Teatro* (DDT) and *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris* (ĢIT) now have an established place on Latvian theatrical scene, functioning as artistic platforms, which open opportunities of free expression and experiment space (naturally, within the limits of very restricted funding). This form of initiatives, whose profile is to act in interests wider than those of a particular director or creative team, enclosing a wider range of artists and functioning on the principles of genre crossing, is a relatively new occurrence in Latvian performing arts. Established in 2008 and managed by a small, but passionate management team, DDT attracts a wide range of young artists of theatre and dance premiering, in its three small playing spaces, in average 10–15 performances a year as well as organizing readings of new Latvian drama *10 minutes of fame* and international festival *Dirty Drama*. There is a group of directors,



All My Presidents, director Valters Silis

including Elmārs Seņkovs, Jurijs Djakonovs, Valters Silis, Kārlis Krūmiņš, Andrejs Polozkovs, and Vladislavs Nastavševs, who, while occasionally working in other theatres, basically associate themselves with DDT. New Theatre Institute of Latvia collaborates with DDT in the project *Here Are the Young!*, a presentation platform for short works by young choreographers, intended to bring the followers of contemporary dance to DDT.

Ģertrūdes ielas teātris (ĢIT) inhabits two grounds of a former industrial plant. Director Andrejs Jarovojis is one of its founders who also stages his theatrical work in this space. However, ĢIT aims at evolving into an open venue – it has attracted several directors, mostly of younger generation; it invites public to concerts of alternative music, and organizes discussions on contemporary performing arts in collaboration with internet platform for performing arts *Teritorija.lv*. ĢIT is also known for steady development of international collaborations, being one of the few Latvian theatres that make co-productions such as *Mannersache* (2010) and *Legionnaires* (2011) as well as invites touring artists.

One of the large repertory theatres, Latvian National Theatre (LNT), should be mentioned in this context as a playhouse interested in opening of one of its smaller stages to emerging directors for artistic trial runs. Already for the 2nd year in a row, LNT offers its New Stage as a working space to the winner of annual student performance forum *The Autumn of Patriarch* and collaborates with graduating directors in their diploma period. In 2011, LNT and *Dirty Deal Teatro* initiated a joint project titled *Test*, which allows beginner directors to work with LNT actors on DDT premises.

And thirdly, young directors, dramaturgs, set designers and choreographers themselves are exploration and cooperation-disposed, they come together into groups of the like-minded, which no longer respect traditional hierarchies (such as dominance of text or director) in the production.

Synthesis

Until very recently, Latvian playwrights tended to take a stand of the wounded by theatres and directors because those would not stage works by, ‘living authors’ and tried to set political support mechanisms of their drama in motion (such as urging the Ministry of Culture to establish quotas for mandatory annual staging of national drama). The younger generation of playwrights is more predisposed to collaboration than previous ones. Already in the study process, they have encountered student directors and actors in stage projects allowing to test their ideas and early sketches in action. Owing to director Elmārs Seņkovs’ invitation to stage a play together in the end of their second study year, Latvian theatrical scene now has enthusiastically embraced the young dramaturg Jānis Balodis who has already authored several performances as well as a witty script for the annual professional theatre awards ceremony 2011. His fellow-graduate Rasa Bugavičute, the chair of the Latvian Dramaturgs’ Guild since 2011, has also collaborated with Elmārs Seņkovs in his performances *Confession* and *Performance “The End”*, and she and Madara Rampāne are in the process of developing a play commissioned by Viesturs Meikšāns for Valmiera Theatre. In turn, an earlier Drama Studies graduate, poetess Inga Gaile considers herself an author for one director only and so far has developed her craft in collaboration with director Andrejs Jarovojis.



Skin, director Andrejs Jarovojis

The practice of collective generation of performance text characterizes the work of directors Viesturs Meikšāns (*Wine and Weeds*, Valmiera Theatre, 2010), Valters Silis (*Legionnaires*, ĢIT, 2011) and Elmārs Seņkovs (*Performance “The End”*, LNT, and *Granyonka*, Riga Russian Theatre, 2011) while Vladislavs Nastavševs, who studied theatre in St. Petersburg and London, demonstrates a starkly individual approach to directing, selection and structuring of dramaturgical material. To this day, in Latvian theatre, director retains the central role in choice or development of performance material and its creative team. However, the practice of the younger theatre makers inclines towards equally distributed team-work, where set designer can author performance on a par with its playwright or director.

While the mainstream of Latvian theatre flows somewhere between sturdy traditionalism and forced commercialization, which has now turned into accepted norm, it is interesting to detect the kind of narrative message, which is relevant to new-comers of theatre. I was surprised to discover that our younger generation of directors practically overlooks the classics. Would that signal their distrust of the time-tested values? Contemporary foreign drama of the best quality – Roland Schimmelpfening, Mark Ravenhil, Biljana Srbljanović, Ivana Sajko, Kristian Smeds, Tracy Letts – are picked to develop individual directorial style, but, mostly, directors wish to be authors or co-authors themselves. They construct theatrical situations allowing for immediate communication with their audience and even for its involvement (as in Silis’ *Legionnaires*). They touch on themes, which cannot be indifferent to the viewer, thus, addressing the audience reflectively as well. Jānis Balodis’ take on this generation of directors – that ‘they want to tell us about people who are *here now*’ – is revealed in at least two aspects. First, performed characters are our contemporaries and their relationship to reality, their values and communicative mechanisms are frequently observed through the comical lens (for instance, in *Wine and Weeds* and in *Performance “The End”*). On the other hand, there is a range of performances reviewing national myths, reflecting on the national identity and engendering socially and politically active discussion (*Legionnaires* and *All My Presidents*).

Presently, the most interesting processes in Latvian theatre take place on the smaller stages and are linked to the youngest generation of theatre professionals. Whether or not and how would they influence the mainstream is question of the nearest future.

¹ This system requires a comedy or popular play to be staged every season along with a yearly interpretation of classics, a children piece, a musical, a couple of more innovatively tended productions in smaller playing spaces etc.



Legionnaires, director Valters Silis

Two up-and-coming Latvian playwrights, Rasa Bugavičute and Jānis Balodis, and a respected researcher of political processes in Latvia, Iveta Kažoka, comment on the situation of playwright and the role of dramaturgy in Latvian theatre.



Jānis Balodis is one of the most intensively working young dramaturgs; he has collaborated with director Elmārs Seņkovs in performance *Confession (Dirty Deal Teatro)*; performance *All My Presidents* (DDT and LNT project *TEST*) he authored with director Valters Silis, earned its cast and creative team award in the category The Best Staging of Original Latvian Play in the annual Latvian theatre award; presently, he studies to acquire MA in Screenwriting in the University of Salford.

Tales about people who are *here now*

What is young Latvian director like and what does he expect from a dramaturg?

The young Latvian director expects way more from the dramaturg than the generation before, and the young dramaturg, likewise, wishes to be required by director. This mutually expedient situation came about thanks to the fact that the Academy took in parallel groups of students to specialize in directing and playwriting, in 2007, and, for the first two years of study, we shared most of the classes. Directors could see that dramaturgs acquire playwriting just as they are learning directing; and it makes no sense to expect a new Tennessee Williams or Rūdolfs Blaumanis to be born; we have to work together, and the accumulated experience would allow the playwright to create better and better theatrical texts. Significantly, our young directors choose to tell stories about people who are *here now*. And this is precisely what the new drama would offer, or call it co-writing of performance text together with the creative team!

What did you learn about drama in the Academy of Culture and how does it relate to your actual theatrical practice?

I have difficulty discerning what I have learned in the Academy and what has been picked up in my practice, since I was offered to make a performance together by Elmārs Seņkovs already before the third year of our studies. We were all artists in making – dramaturg, director, actors and set designer. With this experience, I gained conviction that the dramaturgic instruments, the use of which I'd acquired, would work, if applied correctly. In the academic process, we, mainly, tried to learn the whats and whatnots of telling a story with three-dimensional people on stage. These are the basics you have to be trained in before you turn to experimentation and improvisation.



Performance *'The End'*, director Elmārs Seņkovs



Rasa Bugavičute, the chair of the Latvian Dramaturgs' Guild, is a playwright, she has worked with Elmārs Seņkovs in performances *Confession (Dirty Deal Teatro)* and *Performance 'The End'* (Latvian National Theatre).

The importance of having an answer

What is young Latvian director like and what does he expect from a dramaturg?

Young Latvian director is enthusiastic, curious, forthcoming, creative, open and intent to assert himself. At times, he gets confused in his whirlwind of wants and possibilities, and, for these moments, he needs a dramaturg. Not infrequently, playwright fulfills the function of filter by making the director repeat again and again to himself and to the others what it is he intends to say with his prospective performance, and then he identifies the best dramaturgical means to achieve it. There are times when dramaturg has to serve as interpreter in communication between director and actors, and even to play the audience, as the young Latvian director is inclined to philosophize extensively on things that otherwise can be easily captured in few simple sentences.

What did you learn about drama in the Academy of Culture and how does it relate to your actual theatrical practice?

In Academy, we are taught to construct a play. Its essence is characters, who must be clear to you as a writer in terms of four concrete questions – this is quintessentially Lauris Gundars' school. For example, if a character's dream is unknown, the actor does not know where he is headed. In the Academy, I did not understand the importance of having an answer to what would one want to say with his performance. But, collaborating with directors now, I myself ask this question to them, and they are extremely unhappy about it. Sometimes, they are reluctant to answer because it is something too personal, but it is precisely this question that determines whether or not you are interested to work with this director. Since we had to spend our four years of studies side by side with directing and acting students, it was clear even in the Academy that the playwright's profession requires communication and collaboration skills as well as trust.

How do you perceive the situation of dramaturg and drama in Latvia at the moment, and what are the nearest objectives of the Latvian Dramaturgs' Guild now that you lead it?

The latest activities in the field attest that the situation is improving. Dramaturg is no longer a cast-aside, non-descript and gray little man who has written something for someone, but an active person ready to be involved. These changes gradually get noticed by theatre professionals as well as the public. The main objective of the Dramaturgs' Guild is to promote communication between playwrights and theatres, so that the dynamics of offer and demand would be clear.



Iveta Kažoka is a researcher at the centre for public policy *Providus*, specializing in the fields of political parties, election campaigns, good governance standards and legislative process in Latvia.

A Dream of Political Observer

Art has a privileged position in democratic societies: it allows for wider expression within its limits. At least, that is how it should be. Art as a space open for experiment, a platform for new ideas, approaches, perceptions, and reactions to be tested unfettered by fear of censorship and protests of society and, especially, politicians.

This is why it is so surprising that, at least in what concerns politics, art in Latvia has refrained from fulfilling this liberating, tolerance building function for so long. Perhaps it could be explained by historic traumas of the Soviet era, by the formula logic – 'politics on stage can make only for propaganda'. The fact that politics is not easily universalized, and, when staged, does not approach the heights of 'eternal art', arguably, could be one of the reasons as well. But it is important to outgrow this fixation. And there are signals that it may have happened already. We see such clearly politically engaged performances as *All My Presidents* and such treatments of polarizing moments in history as *Legionnaires* emerging on theatrical stages in Latvia.

Theatre allows for the forms of expression, which a political observer can only dream of. It is, of course, possible to document talks of the USA and Swedish diplomats concerning the extradition of Latvian legionnaires to the USSR on some 50 pages, and it should be done. But the audiences today will be more impressed by a wittily crafted and performed dialogue of the Soviet and Swedish representatives of the case we observe portrayed in the *Legionnaires*. Biography volumes of the highest ranking persons of the state can be written, and, likewise, we expect this literature to be created. But the public will be more surely 'hooked' by a daring dramatic confrontation of the facts, which form those biographies, as it was done in the performance *All My Presidents*. It is not the theme, which makes a performance great, but its sincerity, power and precision.

In my view, it is good, even great that these new trends can be registered on Latvian stage. They are the proof that theatre can generate impulses of change in our society. It already has. This search into new content and fresh approaches liberate not only the society, but the theatre itself as well: it turns out that actual themes can engage the viewer just as successfully as the timeless or imaginative ones. It turns out performances can aim at political polemics and even provoke. And if this is valid for political issues, then other sorts of questions should be open as well.



Andrejs Jarovojš

Inga Gaile, poetess

‘This text is even more terrible than the previous one,’ I hear Andrejs say to me on the day of the first rehearsal about the rewritten material departing from Dostoevsky’s short story *White Nights*.

Andrejs and I started to collaborate in 2006 on theatrical script for New Riga Theatre production titled *LV*. It was a very interesting staging, which, for the reasons that are obscure to me, however, failed to win nominations for annual Latvian Theatre Award, although it was the year when innovation in theatre was established as a separate category to be honored. The text of *LV* was a compilation of themes from plays of Latvian playwrights Rainis and Gunārs Priede. Yes, and Andrejs had silently edited out that couple of neologic obscenities I had squeezed into its script.

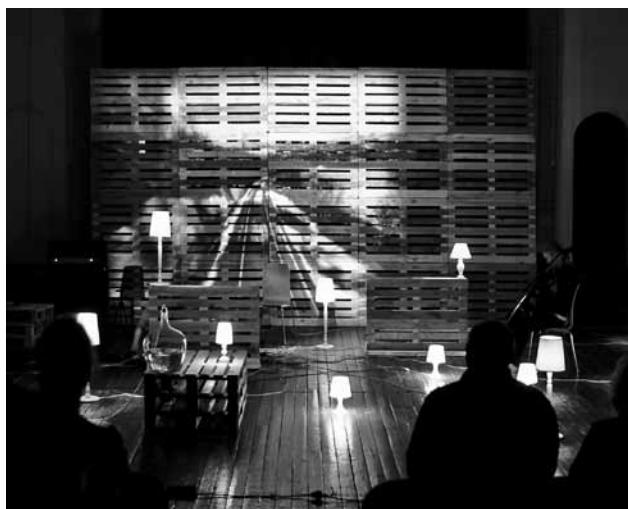
Through a couple of turns to pass, such as *The Unfaithful* (2009) in National Theatre, the song lyrics I wrote for production *Brothers* (2009) in Liepāja Theatre and the adaptation of Ivana Sajko’s *Woman Bomb* (2006), in November 2011, our collaborative paths finally met in the process of staging an original drama *Skin*, which *did* merit very few alterations and which had me thinking, on the night of its premier,



Viesturs Meikšāns

Marta Krivade, publicist, manager of on-line magazine *satori.lv*

At time when the theatre repertory was dominated by classics, shows and powerful socially realistic stories about the present day Latvian, young stage director Viesturs Meikšāns, working in a town 100 kilometers away from the capital, Valmiera, chose to interpret a centenarian Latvian play *The Golden Horse* (2009). Until lately, this national classic Rainis’ fairy-tale reminded to contemporary viewer of the school reading representing the seemingly didactic idea of ‘he alone will stay who transforms,’ but, in general, the language of this symbolist drama had grown too antique for imagination and soul. The young director daringly chooses to take the risk of relating the original classic text to the present day. But the production turns out to be so successful that some Latvians feel urged to search the furthest recesses of their book-shelves for the play’s text and re-read it in a new light of understanding of its poignancy. It is interesting that drama of nation’s longing for the voice of people to be woken from its frozen sleep high up on top of a glass mountain is staged at a time when Latvia is heavily hit by an economical crisis – an event actualizing the urgency of a second, this time a spiritual national



Man on the Stairs, director Andrejs Jaravojš

that maybe we would turn out to be able to work together after all.

However, this text is even more terrible... Why am I telling all this? Perhaps, I do it to understand why, regardless of all complexities, I keep hoping that our collaboration will last, and also I do it to capture particularity of the position that Andrejs occupies in the current Latvian theatre.

To begin with, I am convinced that Andrejs’ straightforwardness, his inability to be diplomat and to pretend, in order to have a more pleasant PR profile, characterizes his subtlety. It is, in fact, appalling, for a delicate and honest person, to try and learn the whatnots of manipulation – that is, to communicate and work on a personal PR. Secondly, Andrejs is never seen to shout or berate someone, he merely registers the facts as they are, talking of work, instead of discussing personalities of dramaturge, actor or costume designer. Third, it has to be said, he has another outstanding character trait: even when unsure of how to articulate what he needs to say, Andrejs keeps talking, which is to say, he directs theatre not in order to be noticed, but because of an inner necessity to make it; to do theatre, to partake in this particular mode of communication. Forth, his style as the director is non-manipulative and refined. At times, its spider-web is too invisible for an

inexperienced eye. But one who has learned to watch can perceive it to begin to reflect the light like dew drops sparkling in sunshine (now, I could never hope to sell this kind of a stunning comparison to Andrejs!).

I would say that Andrejs’ best directorial work so far has been *Man on the Stairs* (2011), which is still in the repertory of *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris* theatre, a performance where no actors are on stage, a theatrical piece played by professional musicians, which, for the first time in a long run, had me crying while sitting in audience, no matter whether it was because of being moved or out of empathy, although, in the ‘performance’ there are no traditional characters to follow; that is, if not to perceive the audience, light and sound as characters.

And my fifth argument would be: Andrejs has imagination and intuition, which he cannot use favorably for his PR – in order to advance his personal project in the intriguing corridors of opportunism – because of the lack of the special skill mentioned in Argument One. But these qualities make his directorial work particular.

Andrejs’ performances that have lingered in memory the longest are *P.S. Thom Thumb* (2004) – a wittily directed, naive Latvian drama classic turned circus. Next, it is *Woman Bomb*, a monologue by Croatian dramatist Ivana Sajko. *This Is Riga Calling* (2006), in turn, was organized as a bus-ride taking the viewer to a number of historically or symbolically significant objects of Latvia’s capital. *Man on the Stairs* was made of light, music, St. Augustine’s quotes, lamps, lampshades and video projections not looking like video projections. *Skin* (2011): it was clear that this performance would be poetic even before the text was completed, but only Andrejs must be thanked for it turning out to be also a viewer-friendly and tragicomic piece. *The Tale of Dwarf Longnose* (2012) is a slightly dark rendition of Wilhelm Hauff’s fairytale, which has actress Maija Doveika baking an apple pie in the process of telling it.

I hope strongly that we will manage to stay on top of the challenging texts of *White Nights* as well, and create a subtle, expressive performance revealing a new theatrical language, one, which precisely Andrejs Jarovojš is ready to coin today in Latvian theatre.



Score for an Ecosystem, director Viesturs Meikšāns

awakening, following the first, which took place in 1991 and brought Latvia to political independence.

A year later, Meikšāns receives the Director of the Year Award for performance *Floods and Solstices in the Sound of Straumēni* (2009). This staging is based on another Latvian classic Edvarts Virza’s poem monumentalizing the rites of life in a Latvian homestead. It should be understood here that, for an average Latvian high-school graduate, *The Golden Horse* can approach some relevance at least on the level of general idea, while Virza’s romantic poem with its flow of the rhythms of work and changes of seasons, devoid of anything resembling an engaging plot or details even remotely pertinent to everyday life of a modern Latvian, serves as an instant sleeping pill or, at best, as a read provoking a smile while running fingers over a picture of a dead grandmother in a family album. But, in this performance, a work of contemporary art, the director has certainly succeeded to distill the essence of Latvian identity, its spiritual core, forged in the past before Christianity and our written history. The viewer is brought to admit that, quite possibly, the Latvian is rather that land-tied and slightly sleepy peasant depicted by Virza than the change-hungry dreamer from *The Golden Horse* by Rainis. It has to be noted that music and stage design of this

production are works of art in their own right, which have earned international recognition at the Prague Quadrennial 2011.

I know I will be found wrong by some Latvian theatre critics, but Meikšāns’ most important achievement and the turning point on his artistic trail will prove to be his less known experimental lecture-performance *Score for an Ecosystem* (produced by the theatre festival *Homo Alibi* in 2010). It is a theatrical piece where the viewer grasps the world’s musical evolution re-played through the experience of two sound artists. In order to reveal the evolvement of music, these creators summon a clarinet, an overhead projector, a range of plastic tubes used in plumbing, sounds generated by insect movement on dry wood and flies hitting the windows, a hundred year old steam runner and one of the best Latvian choirs. The performance takes place in the steam power plant built in 1905, which serves simultaneously as the content of music created in the performance and its scenic space. The chosen form of staging shifts several road markers and dispels stereotypes concerning perception of music even for those who presumed they did not have any knowledge and, therefore, opinions on this art form. However, the limited number of viewers, experimental performance space and the priceless participation of the choir are reasons why this theatrical piece will have to remain an undiscovered treasure for many aficionados of stage as well as critics in Latvia and, certainly, abroad.

In retrospect, Viesturs Meikšāns has unearthed his roots and demonstrated how stereotypical our notions of art can be. It seems that now he has paved the way for new directorial explorations and ideas. First of those we even may expect realized on the stage of Moscow Theatre of Art where he has been invited to work after a successful debut in its Small Stage early this year.



Vladislavs Nastavševs

Vilnis Vējš, art critic and curator

Vladislavs (Vlads) Nastavševs directorial debut on Latvian stage in the season 2009/2010 coincided with those of other talented young directors. Although to relate a colourful individual emergence to general trends means to speculate to certain extent, the history tends to speak of the latter, so hopefully somebody will name these several new-comers on Latvian directorial scene as 'the new wave of Latvian stage directing' or like, even if only for marketing reasons. Vlads arrived to this lieu by a different path than his colleagues; he acquired an acting degree in St. Petersburg and then went to London to study directing in the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. His first independent productions were staged in London and Sydney.

He stands apart from the others even by his appearance. While Valters Silis and Elmārs Seņkovs, for example, leave an impression of constantly smiling and quite harmonious boyish young men, Nastavševs lean form and serious, even brooding face signals a kind of a heavy load of thoughts he could be carrying on his slightly shrugging shoulders. He would not be termed an easy-going director by many; in theatrical circles, his



Ding Dong, director Vladislavs Nastavševs

premieres are frequently heralded by talk of a sudden change of a performer or two.

Nastavševs' four latest productions, which so far have sketched an ascending line of mastery, mark a relationship of tension between their linguistic and image aspects. It seems that director, stage designer and musician inhabiting Nastavševs compete with each other for leadership in the act of staging. Fortunately, in the end, the winner turns out to be each. *Mitya's Love* (2010) is staged to be played above ground, on a single vertical wall-face where actors are supported by no more than a range of metallic bars. The performance text flows unevenly, divided disproportionally between characters. Meanwhile, Jurijs Djakonovs' stunning brown eyes almost burn wholes in his partner Inese Pudža who performs several roles in the play. We are left to guess whether the root of his muteness is his psychic turmoil or perhaps it might be referred to the fact that, for *Mitya's* actor and director alike, the dialogue language is their second one, or, possibly, the dramatized material has fought unequally with Ivan Bunin's prose text. In the next of Nastavševs' productions, *Boys Smell Like Oranges* (2011), the relationship between language and action grows even more conflicting. The laconic heightened dialogue clashes with the naturalistic mode of actors'

physical existence on stage, and chatty voices can be heard in a recorded conversation. Yet, the viewer's eye is engaged not only during the performing duo's moments of silence; the physicality of the young men itself, while not revealed in an outright nakedness, serves for a visual bait the director displays in the bright coloured, laboratory-like stage box. This almost forced act of witnessing, which throws spectators into near embarrassment, is justified by the performance's moving finale when one of the characters' tentative attempts to break through to the other is rejected, attesting to the chasm in physical and emotional togetherness.

In turn, text and visual images form indivisible whole in both of Nastavševs' interpretations of plays staged in the National Theatre – in *Ding Dong* by Yevgeny Kharitonov (co-produced with *Dirty Deal Teatro*, 2011) and Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly, Last Summer* (2012). Refined lacework of the text, in the first, is knitted with gags of a poor theatre of enthusiasts, while the other reveals Williams' dramatic masterpiece in a visually beautiful way. *Suddenly, Last Summer* is a form of theatre long awaited on Latvian stage: displaying no rags, wigs, and haphazard 'stuff', which tends to occupy our theatrical stages since Alvis Hermanis established his photo-realistic style. It features bare minimum of scenic attributes. Nastavševs brings carefully selective, detail-conscious, radically laconic aesthetics back to the performance, whether it would be a tea-pot suddenly spouting sand or an old-fashioned spotlight, which translates the realistic performance of actors into visual metaphors. Both performances are set in stark spaces limited by the concrete reality of their walls. By spare, although effective means, the director turns them into imaginary rooms, where all relative constraints have to fall: without any particular outer changes, the actors' physical bodies turn into vehicles of their souls and places and moments in time are conjured up by the change of lighting. Vlads Nastavševs' distinctive directorial style joins him to the new generation of Latvia's stage directors while also setting him apart in this spectrum.



Valters Silis

Gunta Sloga, journalist

'No good will come out of this,' – I was muttering to myself on my way to see director Valters Silis' production *All My Presidents* (2011). My motive for such an inner dialogue was twofold. First, it is universally known that, in Latvian theatre, all attempts to satirize politics, as was the promise of this performance, end in catastrophe. Second, it was the part of me who is experienced political reporter raising her conceited head assured of being omniscient in all matters concerning the three personas of the play – the former successive presidents of the state. How could I possibly be told anything new about them by Valters Silis?

The director, however, surprised me with an engaging form of political theatre, a genre too infrequently seen on local stages. The performance's range of comic sketches bespoke rather unpleasant truths about Latvian inability to take responsibility, about our permanent waiting for mythical political savior figures and our dreams of conceiving a Latvian *Nokia*. Playing in a laconically designed set, the performing trio of actors mixed historical facts and fantasy. 'To express these things, it was important to me



Legionnaires, director Valters Silis

to find the suitable format. I watched other directors' work on related themes, lots of which seemed banal. I thought they would have done better staging something about love,' – Valters had commented on this topic in a recent conversation. *All My Presidents* ensemble dismantled the myth of our younger generation being apolitical and unpatriotic.

If with *Presidents* Silis had proven he could masterfully joke about politics, *Legionnaires* (2011) demonstrated a fresh and a cliché free approach to Latvian history in the 20th century, reflecting on the issue, which still polarizes society most intensely. The 'hot potato' he did not shy away from was the fate of Latvian legionnaires in WW2 and, specifically, the decision of the Swedish government to extradite this group of people to the USSR and, by that, destine them to repressions. The performance, described as post-dramatic by its creators, was intent on actively engaging the viewer, thus strongly inviting the audience to investigate the limits of moral compromises and impossibility to correct history.

The Soviet repressions, history and politics have featured as themes in other Silis' productions as well, but a singular focus on those would make for only a partial overview of his directorial achievement so

far. Silis, who was born in 1985, has tried his hand in experimental, genre-crossing work such as *Anthropozoo* (2011) and *Hypnotize me!* (2010) and the rather traditional *Proof* (2010). He earned his first professional award for children performance *About Mothers* (2009).

Each of Valters Silis' performances stand out for being a vehicle, by which to focus on a fresh theme, to try a new genre or to let actors' personalities shine. His choice of dramatic material for the directorial debut in Latvian National Theatre was *Osage County* by Tracy Letts, which was a courageous act in itself considering that, in the eyes of the younger viewer, this playhouse has meant productions, which are rarely much in step with the present.

Some of the critics in Latvia have objected to Valters Silis' comedic interpretation of *Osage County* (2012). 'I read the play and found myself laughing all the time; yes, the story is tragic, but everything attests to it being, in fact, a comedy,' – insists the director. He frequently leaves an impression of approaching life and work playfully, not really assigning himself to the task of 'creating the high art.' Simply, he is curious about living, both, in artistic search of new forms and in standing up to the themes, which have left his more 'regal' colleagues in cul-de-sacs. Silis even risked a creative suicide this spring. He signed on directing the National Theatre's annual semi-political variety show slash guaranteed sold-out *100 grams of the Rat*, which for the 'snobbish' theatre goers has been a household name for bad taste in jokes.

The suicide failed. Even people like the author of this article – convinced no-goers to that kind of entertainment, went to see the show, and, admittedly, laughed watching it.

Conversation with seven directors about opportunities, compromises and the specificity of Latvians

Prepared for publishing by **Inga Fridrihsone**

‘No women directing...’

After the conversation with theatre directors of the younger generation, The New Theatre Institute of Latvia posted a photo of this event on their Facebook page with a caption ‘Preparing for the Latvian showcase, young directors discuss the future of theatre in Latvia.’ Shortly after that, a Facebook user added a commentary: ‘No women directing... is the future...’

However, there is a ‘balance’ today, in Latvian theatre. The matters of gender are discussed in the seminars of critics and theatre historians as these professions are represented almost singularly by women, which is a current tendency not only in Latvia, but in the European art criticism in general. Meanwhile, the younger generation of directors, who have gained resonance and who direct plays not only on independent stages but in the state theatres as well and have already been called the *new wave* in Latvian directing, is represented almost only by men. To draw all of them around a table of live discussion turns out to be a difficult feat, but, finally, this unique possibility – in their own words – occurs, and the circle is almost complete. 26 to 36 is the age of seven theatre makers working in Latvia partaking in the talk. They are Jurijs Djakonovs, Mārtiņš Eihe, Andrejs Jarovojš, Kārlis Krūmiņš, Vladislavs Nastavševs, Elmārs Senkovs and Valters Silis, and directing student, journalist Dmitrijs Petrenko moderates the event.

1. ‘Million possibilities’

For the local context and comparing to few years before, they are a considerable group. Discussions of contemporary trends in Latvian theatre involve the term ‘the young directors’, which, largely, subsumes eight to ten artistic figures of differing interests. With the benefit of having most of them around a table together, we asked them – **How would you define the zone of your interests, your niche, perhaps, in Latvian theatre?**

Jurijs: In my view, none of us who are here could say concretely what their direction, their public, or their target audience would be...

Vlads: I can define my niche, though, and say what I wish to achieve. I am mainly interested in how open I can be. It is very self-centred; I make theatre about myself and only about myself. In my understanding, the more revealing it is, the better.

Vladislavs Nastavševs: *My performances are about myself and only about myself. The greater openness I can achieve, the better.*

That’s what my gradation is: how much of myself is finally in the performance. I think I may be the only one professing this. Naturally, it is not the only way to build performances. Approach, which is the exact opposite of mine is also possible: no director to be noticed, but the performance is good.

Valters: I have three or four zones of interest where I generally work. At times, they may also integrate into one. I have works like *Hypnotize me!* and *Antropozoo*, which are all about communication with the viewer and theatre as an immediate event. I am even having trouble defining it as theatre sometimes and feel a little embarrassed asking to be paid ticket money for it. Another zone I explore is the question of making a new story, a fresh dramaturgical material. Initially, those were intimate stories, then the picture changed and they became stories about past or about painful matters concerning this country. And the third aspect is: I read a play and I feel it’s a perfect one, and I want to stage it.

Mārtiņš: In my view, only two directions exist: you either make theatre for yourself or for the money. I have directed enough theatre, motivated by money interest alone. You work for a month and get paid three times as much as you earn with your own projects. And the rest, in my case, is personal theatre. What interests me... any freaking thing. I’ve been told by some that the things that interest me are violence and death. I try to watch other people’s work and to read as little as possible, to delimit the choices.

Kārlis: I know for sure that I don’t think of myself as a director at the moment. Now is the time when, providing the situation allows, I position myself as a human who is engaged in what he enjoys exploring. I’m not obliged to create art, since the system supports it. What I do is I don’t aim at a concrete destination, but simply do my thing and try and see whether I like it or not. I experiment, at the moment, with what I know and what I don’t know. The question making me pause and think is the fact itself that we live at a time when such a position is possible. Perhaps, you couldn’t do it so freely elsewhere. You need just your own will to do any of this and some income on the side, so that you are not totally dependent. And you can, basically, make your thing. You can propose a project to *Dirty Deal* or *ÇIT*. You have million possibilities. I don’t know, whether the reason is lack of competition here... I don’t know, but we live in quite a liberated time, which allows for the position I occupy. I wouldn’t exclude that, in a more competitive ‘market,’ people like myself would be squeezed out.

Kārlis Krūmiņš: *We have million possibilities. In a more competitive “market”, people like me would be squeezed out.*

And who knows whether it is good or bad. Remains to be seen, whether I will understand something about this whole matter in years to come, or maybe I won’t – I will swim these waters and see.

Jurijs: We can afford to experiment freely and not only in the independent theatre. Irrespective of whether or not the viewer would come, you can freely experiment with the format. In other, seemingly more restricted circumstances, such flinching, perhaps, would be out of boundaries...

Mārtiņš: Yes, you nailed it. What we call experimentation is flinching in fact. Our education sucks so much that we cannot even call it experimentation. We merely absorb lots of things.

Elmārs: I feel quite a bit like Jurijs. We have fantastic opportunities to experiment. Personally, as a director,

Elmārs Senkovs: *I am training and ‘getting highs’ from the theatre. I don’t invest it with my personal pain. I simply don’t have any.*

I ‘get my highs’ from my work in theatre and don’t try to invest it with my personal pain. I simply don’t have any such thing. I am a relatively happy man. Maybe, it is a problem for somebody, but this is not a fact that disturbs me. If life would hit me, my performances would probably turn into something more open and personal. This is my training. I try to find something new, something special and fresh for myself in every performance. I am, presently, in the process of learning. We can afford to do this quite freely as the competition is relatively low as opposed to Poland, for example, where the students have to struggle to find a stage for their work.

Andrejs: I am interested in theatre as a medium, a mode of communication. I search for the possibilities on borderline. Theatre is the audience and those who present it, and the relationship between both. I am interested in the processes that occur in these relationships and in the ways they change.

How do you choose the dramaturgy you direct? How do your materials find you?

Jurijs: I am often in situations when someone wants to stage something and asks me – haven’t you heard of any good plays, by any chance? People don’t know where to find things. It’s the same with the students. Now, the third year drama students need their monologue material. And they don’t know a thing – neither what exists, nor what books and where are to be found. And their professors can’t answer these questions either.

Mārtiņš: Theoretically, this is a matter of education. [For directing students] no course exists where drama or at least the overview of literary currents would be viewed.

Kārlis: It is absurd. Now, there is nothing, which would limit you from getting a newly written play within the next five minutes from its publishing. What lots of people don’t realize – and I am guilty of it myself – is that one of the crucial things for director is to be well versed in these matters. Valters is the one who does it very well. But, generally, one gets an impression that we just swim around in the narrow pond of the same material where maybe every now and then a stray new one comes up, but the stock at large doesn’t change.

Andrejs: I was in process of making *Man on the Stairs* and was in need of one particular book about John Cage, and it wasn’t anywhere in the library. In my understanding

of normal, in a country building a new national library it should be available there instead of each of us, say, seven people, having to by a copy each. Is that normal?

Andrejs Jarovojš: *Do you call it normal that in a country building a new national library, there is no up-to-date literature?*

Valters: I used to find plays in our Library of Foreign Literature, but, lately, I’ve seen its stands of ‘new arrivals’ to feature second hand pulp fiction there.

Mārtiņš: We are in a market situation, and we are an extremely small market. Nobody will translate anything in Latvian, even the authors wouldn’t care. We have two state theatres with thousand seats where these plays would see 20 performances each. Who would be interested to do that?

Valters: The most tragic thing that has happened in Latvia is that none of Sarah Kane’s plays has ever been staged here, never. It is something completely unbelievable. I was laughing my head off when I heard that Eihe had decided to stage a piece about Sarah Kane. I thought: what an idiot! But I liked his *Sarah Kane* very much.

Andrejs: There is British Council, The Council of Nordic Countries and Goethe Institute, and, by their efforts, at least, we see some of the latest drama arrive here. We are of the proportions we are, and, within the limits of our means, each of us is searching; but the Academy [of Culture] would be wise to widen its resources and stock up on literature of the theatre and theatrical art, and, ideally, someone should translate them in Latvian, to develop terminology and so forth.

Valters: One alternative to Latvian dramaturgy is to develop your performance material collaboratively with a dramaturg. You go through those plays, which participate in national drama competitions and you simply say – no! There are flashes of potential there, things that could be used. Then, it is a question of finding a playwright who is ready to collaborate. It is extremely rare that you find plays where everything suits you and you cannot find a thing to object to. If you have objections, provided it’s a play by a living author, you invite collaboration. If there is one sentence in a play, which annoys me, and I cannot talk to the author, I do not pick that play to be staged.

Valters Silis: *If there is one sentence in a play, which annoys me, I do not pick that play to be staged. Then, I don’t see myself and the author as like-minded people.*

Then, I don’t see myself and the author as like-minded people, and I put that play aside. He is not my friend if he can suddenly blurt out something stupid. I pass that kind of plays to others, then.

Kārlis: As opposed to Valters, I am not shy to take a text and turn it upside down. I read the text and don’t feel ashamed to cut it or to add something, to adapt it. Why should I sacrifice my own interests in the name of the author’s? If I see most of the play to confirm to my message, I take that material and adjust it to myself. I feel completely free, as I am the one who builds the performance and not the playwright.

2. ‘We are all one big compromise’

One director absent in this conversation was **Viesturs Meikšāns** who works in Valmiera Theatre, as he had been ‘summoned’ to Moscow. There, his latest performance, play *Karenin* by Vasily Sigarev has been premiered on February 4th, in Chekhov’s Moscow Art Theatre (MXAT), which has invited him to continue collaboration. Meikšāns’ assignment in Moscow was rather highly publicized in Latvian media this spring, (as, apart from Alvis Hermanis, the cases when directors from Latvia stage plays in prominent theatres outside the country, are few) and stirred a heated eruption of views. It was triggered by this director’s interview, on his returning to Riga, where he was outspoken about two moments. First, Meikšāns criticized the theatrical system in Latvia as aimed at the development of theatre as business instead of theatre as creative endeavour, which, in his opinion, had led to marked uniformity of theatrical productions. Secondly, he characterized the situation in Russia and Putin’s rule as ‘military dictatorship’. Prevailing pre-election mood in the country was ‘horrible’, in his words, and attitude to people ‘appalling.’ Theatre critic Normunds Naumanis, in turn, commented on this indicating that MXAT is led by an outspoken supporter of Putin, Oleg Tabakov, and this has reflected favourably in generous shares of funding the theatre keeps to receive. Naumanis challenged Meikšāns to answer whether he

wasn't a moral hypocrite to criticize the regime while eating out of its hand.

Influence of this discussion was felt when we discussed with our younger directors such matters as allegiance to principles, as well as censorship and self-censorship or compromises. We asked **whether the factors limiting artist's work exist, in the present day Latvia, what are they and what determines them?**

Jurijs: I think, even in the state theatres, the artists should be forced to lower their self-censorship, and the same goes for independent theatres. They should be forced to become impolite. I don't recall a single case when any limits would have been over-stepped so that the piece would actually be unpresentable. On the contrary, we have preconceived ideas about what theatre is to be like, and that already is a self-censorship, to an extent. And we are the ones who put it in place, we have stated those limits.

Jurijs Djakonovs: *Artists should be forced to lower their self-censorship. We are too polite and set borders ourselves.*

Valters: The form is what determines the linguistic means you choose to use in a given case as well as the limits of what is polite or impolite. If I have decided I want to do something, no one can or does force me to do different. I rather see the choice lie in deciding what is it that you would do on the repertory stage and what would be reserved to *Dirty Deal*. You want to be understood after all.

Valters Sīlis: *It is not the censorship that exists, but the choices made in respect of the circumstances. You want to be understood.*

Mārtiņš: Are you saying that you can present your chosen material to a theatre, and it will accept anything, provided that it bears out artistically?

Valters: No, most probably I will be told: yes, you can do it, but on one of the smaller stages. It is an economic choice.

Mārtiņš: If we are using the term 'censorship', there is only one kind of it and that is money-determined censorship. And the other one is self-censorship, I mean, how many bad performances – in the sense that disliked and shunned by the public – can you afford to make on the big stage? The heaviest censorship today is the one that we are limited by what public wishes, especially, in the repertory theatres. Another thing, which has an impact, is the freedom of expression. We can see quite clearly what it has ended with for Viesturs Kairiņš¹, who stages nothing apart from opera here these days.

Mārtiņš Eihe: *There is only censorship by money and the self-censorship – reckoning with the wishes of the public.*

The censorship exists in the sense that you cannot be too wise with people in charge of theatres. You depend on them. I can give an example, which is our *Karlsson* in National Theatre. The theatre's director said that a male actor can't play nanny in a coloured hat because the colours suggest it's a hat of a homosexual. And such things are not allowed in children's performances. What do you call it, if a theatre director can be bothered by such matters?

Elmārs: I only see how we could talk of the self-censorship. It all depends on how much you are prepared to think about the public. We can offer even something quite radical; it is up to you – whether you want it or not. I think that people would accept it, as one can feel that people are looking around for something new.

Mārtiņš: In my view, it's a myth, especially, if we speak of Latvian public. Maybe, the festival directors are in search of some fresh meat to be sold, but here, on the spot, 90% of people require clear and definite values.

Vlads: Problem is in that there are no principles, which should be discarded. I think that there isn't anything to discard.

Mārtiņš: I understand that there are only two people among us who stick to their principles and don't engage in self-censorship – Viesturs [Meikšāns] and Andrejs [Jarovojš]. They are consistent.

Vlads: We are all one big compromise. As artists, we constantly compromise, all of us, myself included. There isn't a person in this room who wouldn't have consented to a compromise. I do that as well. And that is the biggest problem of all, and not the system or any sorts of differences between state and independent theatres.

Vladislavs Nastavševs: *There isn't a single person in this room who wouldn't have consented to a compromise. I am my biggest problem, and not the system.*

I know that I am my central problem and not the system. We are unable to make a really swell, loud, and unashamed performance, we cannot, none of us sitting here!

Mārtiņš: But is this really the objective?

Vlads: To make a work of *art* is the objective. And those works can be art and no-art.

Andrejs: There will always be compromises. It is a matter of conditions. Whether I want to make this or that performance, I have only certain actors available, and certain amount of time, and that's normal.

Vlads: Available or not, time or not, circumstances or not, those are all details and stuff, and then there is the result. And it is what it is. None of us present here has created a work of art, including myself, myself first of all. And only I am the reason of it. Where is the scream on the stage, regardless of whether it's a quiet scream or a loud one? As I see it, this is what we don't question – who am I, what do I do, why do I do this, and whether it is worth doing it. I watch our productions and don't understand what kind of a person has made them and why, and what it is he wants to say.

Kārlis: In my view, it's measuring of the cauldron we share. I worry about what it is that delimits us

Kārlis Krūmiņš: *I censor my will by my lack of mastery.*

and what is that personal reason. I feel limited by my lack of experience the most. I want something, but I don't know how to achieve it because of my lack of know-how. I censor my will by my lack of mastery. It is as much a matter of time as of thinking. I simply don't leave one given frame, which is set – by school, by environment; this is where deliberate or involuntary delimiting of the self begins. But the question is whether or not you should absolutely leave the confines of that frame... Perhaps, it should be done sometimes.

3. 'Naive vitality'

Could we speak of Latvian theatre? Do you perceive any features peculiar to it?

Valters: I was asked once by a Finnish lady, who'd come to another of these showcases why was there the sand, why did we have the sand in every single performance? She said, there was sand on every stage.

Kārlis: We can't take a distanced look at ourselves. Rather, we can speak about circumstances. Now, we are in the situation when there is a shortage of comfortable places in the subsidized theatres for young directors like us. Therefore, you work simply because you want to work. And, even if I am naive in this, I think that it raises the over-all level of theatre considerably, as we work from our natural need to make a performance. It is done not because of being required to do it, but precisely because no one expects anything from you.

Mārtiņš: I think that our theatre is deeply senile, un-educated and, at the same time, complacent. We like what we do extremely. And we wonder why nobody understands us. And it seems to me the reason of this is that our thinking is very senile.

Mārtiņš Eihe: *Our theatre is very complacent, and there is abnormal lack of context.*

Take our explorations of the form, for example: they are all mostly formal. We try to find form, but we don't search for the content.

Kārlis: I cannot agree with this. If we take what we, the present here, have made, on the scale of senile to ultra-modern, yes, maybe. But I don't think there is shortage of exploration of content and form alike, in this company.

Mārtiņš: A prominent German critic went to Valmiera to see *The Idiot* by Kroders² not so long ago, for example, and then she had a public tempestuous rage about how she could be made to watch theatre of that kind.

Andrejs: Latvians could say the same about German theatre. Those are cultural differences of perception. We wouldn't go and watch Brecht as well.

Mārtiņš: What I mean here is, for example, Castellucci I saw four or five years ago. To me, it is good theatre but I don't like the principle, by which he works. I've seen two of his pieces and don't intend to see more. But there is a difference between our Kroders and

Castellucci. We can discuss anything on the level of likes and dislikes. But there is a question of how... I think we are not too far apart from what Kroders is all about. Our self-image is hugely inflated against the reality of what we do.

Kārlis: It is very subjective, and we come to the question of what is theatre. And, in my view, theatre is related to the place where you create it.

Kārlis Krūmiņš: *Theatre is related to the place where you create it.*

Mārtiņš: I don't mean that we are in desperate need of all that trifle from outside, by this. I mean that our environment is unhealthy in the sense that we don't know how to look at ourselves from apart. Yes, it can be an ok performance, yes, perhaps you have even over-stepped some of your own limitations, but what we strive for... I don't know any more. Like we used to joke with Andrejs before – if there is no money in this, let us at least strive for the fame. There is abnormal lack of context.

Elmārs: I can agree with that, to an extent. I've never said myself that I have invented something new. I can name my influences, what I am using as I direct and where you may have already seen something like it. We are compiling things all the time. I've lost any belief that it is possible to create anything fresh today. We live in an age when we can only compile things more or less qualitatively.

Valters: There is another thing characteristic of Latvian theatre – its perhaps slightly naive vitality.

Andrejs: We have an actors' theatre. Actors are centre stage. There is school and there is craft, and that is the first thing that gets noticed about us.

Elmārs: It all depends on how this Latvian theatre is represented in the media. There is one big fish here and a range of smaller ones. I run into some friends in Poland who had been to the showcase, and heard: You have Hermanis in Latvia, and several talented young directors. This is how they perceive us, for this is how we are presented.

How would you comment the fact that the crisis has turned many artists towards identity issues?

Kārlis: It's in the same as 'theatre is elite art form' and how we could talk about its relation to place where it is generated and the pressing matters. But, instead of self-reflexivity, I would call it a socio-political inclination. It did not have any immediacy prior to the crisis, other questions were looming. People are less interested in Romeo and Juliette now, they will rather respond to something concrete than to a story of doomed love.

Valters: As I see it, before crisis, there were these strange forms emerging on theatre. *Caligula* [director Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, 2005], for example, which spoke of Latvia, but camouflaged by uncountable layers of imagery.

Valters Sīlis: *Latvia was addressed on stage through multiple camouflage of imagery. Now is when we need a more direct language.*

The visual form seemed to do its thing, but then there was suddenly the need to speak more directly from stage. Earlier the pyrotechnics spoke, while now it is, yes, the word itself, which communicates.

Andrejs: I made *LV* and *This Is Riga Speaking* already in 2005 and 2006. I exhausted this theme with that material.

Mārtiņš: As I see it, most of us just re-cycle what Alvis Hermanis has already done. We can deny this, but it is closely ingrained and reflects on us backwards. He is a prominent and strong enough personality here and now. It remains to be seen whether anyone can manage to do anything new and different or not. I foresee now a wave of Russian classics washing over this place: Hermanis will be over with it, and the rest of us will take it on. I am joking, of course.

¹ Viesturs Kairiņš (1971) is a theatre and film director, founder of the independent theatre group *United Intimacy* (2002). He has persistently shown interested in non-conventional forms of theatre. Between 2007 and 2009, he staged performances on the big stage of Latvian National Theatre. Reception of his work was controversial, and his productions never become sold-outs. After 2009, Kairiņš' contract with the theatre was not prolonged and this was followed by public arguments between him and the theatre director, including sharp criticism by Kairiņš on the Latvian cultural policy. Since 2009, he stages only operas.

² Oļģerts Kroders (1921) is acknowledged as one of the masters of psychological theatre in Latvia. Staging since more than 50 years, he has built a reputation of an analytical, well educated, ironical director and person in Latvian cultural scene. His main interest lies in psychological subtly nuanced actors' theatre and he is 'the master' for many Latvian actors. Over last years, Kroders has been staging mainly classical works by Shakespeare, Schiller, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov.



Hermanis is Hermanis is Hermanis

Normunds Naumanis, *Diena*

It may well be that Hermanis is one of that rare kind of the theatre personalities spanning the types of a 'Storm and Stress' enthusiast, passionate, Byronic dreamer and cool perfectionist intellectual who defines theatre as craft and professional practice, which has very little to do with 'all sorts of inspiration'. But perhaps it all comes down to one – the fact that Hermanis, an international directorial trend name on the wave of popularity, to-date, is a talent with perfected sense of taste? For, as a classic has said, art is in the ability to create perfection by removing the superfluous.

Smash with tenderness

'To smash with tenderness' – was a conceptual phrase Hermanis once came up with in a passage characterizing his creation New Riga Theatre (NRT) as a *gang* of the like-minded to be working in this non-traditional key, or in this style. A gang intent on smashing their viewer with tenderness.

Intriguing, to say the least and this has been one of Hermanis' strategies, to throw bits of aphoristic thinking to the public making it stop and think – *wait, what might that mean – to smash with tenderness?* Or replying 'everyman's story in theatre is more powerful than Shakespeare' – to answer the question of why he refrains from staging classic material, or 'our actors, from now on, will engage in human studies like good journalists' as a way of foreshadowing the period of *Latvian stories*, or 'now, I am interested in cool, distanced beauty, aesthetics, style, illusion able to take the viewer's breath away' when characterizing his foray into decadent theatre-making. Since Hermanis' directorial debut with his authorial take on Steven Soderbergh's *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* titled *Like a Slow and Lazy River is the Return* in 1993, (flying pigeons, melting ice, lemons eliciting guaranteed response of the reflexes – who could possibly forget these scenic attributes?) he has reformulated his theatrical vision more than once.

Opinion leadership

Hermanis has been publicly eloquent on 'life and politics' as well. The artistic leader of NRT is one of the most controversially viewed opinion makers in Latvia. The prominent gesture of rejecting the highest state honour – receiving the Order of the Three Stars from the hands of 'the President Zero elected by few in the Zoo'¹ alone spoke volumes to many. Or the recent televised statement before the Language referendum when he chose to describe potential voters for Russian as the second official language as traitors of state, reviving historical memories of other 'traitors' whisked away by droves, ticked off on lists, to faraway places in Russia. (Of course, Hermanis, who follows the developments on world politics meticulously, had allowed himself this artistic license quite purposefully as it is common knowledge that the only list the referendum voters are entered in, is the one, which matches the stamp in their passport confirming participation but not the choice one has made...) In terms of his own artistic life and that of the gang he leads, Hermanis is classically accomplished in organizing a dramaturgy with prominent, lasting after-effect.

¹ as was the case in 2007, when political elite's way of selecting its candidate for the state presidency Valdis Zatlers had been an informal, secretive meeting in Riga Zoo



Long Life, New Riga Theatre



Long Life, New Riga Theatre

Theatre as a house

Hermanis keeps to his principle of developing the idea of 'creative chemistry' between European and Russian classic repertory theatre seen as a house, consciously, willingly and selflessly built by all, but lead by one head of the structure, who has marked his territory clearly and controls it to the last detail. It is natural since democracy in theatre is impossible by definition. And those who claim the opposite just pretend to believe otherwise.

Hermanis and his house, the ensemble of NRT actors he has selected and raised, is one of the most potent success stories of Latvia. 'Phenomenal troupe of NRT actors' is a staple phrase heard in international theatre community, productions *Long Life* (2003), *The Government Inspector* (2002), *Sonya* (2006) and *The Sound of Silence* (2007) are hits on international festival scene, moreover, the scouts of the most prestige theatrical forums, generally, are ready to buy the productions of this Riga playhouse beforehand, on trust, taking their quality as pre-guaranteed by NRT and Hermanis' brand names.

Dolce vita

Hermanis – the director and his productions have won awards of numerous major European festivals, from *Kontakt* in Torun (its Grand Prix in 1993 for *Madame de Sade* was the 1st serious international recognition for Hermanis) and Edinburgh and Salzburg (where *The Government Inspector* triumphed as Young Directors Project), BITEF Grand Prix in Belgrade for *Long Life* (a dialogue-free performance, one of NRT's visiting cards) to *The Golden Mask* award in Moscow for *Shukshin Stories*, Johann Nestroy Award for Tracey Letts' *August: Osage County* staged in Wien Burgtheater or *Theatertreffen 2012* nomination for the Best Play in German speaking

countries for Chekov's *Platonov* in the same theatre. Alvis Hermanis has joined the international elite of directors and can be seen to successfully work independently from his NRT troupe.

The New Sincerity and history as time-machine

NRT has its own golden classic part of repertory, *My Poor Marat* (1997) by the Soviet period Russian dramatist Alexey Arbuzov, which, on the 30th of December 2011, bid farewell to the stage by way of live transmission on the public television turning out to be the week's leader of popularity ratings. Hermanis' staging, a typical Soviet time retro 'made on a ten euro budget and with old furniture' had been winning the hearts of Latvian viewers by dint of the *New Sincerity* (*novaja iskrennostj*) before this term was even coined in the post-soviet artistic circles. Alvis Hermanis explains: 'I would not like to forget those artistic treasures, which the generation of my parents grew up with. I'd say that the moment in time has arrived when I can dare to begin to try and throw bridges back to the youth of my parents, to take a look at their ideals, to preserve them much like engineer Marat – a persuaded dreamer and romantic – does in the play. It is important to me to understand what is the resilient, delicate human matter, which holds people together irrespectively of times and political formations. And who is to say that it is impossible to construct or conjure the feel and aroma of that time by theatrical means?'

Directorial interest about 'values of former eras' has determined the style and method of Hermanis. He is less interested in dispassionate historians/archeologists history but in that perceivable as time machine moving



Platonov, Burgtheater Wien



Eugene Onegin, Berliner Schaubühne

one into the atmosphere of long-forgotten past as it was experienced by humans. This engagement, in Hermanis' post-storytelling period, explains his active turning to Russian literary classics – to Gorky's *Vassa Zheleznova* in Munich, to *Idiot* by Dostoevsky in Zurich and Pushkin's *Eugen Onegin* in, both, Berliner Schaubühne and NRT, as well as to such prose masterpieces as *Maids of Wilko*, a dramatized story by Yaroslav Ivashkevich, staged in Latvia and revisited by Hermanis in Italy, to three versions of Isaac Bashevis Singer's stories staged in Munich and Riga, and, in the same line, to the theatrical commercial hit of *Shukshin Stories* in Moscow.

New territories and the sixth sense of talent

Hermanis stepped into year 2012 with an attractive 'balance list' of productions; aged 47, he, presently, has 57 performances to his name, staged in Riga, Tallinn, Moscow, Vienna, Munich, Cologne, Modena, Berlin. The next few years will take him to new territories – to Salzburg, Brussels and Paris and to new challenges in terms of genre and scope of productions, this time – opera: Salzburger Festspiele and La Scala, the 20th century avant-garde, Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* to be followed by Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in Berlin and Wagner – in Brussels' La Monnaie. However, Hermanis was interested in the specific conventionality of opera genre already in his directorial 'youth'; his debut in Latvian National Opera in 1995 with *Fire and Night* by Jānis Medīns remains an unsurpassed example of postmodernist elegance and sharp, poignant political allusions in Latvian opera staging

Thinking about director Hermanis, I, naturally, regret the harshness of theatrical reality; this

evanescent art of the moment cannot be 'conserved' even by the best of technologies. Privately, I miss some of the works of 'early' Hermanis – *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which balanced on the verge of passion and despair; the purity of style and daring perfectionism of opera *Fire and Night*, the absolutely meditative magic of *Kaspar Hauser* and, of course, the masterpiece *Arcadia* – the symbiosis of perfect dramaturgy, enthusiasm of unique ensemble of actors and inflammable fragility of Andris Freibergs' paper scenic design.

Hermanis has remained, in his creative orbit, a consistent aesthete, director gifted by God with most important professional instruments – taste and sense of proportion, but he manages to smash us with tenderness thanks to ability of a true talent to pick up the most acute vibrations of the Zeitgeist, the ones approbated by other directors and, for the rest, artistic currency a number of years later. However, the spirit of time has never been documental for Hermanis; it has passed through serious shredding in his stylization machine and emerges, fertilized by the energy of a unique actors' brotherhood. I can attest that even Hermanis' collaboration with A list actors abroad has not produced performances so homogenized as those made with his NRT ensemble (exception could be made, here, for *Platonov* in Burgtheater Wien). The fact that we, the average viewers, cannot always identify the founts of every new style is another matter, a problem of ours, so to say, not that of New Riga Theatre and its artistic leader Alvis Hermanis.



Onegin. Commentaries, New Riga Theatre

From Alvis Hermanis' interview to newspaper *Diena*

April 5, 2012

How do you perceive the term contemporary drama, which has been more than just plays since long ago?

Our play *Onegin. Commentaries* belongs to contemporary Latvian drama. It is a wholesome original play just as any other Latvian play, which normally gets written at the desk in the solitude of an author's study. We create it collectively, but the result, nevertheless, is a play on paper, which other theatres will be able to stage in the years to come.

You have engaged in sort of visually packaged historic restoration in several of your latest productions, while all of these works belong to so called classical texts. How this change of interest was motivated?

To modernize classical texts, in my view, means to simplify them. If we want to be truly precise, we still have to respect the historic context. Precision – that is the reason behind everything. And, if we are really precise, we are automatically liberated from all the banal clichés, which have soaked the costume dramas with naphthalene. To modernize the totality of theatre and translate it into the language accessible to average tv viewer means to reduce to stupidity and infantilize entire cultural history of the world. Western European theatre has already burned down the Alexandrian Library for the second time, figuratively speaking.

Would you say that there is a future for theatre as a mode of human communication?

Theatre renews itself constantly. Perhaps, its tricks remain the same, but its intonation is fresh every day. You will probably have noticed that it is never a torture to watch old films, while it is impossible to watch recorded historic theatre. Even top actors seem to perform like amateurs, when you watch them after a couple of decades. In theatre, as opposed to film and screen, the main events take place in the viewers' minds.

From Alvis Hermanis' interview to newspaper *Latvijas Avīze*

March 30, 2012

Yesterday, for example, I was listening to music. Scriabin. In moments like that, I find myself moved to a time I've chosen. We are not imprisoned in the present, after all. Everybody can choose the time they want to live in, by means of books, music, or theatre. We can move to every other end of the world and to any period of time, thanks to it all and to our choice. It is important, for my inner spiritual health, to leave the present day and to get lost in the past. My advice to everyone would be to take the time they devote to television and give it to a 19th century novel or to a book of poetry, to read a really fat, good book. And you will feel your inner world to stabilize and to harmonize. In *Onegin's* story, everything runs awry because of a duel. They duelled a lot in those times, for the reason of honour. Honour is what we also tell quite a bit about in our performance. Honour was held to mean more than life in those days. That's the grain of the matter. I belong to people who see the gains of the so called progress as twofold: technically, we move upwards, but we are running downhill as regards human facts of even the highest importance. This is why the past matters. As a reminder.



Girls' Dream, choreographer Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs

Why dance in Latvia raises its hopes with every new generation of artists?

Laura Stašāne, NTIL

Everyone everywhere in arts is eager to see emerging artists and new talents; in Latvian dance circles – even more so, as every next generation of dance artists feeds our hope to see the action begin, which would set the Latvian dance in motion.

The school that started it all

Latvian dance has developed somewhat silently but steadily since 1999 when the Contemporary Dance and Choreography Department was established in the Latvian Academy of Culture (LAC). It was the single-minded initiative of the dance artist and professor Olga Žitluhina, who is the pioneer of the genre of contemporary dance in Latvia, envisaged to shape a local school providing proper higher education in dance. This academic four year program combines technical training with regular contributions of international guest teachers along with the theoretical courses offered by the Academy. This curriculum has been ensuring continuous growth of skilled dancers in Latvia, and the technical level has been developing fast.

Every four years there is a new crop of dance makers graduating the program but only few of them enter the performing arts scene. The reasons for this are multiple. Education in LAC is more focused on the technical development of dancers and, upon graduating, they, admittedly, lack choreographic skills; quite simply, the number of choreographers to begin to work with these dancers turns out to be small. Another reason is the fact that the structural financial support for dance in Latvia has been completely missing (the first yearly grant for a contemporary dance organization was given in 2010) and dance has not been able to develop its organizational basis. While young theatre professionals can benefit from the support of major theatre houses both in terms of financing and practical assistance, graduate dance artists are literally left to fight on their own. On project basis, they can occasionally stage a piece in one of the few independent venues (which are, again, primarily theatrical structures), but this is barely enough to survive, let alone to develop an artistic practice. In the absence of strategy and infrastructure, every new generation, metaphorically speaking, jumps enthusiastically into the same cold water.

Being a choreographer in Latvia is a risky business, which involves manoeuvring and survival techniques. On the other hand, the ones who make it must be truly motivated.

The tactics of surviving

Young dance artists Elina Breice and Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs are among those who actually turn the restrictive conditions to their benefit. What strikes in our conversation with Elina and Dmitry is the way they (and the whole young generation of dancers for that matter) are constantly entering new collaborations and changing artistic environments without seeing those as conflicting or interfering. To an extent, one might blame it on the circumstances in the local dance field, where this is merely a surviving strategy, but the young artists also seem to be interested to look for these diverse experiences as a means to explore different artistic ideas.

As year 2007 graduates of Dance Department, Elina and couple of other young dancers established *Dance Anatomy*, an independent platform, which serves as a basis for their research and creative work. *Dance*



Persona-less, choreographer Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs



Come with Me, choreographer Elina Breice

Anatomy's activities are enabled by Elina's parallel work in her professional dance studio, which ensures availability of their rehearsal space. Elina acts as choreographer and organiser in both of these situations, working with different people and varying practices. Yet for her, this is not a conflicting situation, even if it is determined, first of all, by practical necessity. Elina admits that these two contexts balance each other out and give grounds to put different ideas to test. Meanwhile, Elina is also one of the few choreographers who have developed lasting collaborations with a venue. The independent *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris*, which selects dance performances to form part of its regular programme, specifically presented several of Elina's choreographies. In 2011, ĢIT also produced her latest and fully mature piece, a collaboration with theatre director Andrejs Jarovojš, *Come With Me*, which was a beautifully simple portrayal of a relationship through sweeping fallings and awkward touches.

To trust one's own decisions

This un-conflicting existence in different contexts and readiness to adapt to various circumstances is affirmed by Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs as well. Dmitrijs has worked as dancer and choreographer with Olga Žitluhina dance company since 2005, while also creating his independent solo pieces and choreographing circus artists and a figure skating pair. It was his first short solo work, an ironic comment on a virtuoso artist figure, the *Girls' Dream* (2010), which revealed him as a charismatic performer with an interest and talent for spoken text on stage. Recently Dmitrijs spent time in a residency in arctic Norway to collaborate with Norwegian choreographer Gerd Kaisa Vorren on a new piece (to be premiered in Riga in June 2012), where he emphatically insisted on his participation exclusively as dancer in order to explore the decision making process in collective work: 'It seems to me that too often in the process we are unable to make our own choices without an affirmation from outside. This time, I want the final decisions to be those of the choreographer; of course, we talk a lot, as we progress,



Come with Me, choreographer Elina Breice

and there are many ideas we exchange, but my interest is in leaving her uninfluenced by me.' Here Dmitrijs reveals his distrust of collective work where no one can take an independent final decision and identifies what he perceives to be the main problem of Latvian dance community – its self-doubt and fear of failure.

New strategies

And Dmitrijs is right. As a choreographer, one does not get too many chances to perform in front of the public here. Until recently, the highlight and the opportunity for the local dance scene was the annual international contemporary dance festival *Time to Dance*, the only of its kind in Latvia. No one even thought of looking towards theatre houses or venues. However, it took very little, for the youngest generation of Latvian dance activists, to change the pattern. Collaboration with artists of other disciplines and work in the non-dance spaces comes natural to them. After a series of work introducing the young choreographers to *Dirty Deal Teatro* audiences, they are already into their next projects in DDT, with the only threat, perhaps, to maturity of their work being their eager readiness to participate in everything... It is interesting to note that the younger theatre directors finally accept dance as more than just choreography of their own shows; Andrejs Jarovojš has collaborated on several dance performances and now, is in process of developing a new one, this time with the young choreographer Kristīne Vismāne. Mārtiņš Eihe has notably created a theatrical dance piece *Sarah Kane* (2011), selected by jury for the first Baltic Dance Platform to take place this year in Tallinn.

The dance artists in Latvia have learned to be self-sufficient. It is time to open up, to push the boundaries of dance from within, as well as to acknowledge the hard fact that proper studios and stages alone do not guarantee creative and inspiring environment. It seems to me that contemporary dance in Latvia, primarily, needs more action, more of exchange of ideas, wider influence from outside and higher confidence of its practitioners to find its voice and to turn stronger.



Score for an Ecosystem, director Viesturs Meikšāns

About New Theatre Institute of Latvia

New Theatre Institute of Latvia (NTIL) is a project based organization working in the field of contemporary performing arts since 1998. NTIL produces local and international projects, organizes international festivals of contemporary theatre – *Homo Novus* and *Homo Alibi*, and annual Latvian Theatre Showcase. The Institute also provides training programmes, information exchange and international collaboration maintaining the focus on emerging ideas, innovative work and responsible actions.

NTIL was established as a festival, and the biennial **International Festival of Contemporary Theatre *Homo Novus*** is still in the centre of its activities.

Homo Novus is an essential element of Latvian scene of performing arts and Riga cultural landscape as a catalyst, both, to generative innovative work and the evolvement of new audiences interested in contemporary art. Over a week in early autumn of every other year, festival *Homo Novus* presents established and emerging artists from Latvia and abroad and becomes a platform for meeting, exchange, and testing of new ideas and practices. Since 1995, nine festivals have been organised and more than 100 performances presented and produced.

Experimental Theatre Festival *Homo Alibi* is organized since 2000 and takes place in the alternate years of *Homo Novus* festivals. Over four days, *Homo Alibi* occupies a venue in Riga (be it premises of a theatre house or a floating boat workshop) and invites artists and audiences to turn to a particular theme or development of Latvian and European performing arts. Previous editions of *Homo Alibi* festivals have spotlighted such aspects of contemporary theatre as solo performances, contemporary drama, the use of new media in performing arts, theatre and visuality, object theatre, and the genre of lecture-performance.

NTIL presents international theatre and dance performances also outside the festival frame and, over the years, has introduced to Latvian audiences such artists and companies as *Rimini Protokoll*, *Forced Entertainment*, *Lone Twin*, *Needcompany*, *Ultima Vez*, Romeo Castellucci, Kristian Smeds, Oskaras Koršunovas, Stefan Kaegi, Rabih Mroue, Jerome Bel, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Kornel Mundruczo, Mariano Pensotti and others.

Latvian Theatre Showcase takes place in Riga every spring and features selected last season performances produced by the theatre houses in Latvia as well as by independent venues and dance companies with a special focus on the young scene. The Showcase is aimed at professional international audiences and all the shows it presents are translated in English. The Showcase gives an overall introduction to the latest developments in Latvian performing arts and functions as a meeting place for presenters, critics and artists.



Sņeguročka, director Vladislavs Nastavševs

International networks

NTIL's work has been, largely, propelled by international collaborations, inspiring meetings and active partnership in international networks. Currently, NTIL is a partner in four European and regional networks:

Imagine 2020 is an initiative involving eleven European arts organisations, aiming to stimulate artists, scientists and audiences to engage creatively in discussion and action towards making the changes necessary to stabilise the climate and secure a sustainable future.

FIT (Theatre Festivals in Transition) are eight European festivals that maintain the discussions about the role and function of contemporary performing arts festivals within local, regional and European contexts, and carry out mobile artistic and training programmes for different professional groups, such as young theatre critics or the next generation of festival programmers.

kedja is a Nordic-Baltic network of connected but independent projects within contemporary dance field. NTIL forms part of Wilderness dance project, which, believing in the power of arts for regional development, will engage with new communities on the edge of the vast Nordic-Baltic region by means of artistic residencies in rural areas.

BaNd:expanded is a platform for a cross-disciplinary collaboration, lasting three years, to organize series of creative ateliers for young Baltic and Nordic theatre and dance makers in six cities of the region.

Local agenda

NTIL works in close co-operation with performing arts professionals, researching and responding to the needs and interests of local community. NTIL organizes training programmes and workshops, regularly produces and presents work by young theatre directors within the frames of *Homo Novus* and *Homo Alibi* festivals, and, since recently, it has started a collaborative series with *Dirty Deal Teatro* to present the first works of emerging choreographers. NTIL webpage is a resource for the local professionals to find out about the international scene, and vice versa.



Homo Novus 2011

NTIL acts as an intermediary organization, advocating the interests and issues of independent performing arts sector in Latvia.

NTIL nearest future plans are connected to the development of artistic exchange with several performing arts venues and organizations in other European cities and the participation in the extensive programme of Riga, European Capital of Culture 2014.



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Latvian Theatre Showcase 2012, April 26–29, Riga

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Date	Venue	Address	Director	Author	Performance
Thursday, April 26					
19:00–21:30	New Riga Theatre Main stage	Lāčplēša street 25	Alvis Hermanis	Based on Alexander Pushkin's <i>Eugene Onegin</i>	<i>Onegin. Commentaries</i>
19:00–20:45	Latvian National Theatre Main stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Kirill Serebrennikov	Georg Büchner	<i>Woyzeck</i>
19:00–21:00	New Riga Theatre New Stage	Talsu street 1	Ģirts Ēcis	Morris Panych	<i>Vigil</i>

Friday, April 27

12:00–14:00	<i>Dirty Deal Teatro</i>	Maskavas street 12 – block 2	Vladislavs Nastavševs	Yevgeny Kharitonov	<i>Ding Dong</i>
15:00–16:50	Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i>	Ģertrūdes street 101a	Valters Silis	Valters Silis, Kārlis Krūmiņš, Carl Alm	<i>Legionnaires</i>
18:30–20:00	Latvian National Theatre New stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Elmārs Seņkovs	Rasa Bugavičute, Edgars Niklasons	<i>Performance "The End"</i>
19:00–20:30	<i>Dirty Deal Teatro</i>	Maskavas street 12 – block 2	Valters Silis	Jānis Balodis	<i>All My Presidents</i>
21:00–22:30	<i>kim?</i>	Maskavas street 12 – block 1	Juris Poškus		<i>Kolka Cool a film</i>

Saturday, April 28

16:00–17:00	Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i>	Ģertrūdes street 101a	Andrejs Jarovojš	Inga Gaile	<i>Skin</i>
18:00–20:30	Daile Theatre Small stage	Brīvības street 75	Regnārs Vaivars	Pavel Sanaev	<i>Bury Me Behind the Plinth</i>
19:00–22:00	New Riga Theatre Main Stage	Lāčplēša street 25	Māra Ķimele	Based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's <i>Crime and Punishment</i>	<i>Crime/ Punishment</i>

Sunday, April 29

13:00–14:00	Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i>	Ģertrūdes street 101a	Andrejs Jarovojš	Andrejs Jarovojš and Dāvis Burmeisters	<i>Man on the Stairs</i>
15:00–17:30	Latvian National Theatre New stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Pēteris Krilovs	Based on J. D. Salinger's story <i>Franny and Zoey</i>	<i>Prayer to the Fat Lady</i>
15:00–21:30	Latvian National Opera	Aspazijas boulv. 3	Viesturs Kairišs	Richard Wagner	<i>Twilight of the Gods</i>
17:00–21:00	New Riga Theatre Main Stage	Lāčplēša street 25	Alvis Hermanis	Ivan Goncharov	<i>Oblomov</i>
19:00–22:00	New Riga Theatre New stage	Talsu street 1	Inese Mičule	Based on Gundega Repše's <i>The Tin Scream</i>	<i>Hard Metal</i>

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Printed by *Dardedze hologrāfija*
Supported by State Culture Capital Foundation

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