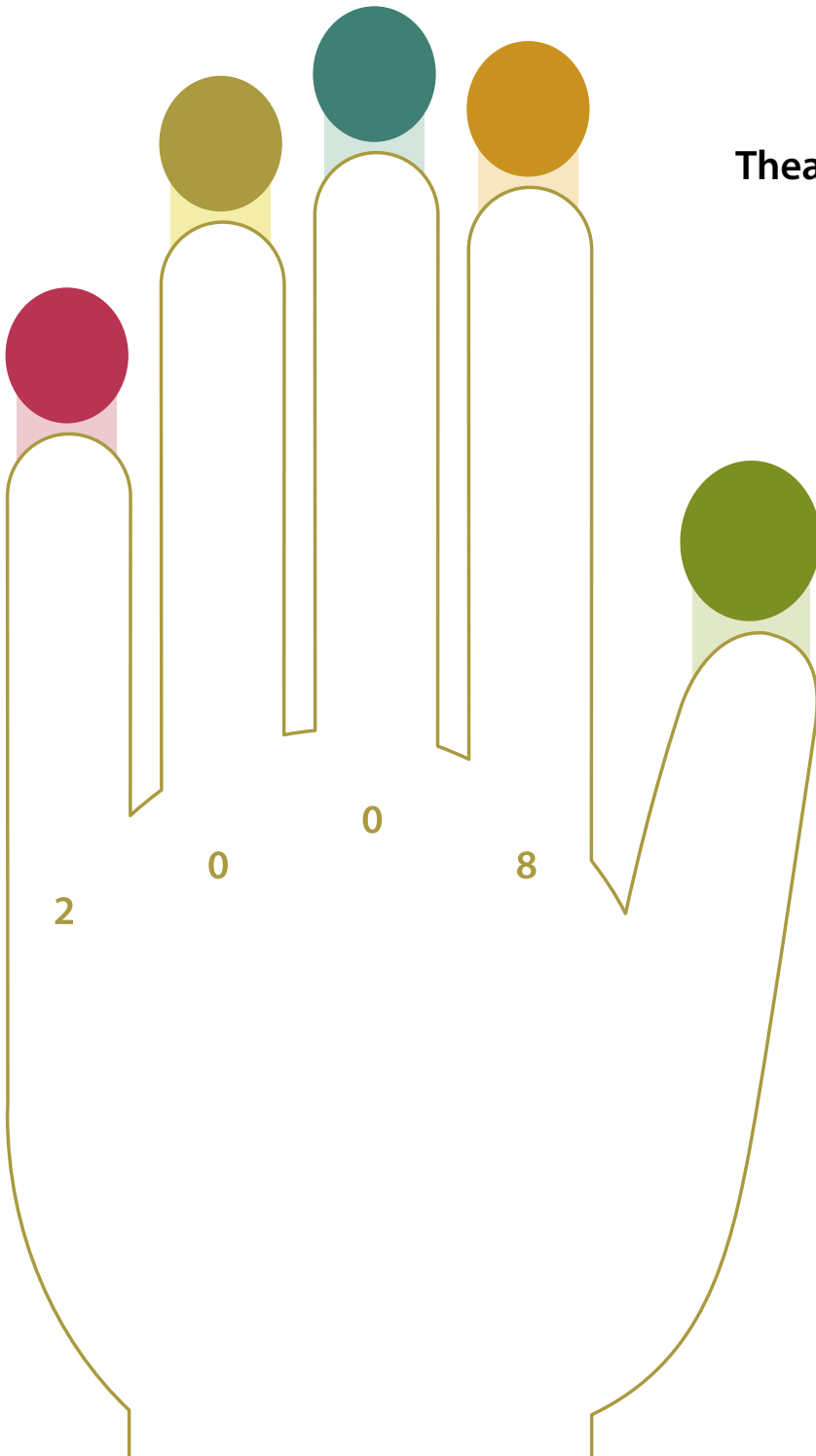


# Theatre and Dance in Latvia



# Theatre and dance in Latvia

In the last few years Latvian theatre has become known in Europe and outside, thanks to the international success of Alvis Hermanis and his New Riga Theatre company. Alvis Hermanis received the Europe Prize for New Theatrical Realities in 2007, and his company continues to tour the festivals with his latest hit *The Sound of Silence*.

This is so far the most visible part of the “iceberg”. With this publication we hope to give an insight into the diversity of Latvian theatres and turn the attention to directors and performances that could appeal to larger international audiences.

The repertory theatre system is still dominating in Latvia. Also the independent directors mostly stage the performances in the repertory theatres with the house companies. The independent scene is scarce and fragile, however, there are some notable examples that have also received international attention. The one to be mentioned is the young object and puppet theatre company *umka.lv*, which is also involved in international collaborations. The search for new expression as the contrary to high quality traditional theatre, is often found in the small stages of the repertory theatres, which is the working place for the young generation of directors, like Regnārs Vaivars, Gatis Šmits, Elīna Cērpa, Ilze Rudzīte and Mārtiņš Eihe. Among the big stage productions there are also some striking examples from the directors Dž. Dž. Džilindžers (Daile Theatre), Viesturs Kairišs (Latvian National Opera and Latvian National Theatre) and Rolandas Atkočiūnas (Liepāja Theatre).

Olga Žitluhina Dance Company is so far the only professional company in the field of contemporary dance in Latvia. However with the establishment of professional dance and choreography studies at the Latvian Academy of Culture since 2001 and the regular home grown festival *Time To Dance* as a platform for both local and international dance projects, the future for contemporary dance looks more hopeful.

One of the best opportunities to get to know Latvian theatre is during *The Showcase of Best Latvian theatre production*, which takes place every year between November 19 and 23.

We at the New Theatre Institute of Latvia will be happy to help you to find out more about Latvian theatre and dance – write us or come over for a visit! We look forward to welcoming you here!

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# Latvian National Theatre



THE AGE OF THE SURVEYORS, 2007



DRACULA. DEMONS, 2007

## International tour

### **Margarita Perveņeckā, Natalya Vorozhbit, DRACULA. DEMONS, directed by Regnārs Vaivars, 2007**

The production is an amalgamation of two plays: Latvian playwright Margarita Perveņeckā's *Drakula*, and Ukrainian playwright Natalya Vorozhbit's *Demons*. Director Regnārs Vaivars uncovers man's inner demons – on a worldly and unworldly plane – and the individual's freedom to choose to live with or without them. The play is set in Latgale, the most vibrant and religious region in Latvia; its soundscape includes original, traditional Latvian, Latgalian and Slavic rhythms and music performed live on stage. *Drakula. Dēmoni* received Latvia's largest daily newspaper's, *Diena*, 2007 annual award for culture.

### **Brothers Kaudzītes, THE AGE OF THE SURVEYORS, directed by Viesturs Kairiņš, 2007**

The production of the Latvian classic, *The Age of the Surveyors*, has sought to combine two characteristics of Viesturs Kairiņš' work – interest in mythological, stylized ritual and socially relevant theatre. Repositioning the play – the first Latvian novel of its kind to show realistic events – to reflect more abstract modern times, Kairiņš uses a men's choir and their songs to represent the concept of Latvians, as a nation of singers, at the same time presenting familiar Latvian characters as Latvian archetypes. Paradoxical connections, original poetic figures and *mise en scènes*, with powerful crowd-scene energy and expressive stage acting characterizes his production aesthetic.

### **William Shakespeare, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, directed by Galina Polischuk, 2007**

A bold deconstruction of the classic text, this work examines what happens when all that remains of the original is its theme – from which a new play is constructed. With its light-handed and appealing stage play, this collage of études on the theme of "Marriage, Italian style", is a charmingly infectious study of theatre itself.

## Latvian National Theatre

While the Latvian National Theatre, founded in 1919, works primarily in the traditional realpsychological theatrical genre, over the past years it has devoted time and space for experimental and contemporary pieces, focusing special attention to the development and staging of original drama. For example, last season saw a modernized version of the Latvian classic based on the Brothers Kaudzītes' novel, *The Age of the Surveyors*, directed by Viesturs Kairiņš, as well as the staging of the brilliant prosaist Nora Ikstena's story collection *Amaryllises*, directed by Ināra Slucka, and *Dracula. Demons*, written by the young, provocative dramatist Margarita Perveņeckā, directed by Regnārs Vaivars. Providing a home to its directors-in-residence, the LNT company also attracts independent and guest directors from other theatre houses in Latvia as well as the international theatre world. The LNT boasts three professional stages – the Great Hall, the Actor's Hall, and the New Hall.

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# Latvian National Opera



DIE WALKÜRE, 2007



CARMEN, 2007

## International tour

**Richard Wagner, DIE WALKÜRE, directed by Viesturs Kairiņš, 2007**  
 Together with a team of international artists, theatre and cinema director Viesturs Kairiņš' and artist Ilmārs Blumbergs' contemporary staging of *Die Walküre* is an aesthetically provocative work. This psychologically demonstrative production is the second of Wagner's Ring Cycle, the others of which have been staged by various directors since 2006. Riga's Opera Festival audiences will be treated to the entire cycle in 2010.

**Ēriks Ešenvalds, JOSEPH IS A FRUITFUL BOUGH, directed by Gatis Šmits, 2007**

This original Latvian opera, based on the Biblical story of Joseph, is the work of composer Ēriks Ešenvalds, librettists Kārlis Vērdiņš and Inga Ābele, theatre and cinema director Gatis Šmits, and stage designer Rudolf Bekic. By freeze-framing each scene separately, the production has a uniquely cinematic aesthetic, and the outstanding ensemble of vocal and instrumental musicians have collaborated to create a brilliant, unconventional musical accompaniment.

**Georges Bizet, CARMEN, directed by Andrejs Žagars, 2007**

The well-known story of Carmen – a hot rebel, born to be free – is one of the LNO's most visually colourful productions of the past years. Rather than presenting a clichéd Spanish Carmen, the director was inspired by modern-day Cuba – its political drama, unvarnished rough environment, and vibrant people – to set the opera in Castro's Havana.

**ANNA KARENINA, choreography by Boris Eifman, Russia, 2007**

One of the most impressive recent Latvian National Ballet productions at the LNO, this ballet has a psychologically powerful impact. The production receives consistently conflicting reviews, and leaves no viewer indifferent.

## Latvian National Opera

The Latvian National Opera House is home to both the Latvian National Opera and the Latvian National Ballet, staging, on average, six new productions every season. While paying tribute to the traditional values of the classical and Romantic operatic works that are the cornerstones of its repertoire, the LNO continually strives to seek contemporary forms of expression. LNO stage regularly resounds with successful productions of Baroque operas, modern operatic masterpieces, children's performances, and original Latvian works. LNO is open to the world – the company has an active touring schedule; many superb guest singers, conductors, and directors, set, costume, and lighting designers frequently grace LNO stage. LNO takes great pride in its consistently exceptional performances, and recent award nominations are a testament to its excellence. The opera choir has been nominated for Latvia's 2007 Great Music Award for its outstanding ensemble work, but Ēriks Ešenvalds' opera *Joseph Is A Fruitful Bough* has been named the year's best performance.

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## New Riga Theatre



THE SOUND OF SILENCE. THE 1968 SIMON AND GARFUNKEL RIGA TOUR THAT NEVER HAPPENED, 2007



IT HAPPENED WITH THEM, 2007



## International tour

### **THE SOUND OF SILENCE. THE 1968 SIMON AND GARFUNKEL RIGA TOUR THAT NEVER HAPPENED, directed by Alvis Hermanis, 2007**

A 60s commune utopia – Woodstock, Simon and Garfunkel, dreaming about love, peace and a better world... Director Alvis Hermanis, set and costume designer Monika Pormale, and the NRT ensemble turn back time 40 years and tell the stories of young people living in their own particular communes – the communal apartments of Soviet Latvia. The production has no spoken dialogue, and is accompanied solely by the music of Simon and Garfunkel. A Berliner Festspiele and NRT co-production, it premièred at the Berlin theatre festival, spielzeit'europa.

### **IT HAPPENED WITH THEM, directed by Gatis Šmits, 2007**

Together with a magnificent group of actors, theatre and cinema director Gatis Šmits has created a plot reminiscent of 40s and 50s Hollywood film noir flicks. With its consistently intriguing storyline, the production is at once a pastiche and parody of film noir – the beginning of the play surprises with unexpected and bizarre twists that gradually transform themselves into a witty comedy. Designer Rudolf Bekic's scenic design and young fashion designers mare & rols' costumes complement this vivid production perfectly.

### **TENDERNESS, directed by Elīna Cērpa, 2006**

Based on Jorge Luis Borges' short story, *La Intrusa* – one of the Argentinean writer's most unusual love stories – the play tells the story of two brothers and the woman who enters their lives. With its singular use of Latvian clay, physical energy and music, the staging of *Tenderness* is experimental and bold: by peeling back Borges' text to uncover archetypal situations, Cērpa has created a sensual and revealing atmosphere.

## New Riga Theatre

Internationally acclaimed director, Alvis Hermanis, has been artistic director of the New Riga Theatre since 1997. NRT continues to develop its studio-style theatre, providing Latvia with a vital base for experiencing innovative theatre that pushes the boundaries of reality. Along with staging classical psychological productions, the theatre has presented the Hollywood film noir-styled *It Happened With Them*, director Gatis Šmits; *The Sound of Silence*, director A. Hermanis, a metaphorical play without spoken dialogue; the provocative *Ice. A Collective Book-Reading With the Help of Imagination in Riga*, dir. Alvis Hermanis, which leaves the audience emotionally confused with its Brechtian alienation, and *Tenderness*, director Elīna Cērpa, a play about first passion that is played out in four tonnes of clay. NRT's core is its thirty-something actors – doubling as co-writers and dramatists – who can often be out in the field, collecting sociological and anthropological data for their next productions. And the fruits of their labour can be seen in *Long Life*, *Latvian Stories*, and *Latvian Love* – all directed by Hermanis – in which the real-life stories of actual people have been recast into colourful prototypes of Latvian society.

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# Daile Theatre



CALIGULA, 2005



YVONNE, THE PRINCESS OF BURGUNDY, 2007

## International tour

### **Witold Gombrowicz, YVONNE, THE PRINCESS OF BURGUNDY, directed by Roman Kozak, Russia, 2007**

Russia's well-known director, Roman Kozak, has brought the magniloquent Polish playwright Gombrowicz's ludicrously tragic, absurdist tale to Daile's Great Hall. In his interpretation, *Yvonne* is a grotesque tragicomedy about a freakish princess who doesn't fit in and seems to have been created solely to unhinge and deeply unsettle those around her. The production has received high praise from Latvia's theatre critics and audiences alike, especially noting its visual effects and razor-sharp irony, its imaginative stage direction and acting performances.

### **David Harrower, KNIVES IN HENS, directed by Gatis Šmits, 2006**

Rather than becoming engaged in the play's external developments, Gatis Šmits focuses his attention on the subjective inner-mind workings of the principal character, Young Woman, and her depiction of imagined events as reality in the real world. This production is characterized by its eloquently minimalist text, movement, vision and objects, the aesthetics of an intimately enclosed space, and never-before-seen precise and concentrated acting.

### **Albert Camus, CALIGULA, directed by Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, 2005**

Camus' philosophical text is the basis for this grandiose and colourful production presented in the Great Hall. This staging, with its refined parody, mass culture maxims, brilliant musical compilations hearkening back to Soviet times, and Džilindžers' single-minded and deeply personal direction has captivated audiences. As well as winning the 2005/2006 theatre season's highest awards for direction, set and lighting design, this production triumphed as Best Drama Performance of the year.

## Daile Theatre

Founded in 1920, Daile Theatre is Latvia's largest professional repertory theatre. The Great Hall, a 1,000-seat auditorium used primarily for theatrical performances – including musical and comedy productions – attracts a wide audience. The Small Hall is ideally suited for psychologically dramatic works and contemporary plays where a more intimate setting is important, but the Chamber Hall is available for short theatre pieces, offering a closely personal space for the experiments and forays into new forms of theatre aesthetics. Each year, the theatre presents between ten to fifteen new productions, showcasing the talents of local as well as guest directors. Daile Theatre is well-known for its regular participation in international theatre projects and organizing contemporary dramatic readings. It also provides a unique professional experience for theatre's artists to develop their skills in creating musical theatre.

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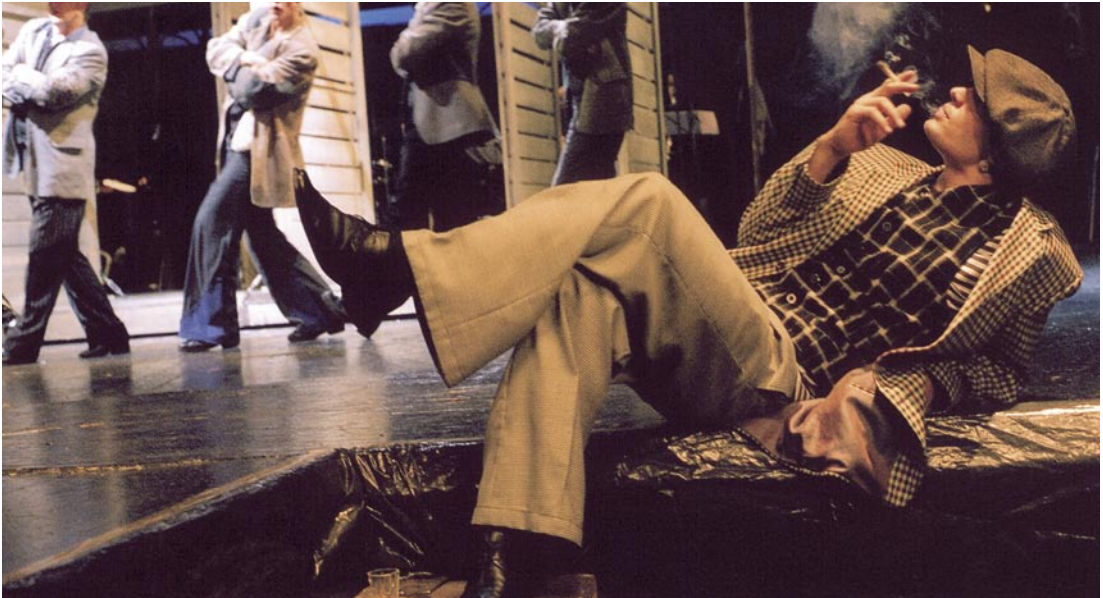
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## Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre



THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, 2007



THE RED-HEADED KING, 2007

## International tour

### **Martin McDonagh, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, directed by Andrey Prikotenko, 2007**

Part of a craggy limestone reef, the Aran Islands, a group of three tiny islands off the Western Coast of Ireland, are home to an ever-dwindling population. The news of a Hollywood film project on a neighbouring island arouses dreams of a different life in the inhabitants of Inishmaan. But what if the dream comes true? Filled with humour and pathos, the play tells the story of these dreamers and their relationships – their love, openness and strength of spirit – as they each seek to find their place in the world.

### **Vjacheslav Verbin, THE RED-HEADED KING, directed by Vladimir Zolotar, Russia, 2007**

Odessa sun, Odessa humour, Isaak Babel's *Tales of Odessa*. Colourful personalities, magnificent music, and the carefree air of a seaport city. A love story set on the backdrop of events ushering in the 20th century. The legendary composer Raimonds Pauls' newest project – a full-scale production on the main stage complete with an impressive ensemble, orchestra, and the composer himself at the piano.

### **LIVEJOURNAL, directed by Timofey Kuljabin, Russia, 2007**

LiveJournal is a popular Internet blog site for young people, where users are bound by strict "Terms of Service". One of these terms – anonymity – is the very thing that leads people to expose themselves. The play makes use of six published LiveJournal blogs, keeping their particular style, chronological order, and other distinctive elements. Speaking in the language that only they can use, six young actors present an authentic dialogue about the most painful problems of their generation.

## Riga Russian Theatre

Founded in 1883, Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre's repertoire is based on dramatic, musical, and children's theatrical productions – predominantly Russian classics and works of modern-day playwrights. Riga Russian Theatre is home to local directors as well as host to many guest directors from Russia. The theatre welcomes opportunities for international relations – with guest performances, as well as various co-productions. Peter Stein, director of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and Roman Kozak, director of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, a bilingual production, are among those who have worked at the theatre. Last season, in collaboration with Vilnius and Tallinn Russian theatres, RRT presented *Russian Laughter*, a production based on several stories by Dostoevsky. A graduate of the Theatre Academy of St. Petersburg, Andrey Prikotenko – Riga Russian Theatre's artistic director since 2007 – has won the prestigious *Golden Mask* and *Golden Soffit* awards for his directorial work.

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# Valmiera Drama Theatre



IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH, 2007



KING LEAR, 2007

## International tour

### **William Shakespeare, KING LEAR, directed by Oļģerts Kroders, 2007**

Seeking to unravel the meanings of words and actions, the relationship between power and reality, director Oļģerts Kroders interprets this classic as a spiritual journey that stands above time and place. Shakespeare's plays are nothing without crowds, battles, fools, and death, yet here – all is metaphor. Spectacular staging and set design.

### **Rūdolfs Blaumanis, IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH, directed by Mārtiņš Eihe, 2007**

The play is modelled after one of Latvian literature's great existential works, Rūdolfs Blaumanis' classic novel, *In the Shadow of Death*. Compact, meticulous staging has created an emotionally analytic conversation with the audience about the closeness of death and our ability to stand up in the face of it. The interplay of light and shadow, supported by precise performances have created a story of masculine solidarity. The production received the season's nomination for Best Ensemble.

### **Martin McDonagh, THE PILLOW MAN, directed by Jānis Vingris, 2005**

Critics have lauded this production as an intelligent, insightful interpretation of Martin McDonagh's world-renowned play that has returned a long-forgotten tradition to the stage: telling the audience a story. In this, his theatrical début, film director and producer Jānis Vingris has made a success of the 'poor' theatre aesthetic, winning Latvia's largest daily newspaper's, *Diena*, prestigious award for culture in 2005.

## Valmiera Drama Theatre

Founded in 1919, Valmiera Drama Theatre is one of the leading professional repertory theatres outside Riga. The theatre is characterized by its artistically high-quality productions, venerable theatre-making traditions, a finely-tuned creative ensemble, and a willingness to collaborate and explore challenging artistic endeavours. Resident directors include members from Latvia's theatrical establishment – Oļģerts Kroders, Felikss Deičs, Varis Brasla – representing the psychological theatrical tradition, as well as a new generation of directors, and the theatre regularly works together with local and international guest directors. Director Kroders' recent productions of classical works, mostly notably Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, have breathed fresh air into VDT, receiving critical and audience acclaim. His *King Lear* won the 2006/2007 season's award for Best Dramatic Performance.

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# Liepāja Theatre



CV (UNCLE VANYA), 2007



CV (UNCLE VANYA), 2007



## International tour

### **Anton Chekhov, CV (UNCLE VANYA), directed by Rolandas Atkočiūnas, 2007**

Using *Uncle Vanya* as the foundation, the director has infused the work with other Chekhovian elements, creating a unified theatrical mystery, in which an extraneous play within the play repeatedly surfaces with psychological precision. Mārtiņš Vilkārsis' stage design is rich with colour and symbols – the vampire's or knight's banquet, a carnival that takes over Chekhov's play, uncovering hidden passions, making them apparent to all. For two days, the Voinitsky estate is an extreme of blazing passions in which every hero perishes – and only art can resurrect them.

### **Jean-Paul Sartre, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, directed by Rolandas Atkočiūnas, 2006**

The director, together with set designer Mārtiņš Vilkārsis and four actors have created a precise image of Earth in birth and rebirth. The production was staged in Latvian and Russian, and in 2007, the performance received critical recognition at international festivals in Lithuania and Russia.

## Liepāja Theatre

Providing a varied repertoire to a wide-reaching audience – from children's and young people's performances to intellectual dramas; from intimate performances to full-scale musicals – Kurzeme's Liepāja Theatre is the only professional theatre in the region's largest city. Since 2005, the theatre's artistic director has been Lithuania's Rolandas Atkočiūnas, whose distinctive directorial style is marked by precise analytical thinking and paradoxical imagery, ritualism characteristic to Lithuanian theatre, and the use of metaphor, which is enriched by the psychologically based verbal expression that is characteristic to Latvian theatre. Managing director Ivars Lūsis works as theatrical director alongside Rolandas Atkočiūnas. The core of the acting company is made up of experienced actors, Klaipēda University providing the academic foundation for Liepāja Theatre students.

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# Daugavpils Theatre



SHORT STORIES, 2007



LITTLE DEVILS, 2008

## International tour

### **Rūdolfs Blaumanis, LITTLE DEVILS, directed by Viktors Jansons, 2008**

This play can be perceived as a children's fairytale, but it also has psychological attributes. In order to transform Blaumanis' literary language into theatre language, the director makes use of various theatrical elements, from pagan rituals to market place theatre. Ritual theatre provides the opportunity to deal with one of man's greatest challenges – how to consciously achieve harmony with Earth – but the 'market place' form makes it up close and personal to modern man.

### **I BELIEVE IN OUR STAR – VLADIMIR VYSOTSKY IS 70, directed by Vladimir Dupak, 2008**

Dedicated to the 70th birthday of Russia's famous bard and actor. Vladimir Vysotsky. "I believe in our star..." is a line from a poem for his wife, Marina Vlady. The production is based on Vladimir Vysotsky's relationship with his women – his first wife, Izya Zhukova, his second wife, Ludmila Abramova, and of course, Marina Vlady. The performance also makes use of Alla Demidova's, Bella Akhmadulina's, and Vysotsky's closest friend, Mikhail Shemyakin's memories. A rich, lyrical production filled with a selection of Vysotsky's many songs specially adapted for this memorial performance.

### **SHORT STORIES, directed by Harijs Petrockis, 2007**

Based on an idea by Daugavpils Theatre's actors, Egils Viļumovs and Karina Lučīņa, the play was staged specifically for the 19th International Festival for Experimental Theatre at Cairo's Metropol Theatre and premiered in Egypt, September 2007. Five short love fantasies that He and She experience in five geographical locations, under five separate circumstances, and in five languages – Latvian, Russian, English, French, and Italian.

## Daugavpils Theatre

Founded in 1854 and home to two working theatre companies – Latvian and Russian – Daugavpils Theatre is the only one of its kind in Latvia. And being in Latvia's second largest city, the theatre has a very specific regional theatre function. As well as producing traditional plays from the *realpsychologie* school, DT's repertoire is dominated by Latvian, Russian, and foreign classical works, many of which are produced for children and young people. Daugavpils Theatre regularly collaborates with guest directors from Latvia, Russia, and France.

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# Latvian Puppet Theatre



WHICH OF US IS TANGLED UP?, 2007



TAILOR DAYS IN SILMACHI, 2007



TAILOR DAYS IN SILMACHI, 2007

## International tour

### **WHICH OF US IS TANGLED UP?, directed by Aleksandr Mindlin, Russia, 2007**

Presented by the theatre's young actors, this performance of mobile marionettes – entirely without spoken dialogue – is intended for young people's audiences. Onstage, a bunch of kids find a collection of identical, faceless wooden puppets. They begin to work with them – tying strings to their arms and legs, or, the reverse, cutting them loose. In the hands of their creators, the wooden puppets gradually become humanlike, acting out various episodes of human life.

### **Rūdolfs Blaumanis, TAILOR DAYS IN SILMACHI, directed by Kārlis Auškāps and Valdis Pavlovskis, 2007**

One of the few performances that is intended not only for children, but adults as well. By transforming the human heroes of Blaumanis' Latvian classic into house pets, the production's creators have made this well-loved comedy even more humorous and interesting, but the characters' relationships with one another, more vivid.

### **ONE LITTLE RUNNER BEAN, directed by Vija Blūzma, 2005**

Based on three stories by Vladimir Suteyev, this production – from the *Fairy Tale, Little Tale* cycle – is intended for the tiniest theatre goers, who are drawn into open conversation about the animals, objects, and developments on stage. Parents can make excellent use of this play as a playtime learning tool. The 2006 performance received the Best Performance for Children award.

## Latvian Puppet Theatre

Dedicated exclusively to puppetry productions, the Latvian Puppet Theatre is the state's only professional puppet theatre. While the theatre's repertoire is based primarily on the aesthetics of traditional puppetry, the troupe is consistently developing new art forms to attract its audiences. LPT currently has some thirty productions on the boards, including performances for very young children, fairy tales and productions of children's literature, as well as performances highlighting various puppetry techniques for young people. The theatre members include local and visiting Latvian and Russian puppeteers, often showcasing guest directors from other theatres. LPT regularly takes part in various international festivals.

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# Galina Polischuk Theatre Observatory



US, 2007



COLD SHOTS, 2005

## International tour

### US, directed by Galina Polischuk, 2007

A re-working of Aleksandr Ostrovsky's play *The Storm*, which centres on the feebleness of human emotions, intolerance, and narrow-mindedness. The production has taken an Ostrovskian village from the 19th century and transformed into a modern-day haute couture fashion house.

### SACRED BLOOD, directed by Galina Polischuk, 2006

Staged in collaboration with the Norwegian production company, *The Tynset Projekt*, this play premiered at the Black Box Teater in Oslo. The work is a mystery based on the Norwegian playwright Ola Jonsmoen's *Beyond the Longest Mile*.

### COLD SHOTS, directed by Galina Polischuk, 2005

Based on motifs from contemporary Latvian playwright Inga Ābele's play, *Jasmine*, the play investigates burnout – an all too familiar modern-day syndrome.

## Galina Polischuk Theatre Observatory

The Galina Polischuk Theatre Observatory was founded in 2005 with the goal to create an intellectual independent theatre company. Galina Polischuk, the TO's sole director, works with a small, permanent ensemble. By offering original interpretations of classical dramatic works as well as introducing audiences to contemporary pieces, Theatre Observatory strives to inspire intelligent, critical thinking. In collaboration with the Latvian National Theatre, Theatre Observatory has presented works at theatre festivals in Germany, Poland, Croatia, Russia, and elsewhere.

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# United Intimacy



DIE RÄUBER, 2007



WOMAN-BOMB, 2006



## International tour

### **CARAVAN. NINETEEN DAYS IN THE TAKLAMAKLAN DESERT, directed by Andrejs Jarovojš, 2008**

Based on motifs from the adventurer Bruno Baumann's documental book, *Caravan of No Return – Drama in the Taklamakan Desert*, this is a multi-media production. Using puppets, various objects, sand, and cinematic and musical elements, three actors demonstrate the famous Austrian traveller's endeavors in one of the world's largest sandy deserts.

### **Friedrich Schiller DIE RÄUBER, directed by Janek Müller, Germany, 2007**

A young Latvian and German artists' co-production that looks at the classic Schiller melodrama from a fresh perspective. Sombre reflections about the passing of youth, searching for shelter between two cities, and dealing with daily drudgery.

### **Ivana Sajko, WOMAN-BOMB, directed by Andrejs Jarovojš, 2006**

Croatian playwright Ivana Sajko's 1975 play, *Woman-Bomb* – an acerbic, through a glass darkly monologue that provokes the audience, deals unforgivingly with modern-day women's identities and the unavoidable impact world events have on our every-day lives.

## United Intimacy

Founded in 2002, United Intimacy is a professional, non-governmental theatre organization. It was formed in order to rejuvenate theatre life, creating an up-to-date and dynamic alternative to state-run theatre productions. UI holds to its own 'project principal': working as an innovative production group without a permanent company or stage. Every performance has its own creative team and each venue is carefully considered in regard to its suitability for a particular performance. The resident artistic director of UI is Andrejs Jarovojš. UI is an active international theatre member, initiating and realizing collaborative art projects both locally and abroad. It also publishes the contemporary theatre art magazine *Territory*.

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CREATURES, 2007



THE STORY OF DANIEL RAY, 2006

## International tour

### CREATURES, 2007

Creatures is a musical/industrial forest fairy tale whose participants were, until very recently, quite real and living in the forest. The lynx, the wolf, and the beaver, among others, tell their life stories – stories that because of people's negligence, lust for power, and callousness, have pulled their horns in.

### THE STORY OF DANIEL RAY, 2006

The performance's main hero – a Daniel Ray school bag – survives all the possible TV series superheroes' lives, unselfishly fighting for freedom, justice, love... *The Story of Daniel Ray* betters any typical TV series' hero, the clichéd superhero. In this story, the boy-next-door superhero is a worn school bag that takes on evil, regardless of its meagre size and apparent impersonality. The production was successfully received at several international festivals.

### SHOW YOUR FACE!, directed by Matjaž Pograjc, umka.lv, and Betontanc, 2006

Under the direction of Matjaž Pograjc, *Show Your Face!* is an international co-production with umka.lv and the Slovenian physical theatre group Betontanc, playwrights Andris Gauja and Daša Doberšek, multi-instrumentalists Uģis Vitiņš and the Slovenian cult group, Silence, including various and sundry household items which come alive in the hands of the artists, transformed into well-known historical figures. Each member of the group took active part in the creation of the play, working and re-working the text, making puppets and objects, movement and original musical score and performance. The result of this collaboration is a comic-book inspired story about a human who has no face, but a brilliant voice – which world powers are scrambling to possess. The production received critical acclaim in Slovenia as well as Latvia, and has travelled to various international festivals.

## umka.lv

Founded in 2004 by graduates of the puppet theatre arts program at the Latvian Academy of Culture, umka.lv is an object theatre company whose members include Andris Kalnozols, Gints Širmelis-Širmanis, Ģirts Šolis, and Armands Berģis. Collaborating with a variety of professional artists and musicians, umka.lv is an independent theatre troupe without a permanent stage, developing its own object theatre techniques and creating provocative puppet and object productions for young people and adults. umka.lv never ceases to amaze its audiences with its modern theatre language and bold syntheses of different cultures.

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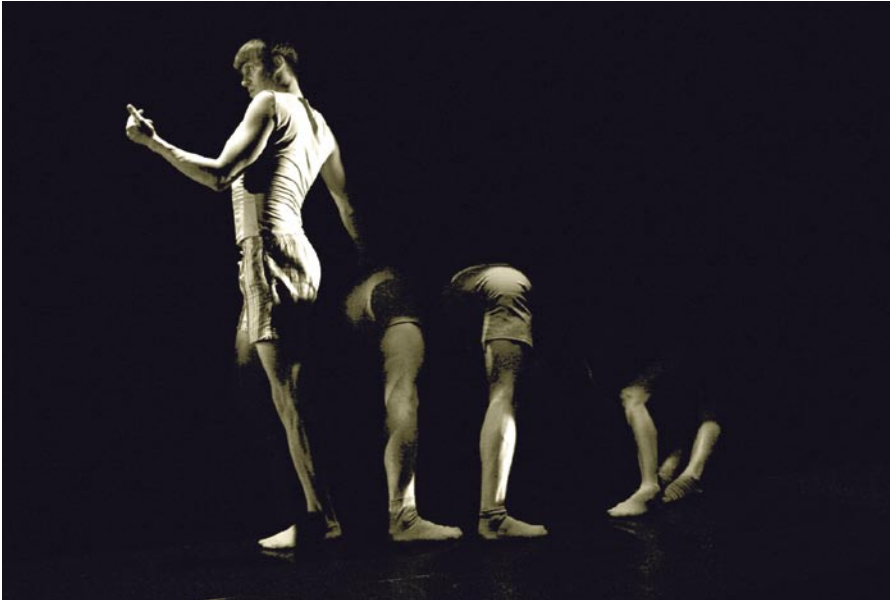
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# Olga Žitluhina Dance Company



BICYCLE, 2007



AGAIN ABOUT THE SAME THING, 2005

## International tour

### **BICYCLE, 2007**

Inspired by the relatively unsuccessful play, *The Semi-Idealist*, written by the great Latvian poet Rainis while in exile in Russia over a hundred years ago, this dance tells an idealistic tale. Does our idealism make the world a better place, or does it also make the semi-idealist, the near-idealist, and the blessed feel uncomfortable?... How does one present a hundred-year-old idea linked to a contemporary art form? The answers can be found in this première performance based on a written text.

### **TAKE 735, 2006**

This performance – created solely for the company's male corps – investigates whether man is a hero, the meaning of heroism, and how it appears in the eyes of a female choreographer.

### **AGAIN ABOUT THE SAME THING. Part 1, 2005**

A full-length production, this one plays out the many expressions of love – like that of a strawberry melting on the tongue: smarting sweetly, full of longing and a little romance – the most beautiful of life's emotions. An audience favourite that continues to receive critical acclaim in Latvia and abroad, it's an Olga Žitluhina Dance Company must-see.

## Olga Žitluhina Dance Company

The first of its kind in Latvia, the Olga Žitluhina Dance Company, founded in 1996, is a professional contemporary dance company that is committed to the continual creative process and its popularization. The company's repertoire consists of three full-length works, as well as a series of elaborate shorter dances that are stylistically contemporary and improvisatory. The members, ranging on average between five and eight, all of whom are professional dancers educated in choreography, actively take part in the creation of new dance works and complementing live performances with their improvisational skills. OZDC regularly takes part in various local, educational, and experimental projects, refining their ability to perform in non-traditional venues. The company tours frequently, takes part in international contemporary dance festivals and master classes in Europe and USA, and collaborates with foreign choreographers and dance instructors.

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# Theatre TT



ARTIS FALLS SILENT, ALICE FALLS SILENT, 2005

## International tour

### **Rudolfs Blaumanis, THE INDRAN, directed by Lauris Gundars, 2008**

Theatre TT's first production of a re-visited classic – the Latvian playwright Rūdolf Blaumanis' 104-year-old play yields long-slumbering values. Set in the Latvian countryside, *The Indran* can certainly rival any Ibsen-like passions. But the action is stylistic and contemporary, up close and personal: like looking through a magnifying glass. Actors from four different Latvian theatres take part in this production.

### **THREE WORDS, directed by Rūta Nordmane, 2006**

*Three Words* is an unusual dance comedy in which everyone can recognize themselves – real, sincere, and comical. This production is the young choreographer Rūta Nordmane's début as director and playwright. The play begins ordinarily enough: a man enters a salon. But which of the three hairstylists has he come to? Three different stories – about love and hate, tenderness and fear – yet, as we see, each requires only three words. The multi-aged troupe of professional actors dance out the entire performance.

### **Ansels Kaugers, ARTIS FALLS SILENT, ALICE FALLS SILENT, directed by Lauris Gundars, 2005**

The début of the young playwright, Ansels Kaugers, became the season's 2005/2006 best production of Latvian drama. The play's only heroes, Artis and Alice, are 18 years old. Walking along the beach, they know absolutely that neither will ever go back home. Their past worlds were quite different, but their dreams are the same: longing to be loved, even though such longing seems to be the stuff of silly love songs. Could they love each other? But Alice swears she's a lesbian...

## Theatre TT

Founded in 2000 by the producer and actress Anna Putniņa, Theatre TT is a professional independent theatre. TTT works by inviting professional directors, actors, and designers in creating theatre projects. Producing contemporary drama, Theatre TT has staged a variety of projects, including the comedy *Tiritomba, or The Goldfish*; *Touch The White Bear!*, a tragedy about Siberia; a contemporary work *Nezabudka Vulgaris*; and an experimental dance comedy *Three Words*. Latvian playwright works have included Lauris Gundars, Ansels Kaugers, and Margarita Perverņecka, among others. Theatre TT regularly works in non-traditional settings, seeking out the most suitable space for each performance – a coffee house, a dance club, a ferry boat trip, the basement of the Occupation Museum of Latvia. The theatre often débuts budding theatre professionals.

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## Independent Theatre Skatuve



CYMBELINE, 2007



THE FIRST TIME, 2006



## International tour

### **William Shakespeare, CYMBELINE, directed by Davide Giovanzana, Italy, 2007**

The production was the result of a month-long *commedia dell'arte* master class which was part of the budding theatre director's MA thesis. The events in *Cymbeline* are cleverly intertwined with actual political themes and preconceptions of today's Latvia, the artists displaying vivid stage work and a mastery of the genre.

### **Michał Walczak, THE FIRST TIME, directed by Viesturs Meikšāns, 2006**

The contemporary Polish playwright, Michał Walczak's Latvian première is intended for young audiences. "Intense, *joie de vie* dialogue and the young actors' outwardly expressive comicality is combined with an almost tragic tone, because the story is about how two young people fail to meet, and how, over time, their emotions – love, in the parlance of youth – are either forgotten, or turn to despair". (Linda Ģībiete, *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, January 2007)

## Independent Theatre Skatuve

Founded in 1991, Skatuve is one of the few independent theatres in Latvia that has its own venue – a black box stage. Since the theatre does not have a permanent troupe, productions are on an ad hoc, project-to-project basis. Skatuve works in two primary directions. Firstly, its repertoire consists of international dramatic works not yet staged in Latvia, and secondly, it operates as a working base for theatre arts students studying at the Latvian Academy of Culture, by providing them with their first 'boards'. Many well-recognized Latvian actors, directors, and stage designers have begun their professional careers at Skatuve.

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## Alvis Hermanis (1965)

New Riga Theatre's artistic director is one of Latvia and Europe's leading directors. Alvis Hermanis' place in Latvian culture is not solely determined by the quality of his productions, his continuous quest to develop his distinctive style and creative resources, the recognition of local and foreign professionals, and participation in countless theatre festivals and guest performances, but also by his active attitude toward socio-political events in Latvia. Diversity in theatrical style – something which Hermanis investigates and excels at – is limitless, yet he considers his use of the documental style as being not only cardinal to his work of recent years, but also of prime importance to contemporary theatre. In one sense, his Latvian series – *Long Life*, *Latvian Stories*, *Latvian Love* – created as études from the researching the real-life stories of actual Latvians as well as the use of personal experiences – can be considered an anthropologically experimental form of theatre. Occupying a completely different niche is his production of Vladimir Sorokin's *Ice*, and *Further*, based on motifs from Maxim Gorky's play, *The Lower Depths*, which are both explorations in new theatre language (the transformation of epic and intellectual theatre), as well as extended philosophical messages about the times, which are the very things that Hermanis views through ironic and tragic eyes. As a guest director Alvis Hermanis regularly works in different theatre houses in Europe (Zürich, Frankfurt, Moscow, etc.). He has also received the prestigious Europe Prize for New Theatrical Realities in 2007.



## Māra Ķimele (1943)

A leader in Latvia's theatrical establishment, Māra Ķimele is a resident director at New Riga Theatre. With her characteristically incisive and astonishing interpretations of dramatic material, Ķimele stands firmly in the psychological theatre aesthetic. Although her attention has always been focused on the great classics, she occasionally chooses contemporary works that contain biting social commentary. Over the last years, Ķimele's greatest achievements have included Ivan Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, in which the classical plot is played out with heightened feelings of happiness and joy, highlighting the performances of NRT's actors in the leading roles. Brilliant interplay has also created a captivating interpretation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. *Night Tariff* is a significant work that was created from documental materials, interviews and conversations with representatives of opposite ends of the work force – priests and prostitutes – with the intention of investigating what drives them: sex or God. The director's most recent production with the New Riga Theatre is Leo Tolstoy's *The Living Corpse*.



### **Viesturs Kairišs** (1971)

Viesturs Kairišs has already been hailed by audience and critics alike as one of the Baltic States' finest directors. His work covers a range of performing arts genres – including theatre, opera and cinema. As an independent director, Viesturs Kairišs presently works with several repertory theatres and the Latvian National Opera company. Favouring large casts, which become the ideational and aesthetic foundation, his productions are known for their vast range. Originally, his interests lay in sacred theatrical works – mythological, stylized ritual, and a desire to return to the source of theatre language – with such productions such as Mircea Eliade's *The Serpent* and *Miss Christina*, original interpretations of popular Latvian plays such as Rūdolfs Blaumanis' *Tailor Days in Silmachi*, revising former conceits about their staging traditions. Later, having founded the independent theatre United Intimacy, Kairišs turned his attention to socially relevant theatre. One of his most recent productions, the National Theatre's performance of the Latvian classic, *The Age of the Surveyors*, for example, have sought to combine both these directions. Kairišs' 2007 Latvian National Opera production of Wagner's *Die Walküre* was considered the year's highlight.



### **Gatis Šmits** (1973)

A graduate of NY's Tisch School of the Arts working independently as a theatre, opera, and cinema director. Gatis Šmits' theatre productions are visibly cinematic – experimenting with the relationships between real and stage time, using well-planned close-ups, poetic mise en scène imagery, and concise, external stage play. After returning from New York, Šmits produced four very individual works, each in a different genre – two of which received nominations for Best Performance in Latvia: David Harrower's *Knives in Hens* for Daile Theatre's Small Hall, and the original Latvian opera, *Joseph Is A Fruitful Bough* by Ēriks Ešņvalds at the Latvian National Opera's New Hall. In 2007, he adapted the film noir aesthetic to present local subjects in *It Happened With Them* at New Riga Theatre's Great Hall, and, most recently, directed a Latvian version of the expansive musical, *Les Misérables* at Ķīpsalas Hall. Presently Gatis Šmits – who is both intelligent and gifted, highly educated in his profession, not only in theatre but cinema as well – is in the league of young directors who are being watched with great expectation and interest, the theatre public waiting for original messages expressed in newly refined theatre language.



### **Regnārs Vaivars** (1973)

Using the text as only one, often the least important means of communication, the Latvian National Theatre director distinguishes his productions by creating his own world. Vaivars pays particular attention to the use of musical and sound scores, lighting to create imaginative and expressive space; coloured, unrealistic visual images where objects and space form uncommonly absurd surroundings. Paradoxical thinking has been the frame of reference for all his most recent productions – mildness, not violence, proved to be the foreground theme in the staging of Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. In *The Puppet Master*, the story of a Jewish puppet master who is unable to believe that the war has truly ended, Vaivars investigates man's subconscious desire for self-determination. His most-recent production – M. Perveņeckā's and N. Vorozhbit's *Dracula. Demons* – experiments with the cultural clichés in our conscious and subconscious minds, and a variety of theatrical language is used to present two conflicting worlds.



### **Dž. Dž. Džilindžers** (1966)

Often choosing to present works about historical figures or literary heroes, Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, one of the leading directors at Daile Theatre, shakes up his audiences with his extraordinary behaviour, his world view. Džilindžers provokes the comfortable and well-bred academic theatregoer to think about pushing boundaries as well as setting them – voluntarily giving over to convention, hypocrisy in regard to standards of morality, and the constant desire to ignore them. His performance aesthetic is characterized by various show elements – the use of paradoxical, powerful music, stylized movement, theatrical costumes, dramatic mise en scènes, garish lighting, and close-miking voices in order to amplify and disassociate. Organically, all of these elements came together in the production of Camus' *Caligula*, and such productions as Somerset Maugham's *Penelope*, Nabokov's *Lolita*, Andris Vilcāns' un Ilmārs Šlāpīns' original rock opera, *Dracula. Alien Blood*. The second, but equally important theme for Džilindžers is human sexuality and how we're expected to deal with it.



### **Ilze Rudzīte** (1970)

A graduate of The Russian Academy of Theatrical Art (GITIS), Kama Ginkas' experimental directing master class, New Riga Theatre's resident director Ilze Rudzīte works in theatres in Latvia and Russia. Her productions are characteristic with their psychological refinement and ability to neatly, and imaginatively take advantage of space. Her MA thesis production, Chekhov's *Happiness* (New Riga Theatre), as well as Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* (Latvian National Theatre), and Ivana Viripajeva's *Valentine's Day* (Valmiera Theatre) are painfully and warmly humane performances about the boundlessness of human nature and relationships. NRT's production of Adam Rapp's *Finer Noble Gases* and *Red Light Winter* are a confirmation of the director's creative ability to work in the theatre aesthetic, the organic use of the grotesque and absurd in creating the actors' entities and material revelation. Ilze Rudzīte's stage experience at Daugavpils Theatre – playing several leading roles in repertory productions – has played a major role in developing her directorial approach.



### **Mārtiņš Eihe** (1975)

Since completing his studies, Eihe has decided to turn his attention to interpreting Latvian literary works, furthermore choosing rarely staged pieces, seeking to find them fittingly contemporary theatre language. For example, Rūdolfs Blaumanis' existential novel about eight men stranded on an ice floe for five days and four nights, *In the Shadow of Death*, has only been staged once before in Latvia. Rather than having the actors play out the series of events, they have been directed to tell the stories, interspersed with brief moments of actual action. The main goal is to fill each story with intense energy, thereby allow the audience to imagine the action, themselves. In 2006, in collaboration with the Estonian choreographer Kaja Kann and actor Aigars Apinis, Mārtiņš Eihe produced *Freedom*, an experimental performance that was recognized in Estonia as one of the best alternative theatre productions of the year. Eihe's newest work, *Crazy*, is a piece for teenagers based on motifs from a novel of the same name by the scandalous young German author, Benjamin Lebert. Having cut his directorial teeth at Valmiera Theatre, Mārtiņš Eihe has gone solo, hoping to find like-minded, kindred theatre spirits.



## Elīna Cērpa (1977)

Elīna Cērpa has studied at Danish National Film School and Robert Wilson's master class in USA, and currently works as an independent director, mostly in New Riga Theatre. She has a particular and generous interest for the marginal groups of the society. Her first performance *Happy Birthday, Bear!* (New Riga Theatre, 2003) was created together with people with special needs and confirmed the therapeutic nature of the art and the way in which the theatre can reach into the subconsciousness, despite the intellectual and educational layers. In some ways the same concern is present in the second work by Elīna Cērpa – *The Tenderness* after the novel *La Intrusa* by H. L. Borhes (New Riga Theatre, 2006), which was created in a close collaboration with the ceramist Māris Grosbahs, who made a unique stage design for this performance out of clay. The latest work by Elīna Cērpa, *Memories of Water* (New Riga Theatre, 2008) after Euripides' *Medea* talks about the calamities that our age brings upon the nature.



## Andrejs Jarovojs (1981)

Consistently seeking out new, uncharted theatrical forms, Andrejs Jarovojs regularly directs at the independent theatre, United Intimacy. His interests lie in history and socially relevant themes—in Ivana Sajko's *Woman-Bomb* production he presents the role of women during exacerbated historical events, war, and terrorism. On the other hand, *This Is Riga Speaking*, is performed on an actual moving bus, where two actors tell the history of a suburb of Riga during WWII, relating its history from Latvian, German, Russian, and Jewish points of view. In *LV* (New Riga Theatre), a compilation of two popular Latvian plays from different time periods – a first in Latvian theatre history – Jarovojs presents the Latvian image of a national hero as anthropological phenomenon, and whether such a notion is relevant. All three productions are united by their themes of national historic memory and mentality. *Caravan. Nineteen Days in the Taklamaklan Desert*, Jarovojs investigates the interplay possibilities of object and dramatic theatre.



### **Baņuta Rubesa** (1956)

Independent dramaturge and theatre director with professional background from Canada and UK. As a consequence her artistic interests differ from the mainstream of Latvian theatre making, and lies within the search for boundaries in theatre. The work of Baņuta Rubesa is always an open game – in the classic material it looks for the socio-critical comment on the current public issues, while in the contemporary texts it emphasizes the role of the theatre as a channel through which the director and performers can turn the public attention to the ongoing processes. Baņuta Rubesa has repeatedly focused on the equality of women's position in the society and on the impact of capitalism and rationalism on the women's emotional life. Originally written musical score plays an important role in her productions. Baņuta Rubesa works at New Riga Theatre (*Snow Queen* by H.C. Andersen (2008), *The Silver Veil* by Aspazija(2005), *The Golden Girls* by K.Churchil (2001)), the National Theatre and National Opera (diptych *Fruit of the Earth* (2003); and chamber opera *The Pilot* (2007) by Nick Gotham, children opera *Birds Opera* (2000) by Jānis Lūsēns). The work of Baņuta Rubesa is characterized also by a free and unconventional use of space. One of her most important projects in this field is the large scale site-specific production – *Escape from Troy* (2004), which was staged outdoors at Liepāja War Harbour.



### **Galina Polischuk** (1968)

One of Latvia's most contentiously rated independent directors, Theatre Observatory's founder also stages productions at the Latvian National Theatre. Polischuk's most enduring performances are not anchored on interpretation, rather, they are the work of a creative ensemble that deconstructs the classical text completely, reconstructing a new narrative. And the new narrative may contain either a single thematic element from the original, or stand alone with the director's own imaginative plot, from which the players create their own dramatic material. Using as little dialogue as possible, Galina Polischuk's directorial work is based on creating études – the message is in the movement. Polischuk's productions regularly attract the attention of international festivals and the interest of co-producers.



## **Olga Žitluhina** (1960)

In the dance theatre arena, choreographer Olga Žitluhina's style is trendsetting. From the movement point of view, her method is more likely to be seen as being "pure dance" in form, an autonomous system of figures whose connection to other art forms is on an equal plane. Technical elements such as dynamic release, originality in movement and a reflection of the dancer's personality, the spatiality of dance, nuance of rhythm, and her characteristic sense of humour are all hallmarks of Žitluhina's uniquely original style.



## **Andrejs Žagars** (1958)

The Latvian National Opera director keeps to modern opera principles for his productions. *The Queen of Spades*, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, *La traviata*, and *Carmen* each make use of a flexible chorus, every member given a precise role in the collective performance. Perfectly staged solo parts, always keeping the psychological basis in the foreground for solos as well as duets and ensemble pieces. A mercilessly modern, ironic message that lifts the action to the second half of the 20th century, even present-day, where the rules of the consumption are supreme. Andrejs Žagars' contemporary interpretations emphasize the emotional contrast between what is taught in schools, the family, and by law, compared to what is required to survive in real life. Žagars' approach differs from other LNO productions in that they are characterized by unusual settings and scrupulous precision – nothing is haphazard – no stumbling blocks that might negate the director's boldly extravagant solutions.



## Latvian Theatre Showcase SPĒLMAŅU NAKTS

Latvia's theatre showcase is an annual event that invites foreign guests to view the season's most interesting and promising state and independent theatre productions, and to meet with theatre artists and organizations. The showcase takes place at the end of November and coincides with the award presentation ceremony. Showcase guests have the opportunity to see an average of ten drama, dance, and opera performances, with English translations. This showcase is organized by the New Theatre Institute of Latvia in co-operation with the Latvian Theatre Union and theatres.

## Experimental Theatre Festival HOMO ALIBI

### International Festival of Contemporary Theatre HOMO NOVUS

Since its inception in 1995, the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre *Homo Novus* is the only international festival of contemporary theatre art in Latvia and one of the largest in the Baltics.

This bi-annual festival, which takes place over ten days, offers a wide-ranging programme of contemporary theatre and dance, possibilities for artistic collaborations and experiments, and parallel programmes. Since 2000, the goal of the Experimental Theatre Festival *Homo Alibi* has been to present new theatre forms while keeping within the confines of vitally significant themes including mono performances (2000), new drama (2001), new technology in the theatre (2002), and theatre and imagery (2006). The 2008 festival theme will be puppet and object theatre, with the participants from France, Germany, Latvia, and Russia, among others. Since 1995, the both festivals have hosted many outstanding companies such as ZT Hollandia, Needcompany, Rimini Protokoll, Cirque Ici, Teatr.doc, Ultima Vez, Krétakör, Gob Squad, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Forced Entertainment, and directors Kristian Smeds, Eimuntas Nekrošius, Oskaras Koršunovas, Jožef Nadj, Yevgeni Grishkovetz, and Lars Rudolfsson, to name a few.

## Festivals .....

November 19–23, 2008 – Riga

New Theatre Institute of Latvia

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August 27–30, 2008 – Riga

September 2009 – Riga

### **Programme Curators**

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## Baltic Contemporary Drama Festival **SKATS**

Baltic Contemporary Drama Festival *Skats* is organized by the Latvian Theatre Union in collaboration with the Latvian Playwright's Guild. The festival introduces Baltic original dramaturgy and artistic theatre methods to wide audiences. The festival presents theatres from all three Baltic countries – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – with one small scale and one big scale production of national dramaturgy. The festival takes place every year in one of the Baltic countries in turn. In 2008 the festival will dedicate one day to each of the Baltic countries, and will present off programme, as well. During the festival a representative of each country will give a lecture on the latest development of national dramaturgy.

## International Contemporary Dance Festival **TIME TO DANCE**

An annual event since 2005, the International Contemporary Dance Festival Time to Dance, is an event co-organized by the Latvian Professional Contemporary Dance Choreographers Association and the Olga Žitluhina Dance Company. The performances of each evening are devoted to specific dance groups: Open Stage provides a forum for amateur companies, choreography students from the Latvian Academy of Culture can demonstrate their works on a separate evening, and audiences are invited to view the works of the Olga Žitluhina Dance Company as well as those of visiting foreign dance artists. One of the added features of the festival week is the series of master classes with Latvian and international choreographers, focusing on dance techniques, composition, and improvisation. The festival has been host to accomplished dance companies from USA, Bulgaria, Israel, Moldova, as well as outstanding artists from Russia, Great Britain, Switzerland, and Sweden. Each year, the festival chooses a specific theme—2006 emphasized dance participation of people with special needs, and 2007 highlighted American dance culture beyond musical theatre, show dancing, and jazz dance.

September 11–14, 2008 – Riga

Latvian Theatre Union

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June 5–9, 2008 – Riga

**Managing Director** Ilze Ziriņa

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www.dance.lv

## RIGA OPERA FESTIVAL

Riga Opera Festival is proud to be the only one of its size and scale in Eastern Europe. Founded in 1998, it quickly became the closing highlight of the Latvian National Opera's annual season. The main features of the 2008 festival programme will be the première performance of *Siegfried* – the third of Richard Wagner's monumental four-opera Ring Cycle, Moscow's Grand Theatre guest performances of the Russian masterpiece Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and the avant-garde composer Leonid Desyatnikov's scandalous *Rosental's Children*, under the direction of Eimuntas Nekrošius. The festival programme will also include the newly staged Bizet's *Carmen* and Dvořák's *Rusalka*, as well as Verdi's *La traviata*, and Ēriks Ešēvalds' *Joseph Is A Fruitful Bough*. The 2009 Riga Opera Festival promises to attract great interest with the new season's premières and some of last season's most brilliant achievements. The 2010 season promises to be an exciting one with the presentation of Wagner's entire *Ring of the Nibelung cycle*.

## INTERNATIONAL BALTIC BALLET FESTIVAL

The International Baltic Ballet Festival takes place every spring in several cities across Latvia. The programme of the festival follows the slogan "From the classic to avant-garde" and includes the latest and most interesting achievements in the classic choreography from around the world. The festival features classic and modern ballet performances, exhibitions about ballet and other activities, like meetings, seminars, master classes and gatherings of old ballet masters.

June 5–22, 2008 / June 2–14, 2009

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### New Theatre Institute of Latvia

The New Theatre Institute of Latvia is an actively transparent organization whose mandate is to develop and encourage the multi-faceted forms of theatre art – especially new theatre, dance, and performance – both locally and internationally. NTIL focuses its work not only on professional theatre artists and students, but also its wide-reaching audience. NTIL strives to expand the creative boundaries of Latvian theatre production and theatrical expression, thereby assuring professional excellence and the freedom to explore new ideas. Responding to the ever-changing practices and needs of Latvian and European theatre, the Institute considers the development of short-term projects – guest performances and performance productions – and long-term events – festivals, educational programs, information exchange, and international collaborations – initiated by both NTIL members and their creative partners as well as representatives of various theatrical disciplines from Latvia and other countries.

### Latvian Theatre Union

The members of the Latvian Theatre Union work in a variety of theatrical professions. The goal of the union is to preserve theatre culture in Latvia – its conservation and development, and the protection of the professional, economic and social interests of its membership – by promoting and advocating the theatre profession's prestige and visibility. LTU is a vital member of the international community, collaborating with Lithuanian and Estonian theatre associations to organize the Baltic Theatre Festival. The union also organizes an annual professional theatre showcase which presents productions nominated for the *Spēlmaņu nakts* theatre awards, which takes place one week before the theatre awards closing ceremony, November 23. In co-operation with NTIL, the Latvian Theatre Union invites foreign experts to visit this event.

### Independent Professional Theatre Association of Latvia

Establishing and maintaining dialogue with representatives from the cultural politics arena, the Independent Professional Theatre Association of Latvia represents the interests of independent theatre while keeping the public informed about its activities. By working together with similar organizations throughout the world, IPTAL strives to advance and support the visibility of independent Latvian theatre internationally. Presently, IPTAL's membership includes

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Independent Theatre Kabata, Liepāja Touring Puppet Theatre Maska, Independent Theatre Skatuve, Theatre TT, Independent Theatre United Intimacy, and Galina Polischuk's Theatre Observatory.

### Latvian Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI UNESCO)

The International Theatre Institute was founded in 1948 by UNESCO and international theatre community. ITI has National centres in around 90 countries. The Latvian Centre of ITI was founded in 1992. ITI UNESCO is a global information carrier about the activities in the professional performing arts community around the world. The Latvian Centre of ITI informs the partners in over 90 countries about the Latvian theatre, and collaborates with all professional theatres in Latvia. The main activities of the Latvian Centre of ITI include the collaboration with festivals, professional ongoing education, scientific and information work.

### Latvian Academy of Culture

Latvian Academy of Culture is the only university level education establishment in Latvia for studies of acting, theatre and cinema directing, dramaturgy and contemporary dance. The Academy takes active part in international collaboration and student exchange programmes. The student performances regularly participate in international student festivals.

### Latvian Playwrights Guild

Working to protect the authorship and rights of Latvian playwrights, as well as promoting their work nationally and internationally, the Latvian Playwrights Guild – founded in 1999 – presently has 49 active members. The guild supports and maintains the unpublished dramatic works library which currently contains more than 500 titles written over the past 30 years, including the most recently translated works, of which 33 are in English, 22 in Russian. These plays are also available electronically. LPG collaborates with Moscow's New Drama Festival, which presented seven new Latvian plays in 2007. Together with the Latvian Writers Union, the Latvian Playwrights Guild plans to organize international drama workshops at the historic Writer's House in the seaside town of Dubulti in 2008.

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