

Specifically Latvian Vol. 3



Dreams of Rainis

The Latvian Theatre Showcase is back after a break in 2014. Last year Riga was the European Capital of Culture, a perfect frame for introducing Latvian performing arts to international professional audiences. Yet the previous theatre season turned out to be not sufficient to put together a good showcase programme. The most remarkable events in the performing arts field in 2014 were the excellent guest performances, as well as collaborative projects such as “Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge” devised by Hannah Hurtzig and local experts, “100% Riga” by Rimini Protokoll, city-specific dance productions created by local dance artists in cooperation with Koen Augustijnen, Contact Gonzo and Willi Dorner. Among Latvian repertoire and independent companies only the National Theatre devised a special project for Riga – European Capital of Culture: the festival “The Glory and Shame of Schengen” curated by director Valters Silis and dramaturg Jānis Balodis invited young artists from the Netherlands, Iceland, Lithuania and Portugal to create new works with actors of the National Theatre. The shows were presented only during the festival and not included in the season repertoire, yet this small festival managed to reveal new potential of the cast and the audience of the National Theatre.

In 2015 Latvian theatre is formally structured around theatre houses and fixed companies. Its identity, however, is increasingly defined by personalities. With a few exceptions, directors, set designers and even actors work in different theatres and have possibility to collaborate with several artistic companies and meet audiences both in the capital and regional cities. The directors who were young and emerging artists during the last Showcase two years ago, have matured and developed their individual artistic language. As a result Latvian theatre scene is now more diverse and contemporary than ever before. Vladislavs Nastavševs who is presented at the Showcase

with two shows, have polished to perfection his unique style where all the elements – set, sound, lights, props, performers create an integrated universe of the performance. Valters Silis in ongoing collaboration with dramaturg Jānis Balodis continues to explore urgent topics such as geopolitical turmoil and climate issues and builds direct and profound dialogue with the audience in independent venues, as well as repertoire theatres. He feels equally comfortable on a very intimate scale of Dirty Deal Teatro and on the big stage of the National Theatre, because his primary interest lies in questions raised by the performance rather than aesthetic choices. Elmārs Senkovs has created a set of works where performances may radically differ from one another as he never stops experimenting with dramaturgy, media application, visuality, and the acting method. Recently his work has evolved towards minimalism, highlighting actor’s presence on stage. After a short sabbatical another noteworthy director Viesturs Meikšāns is back in theatre determined to introduce the work of dramaturg Marius von Mayenburg by staging three different plays in three different theatres – New Riga Theatre, regional Valmiera Theatre and independent Dirty Deal Teatro.

A few years ago it was still unusual for Latvian repertory companies to invite directors from abroad. After first successful collaborations it turned into a kind of trend with a slightly competitive touch. Nowadays foreign directors and choreographers working in Latvia is a reality. Several of the invitations has grown into a long-term commitment (“Dreams of Rainis” is the third production by Kirill Serebrennikov at the National Theatre, “My Blaster Has Discharged” is the second collaboration between Liepāja Theatre and Konstantin Bogomolov), allowing for more risky and experimental work and ideas that would hardly develop in the Latvian performing arts scene otherwise. It also applies to the site specific work “From Vecmilgrāvis with Love” by

Koen Augustijnen and Latvian dancers created in the neighbourhoods of Riga and now adapted for the stage.

The two independent venues that work with contemporary performing arts – Dirty Deal Teatro and *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris*, are still in unfavourable position comparing to state repertoire companies. They don’t receive guaranteed state subsidy and therefore cannot produce international work with the same intensity. However, during recent years both have introduced a programmatic, conceptual approach and develop specific thematic programmes and series of works.

There are few performances that were selected for the Showcase programme before they were actually premiered: “Martyr” by Viesturs Meikšāns, “The Idiot” by Vladislavs Nastavševs, and “My Blaster Has Discharged” by Konstantin Bogomolov. This decision was based on our confidence that this festival is not a presentation of the perfect productions but an introduction of individuals who are the driving force in the contemporary theatre of Latvia, their position and artistic path. This is also the reason why in this publication instead of theatre scholars we invited artists to write essays and reflect on their experience of working together with the Showcase directors and choreographers.

We hope you will enjoy your time in Riga and will come back next spring for the Showcase 2016 to see just released and highly appreciated performances “Wit” by Valters Silis, “Antigone” by Elmārs Senkovs, and the big surprises of the next season – return of the theatre, film and opera director Viesturs Kairiņš on the big stage of the National Theatre, staging of the Russian classic Ivan Turgenev’s play “A Month in a Country” by Konstantin Bogomolov, and last but not least – a solo performance by Mikhail Baryshnikov based on Joseph Brodsky’s poetry and staged by Alvis Hermanis in New Riga Theatre.

Gundega Laiviņa, director of New Theatre Institute of Latvia



Alvis Hermanis

Fragments from the interview in January 2014 with **Gints Grūbe**, producer and author of documentary film on Alvis Hermanis “More Than a Life”

After your first production “Homecoming is Like a Calm and Peaceful River” here at the New Riga Theatre, an actor said: “we did everything ourselves, we didn’t have a director.”

Alvis Hermanis: I’ve always said that director’s work is much more productive if the director uses their position only to stimulate the creativity of his colleagues. The director only has to push them in the right direction, provide a frame, and then, as a general rule, the result is much more interesting.

On the one hand, the work of a director is extremely rational, yet intuitive on the other. Yesterday I heard a theatre scholar expressing with touching naiveté her indignation that a director calculates everything, he’s only manipulating us. I’d like to see a director who only sits at rehearsals and weeps and doesn’t understand what is going on or what he is doing.. You could call it manipulation, but the role of the director is to assemble and prepare a performance so that it does something to the spectator. I wouldn’t want to think it’s as cynical as, say, Hollywood movies, where each tear is perfectly calculated. Of course it is better if the director pours it through his own heart.

There is theatre that you can only do here in Riga and only at the New Riga Theatre. In what sense is putting down roots important or necessary for you?

AH: It is absolutely true that theatre is an art form which is happening here and now. It’s like constructing a mandala and then expecting the wind to lift it up into space. It’s a very Buddhist sort of art. If a performance is rooted in a local context, in the context of a local city dweller, it’s a bonus, of course. But the whole thing can function without it as well.

For example, at the New Riga Theatre, more or less the same group of actors and I have been going hand in hand with our audience for 20 years already; and we can develop that. Elsewhere, in the German-speaking theatre world, for example, where actors rotate frequently, this is harder to do. Hence, while working abroad it has been important for me to trust the actors’ intuition. Only an actor like a Stalker or medium can connect to the local context and codes, which to me, as an outsider, is unknown, and will forever remain unknown.

At various stages of your creative journey both your language on stage and your interests have changed. What happens to your productions years later, when they are still being performed? In what respect do you continue to be their director?

AH: I am one of those directors who lose not only their connection to the performance, but also any interest in it, after the opening night. This is not good or bad, it’s just another way of doing it. But I am also a director who recognises that once a performance is released, in a way, the audience takes over the director’s function. I mean it in a good way. The performance has a structure so rigid that it can’t fall apart; the spectator can’t unhinge it with their attitude. At least it hasn’t happened to me. But the live contact among the actors can be adjusted and it can improve the performance, and make it more powerful over time.

Are there things in theatre you can say you discovered?

AH: No, it would be incredibly naïve to think so. As I’ve said before, it’s very easy to be innovative if you have a short memory. If someone calls me a modern director, I take it as an insult, not at all as a compliment. The shift to an obsession with constantly having to invent something

new occurred in European art only a few centuries ago. Prior to that the objectives of art were entirely different.

You often talk about being more a 20th century than the 21st century man. You represent a generation that grew up and was educated in one system, yet works in another. Does that hold any meaning?

AH: Yes, because only memories, individual or collective, and only the past fertilises the soil. Only the past has value. How can the future have value? There’s nothing in it, only emptiness.

I am seriously considering a rather radical development model with the New Riga Theatre – we would love to grow old with our audience. To be blunt, on this side of the stage we are not interested in young people. Young people coming to watch our productions is great, we are very happy about that. But adjusting ourselves to them somehow, having young boys and girls running around the stage, solving their issues.. I don’t think we are going to do that.

Why are your productions always so sad?

AH: Well, the audience does giggle fairly often, and they laugh as well. I’ve always said that the most proper yet difficult thing is to achieve a smile and sadness simultaneously, at exactly the same time.

The longer you work in this profession, the more challenging it is to take the next step, I’d say to move into more subtle vibrations. To an extent this also answers the question about why I have stuck one foot in the door of the opera. Because those strange sound vibrations called music, they are vibrations on a cosmic level, where it’s hard to verbalize anything.

To put it simply, our bodily existence on this earth is truly wonderful. It really is God’s gift to live this life in a body at least once, and to enjoy it, but at the same time our body is also our tragedy, as our spirit and our vertical dimension are limited. We are imprisoned in this bodily life. Music, and I’m talking about real music, gives us the chance to leave the confines of our body and live in the vibrations that only music can offer. Theoretically this can also be achieved in dramatic theatre, just theoretically.



Koen Augustijnen

Kristine Vismane, choreographer and performer

I got to know Koen Augustijnen in the autumn of 2013. He came to Riga to meet dancers for an upcoming performance about the Vecmilgrāvis neighbourhood, and I was among these dancers. I didn’t know what the performance would be about or what the process would be like, but, to be honest, those were not the top things on my mind. I wanted to find out who is this Flemish choreographer from the world-renowned dance company “les ballets C de la B”, and what is he like.

Koen Augustijnen studied history at Ghent University. While he was a student, his intention was to become a guitar player and a journalist. But one day he went to see a dance performance, and...

Tell us how you got into dance?

Koen Augustijnen: I was 20. I was studying history, I had no connection to dancing at all, instead I played a lot of football and other sports. One of my good friends invited me to see the first performance by Wim Vandekeybus. I didn’t understand all of the performance, but I was fascinated. Afterwards I found myself jumping, and dancing, and doing other such things on the street. Then, two months later, my friend said that Vandekeybus is holding the audition and that I have to go. I told her I didn’t have the right education, but she convinced me to go. I remember that I had just arrived from Turkey that

day. I was in my new Kurdish pants, and I went directly to the audition. Wim chose me, and suddenly I was at the heart of Belgium’s new wave of contemporary dance, and this whole new world opened up to me.

Koen is simple, always a bit dishevelled, smiling and energetic. I was fortunate to work with him on the performance “From Vecmilgrāvis With Love”. The impression I got of Koen was that for him, anything is possible! He takes stock of the situation, of the resources available, and uses them very considerably. He doesn’t get attached to ideas, and, if necessary, is ready to let them go. If he knows that time is limited, Koen prefers to work on the quality of performance rather than fulfilling his conceptual ambitions. He often says “less is more”, and that refers not only to the execution of the performance, but also his own choices. I am most fascinated by Koen’s optimism. When an outline of the Vecmilgrāvis show had already taken shape, he often exclaimed “it will be fantastic”. And it was! His enthusiasm inspired me and the other dancers. He fully believes in what he does and wastes no energy or time on unnecessary self-criticism.

What is a typical day for you as a choreographer and as a person?

KA: Meeting and working with people from various backgrounds and with different mentalities. Going to see performances, films, all kinds of art. But sometimes I just need to do something completely different – to travel with friends, to do things which are new for me. For example, now I have a dream to work with boxers. New experiences sustain me.

When I was working with Koen on “From Vecmilgrāvis With Love”, I observed the way he combines dance with theatre. Koen is interested in life, people and the relationships that form between them. In his creative process he tries to discover what’s hidden in each dancer, to open up parts of their personality, which they may not even suspect they have. When working with Koen, you have to be lively and open, you have to catch the impulses he throws, let them in, and let things happen. Each dancer determines how much they are ready to invest, to open up, to express. That is what the performance material depends on. In creating a performance Koen is like a coordinator, giving the dancers tasks and impulses. Then together with us he analyses what we have done and, having heard our opinions, he creates the story.

What is the meaning of contemporary dance theatre?

KA: Theatre makes life and society richer. It is a kind of safe space where you can do things which are not necessarily possible when you are on the street, or elsewhere. It inspires people to create. I think going to a dance performance or being a dancer is better than joining the army. The army destroys society, whereas theatre brings people together.



Konstantin Bogomolov

Gatis Maliks, Liepāja Theatre actor

A few years ago I had the chance to see Alexander Vampilov’s “The Elder Son” directed by Konstantin Bogomolov in Moscow, and I was very impressed. I remember bursting into tears at least twice during the show and laughing out loud. I jumped to my feet the minute the applause began, and applauded for a very, very long time.

When I later found out that Bogomolov was preparing to direct his first show outside Russia and it was to be in Liepāja, I was excited, of course, and hoped that I would

have the opportunity to work on “Stavanger” – to make the audience cry, laugh, give a standing ovation and applaud for a long time. Therefore, I was slightly surprised when during initial discussions before we began working on the production, Bogomolov stressed to each actor that he doesn’t like tears and laughter on stage, doesn’t like actors who laugh, cry and “act” on stage. And that “The Elder Son” was not a favourite play of his – he said it was good, but not a favourite. In other words, I had met a director who hated normal, proper, beautiful and easily digestible theatre, which was easy to empathise with. And this did not excite me anymore. But, I swallowed my disappointment, and I’m glad that I did.

Bogomolov invited me to work on his first show at the Liepāja Theatre, and this is one of the best theatre experiences I have ever had. When theatre critic Livija Dūmiņa wrote that “... the Liepāja actors are ready to play even door handles for Bogomolov,” she was right.

Work on “Stavanger” was intense, but not nerve-racking. Bogomolov, it seemed, was feeling his way, but knew precisely what he wanted to achieve and how to achieve it. It is not even a road which he shows actors, but rather a narrow and very defined path from which you cannot (and also don’t want to) stray. Almost every morning, at the beginning of rehearsals, the actors are given material that Bogomolov himself has adapted or written from scratch. In “Stavanger” only the skeleton remained of the original play. For a long time, the actors didn’t find out who was playing which role, for the first month everyone played (read) all of the roles, until the final division of characters developed. However, this approach did not cause concern at any time, the director knew what he wanted and did not give the actors a reason not to trust him. The main thing was to have the ability to listen and to work with nuances. Also Bogomolov’s background in linguistics allows him to successfully mould the play’s material into his own interpretation without an artificial transition.

“My Blaster Has Discharged” is written by Bogomolov himself. His own work he approaches with just as much ruthlessness as the works of other authors, perhaps even more. At times, it is a pity that he cuts a whole episode with a wry smile, because it is “a little too funny, a little to lyrical.” Bogomolov is not only ruthless towards his own shows, but also towards the audience. He does not hide from us that “here the audience has to feel uncomfortable, so that they are confused – are we being laughed at, or is this serious?”. However, to be an actor for Bogomolov is enjoyable – like in a film by the brothers Coen or Lynch, in a parallel, absurd world, which nevertheless exists in harmony with certain rules. The main thing is not to be “a bit too funny, a bit too lyrical”, so you don’t get cut out.

What, in your mind, makes a perfect actor? What qualities do they have? And what should an actor NOT be like?

Konstantin Bogomolov: Firstly, a good actor’s a person for whom being on the stage is not the most important thing in life. They are also a decent person, and, finally, they are an interesting and complicated person. That’s all. The rest – technique etc. is only an addition to an interesting, complicated and educated personality. I do not like actors who have no brains. Temperament and emotions are not important to me. I am interested in the mind and the level of intellectual sensitivity.

The actor shouldn’t be stupid.

If you can work freely in any theatre to which you have been invited, without self censorship, why do you wish to have your own theatre? How would shows in your theatre differ from, for example, your shows at the Liepāja Theatre?

KB: I want the opportunity to consistently develop my own group of actors, increasing our mutual understanding and developing their individual characters. This is the aim for eventually creating my own theatre. Also, I think that I possess some managerial talent and ambition. Speaking of shows – each of them is different. The main thing is not a particular environment at a particular theatre, but rather your own individual professional and human development.

What makes you return to Liepāja and produce shows here?

KB: Regardless of whether I am in a theatre, city or state, I am very sensitive to the surrounding environment. I am rarely satisfied anywhere. Here I am comfortable at all levels. And there is no rational explanation. I also consider Liepāja Theatre to be a powerful theatre by any standards.



Kirill Serebrennikov

Jēkabs Nīmanis, musician and composer

I had never before worked with a director whose ambitious intentions, presented in the initial stages of work, were so close to the result that was eventually delivered on the stage. Usually the rehearsal process brings about adjustments, which we recognise as circumstances, options and the limits of technical and acting abilities. Kirill Serebrennikov senses these limitations in an incredibly precise way and, as a result, is able to give the team simultaneously ambitious, precise and, above all, in most cases, achievable tasks. Though, initially this does not seem to be the case, general confusion sets in and worried glances are given not only by the actors, but also by the administration.

What inspires me in this collaboration is the incredibly convincing rhetoric of the director, the clarity of his vision, and his ability to communicate it in a precise and polished way. This is a feature of intellect with which he has been endowed not only in the field of art, but also as a specialist in mathematics. His mind has been polished by this technique at an academic level, and this has undoubtedly left a mark on his approach to theatre and film. Irrespective of Kirill Serebrennikov’s rational creative method, his general philosophical aims are always based on an emotional impulse, and an idealistic notion that art can make humanity better on both a personal and societal scale.

This clear stance against nihilism and endless generalization does not lead his works into the trap of didactics. One can still sense in his work some of the most interesting aspects of contemporary art – subjectivity, individualism, originality, the impossibility of understanding another person while possibly identifying with them in certain experiences. Unfortunately, I do not possess the talent to express myself as clearly as Kirill, so I will explain further – his work is concrete in the construction of direction and content, but abstract and multidimensional from the perspective of multiple interpretations of the spectator. The language of Serebrennikov is contemporary. By this I mean that instead of attempting to out-do others with untested methods of theatrical expression, he focuses on a sensitive, intuitive tracing of the transformations in art, society and his own personality.

The two production by Serebrennikov at the Latvian National Theatre which I was involved in (“Dreams of Rainis”, 2015, and “Woyzeck”, 2012) were incredibly intense. The director was demanding and, I would say, pushed me and the actors (and presumably also other theatre staff and resources) to our limits. This would not have been possible if he was not able to formulate his idea and captivate everyone with it. A person can only work with true commitment if they believe in the task at hand. Kirill achieved this perfectly.

It is precisely this intense and motivating work process that I benefited from the most. I felt like I had completed a refresher course, and I don’t doubt the actors felt the same way. Similar to music production, a rehearsal with Serebrennikov is a laboratory in which you reveal the content of the work and its multifaceted nuances. The listener cannot know our joy of discovery, because they hear only its application. If it were possible to communicate this joy of discovery felt in rehearsals, Latvian audiences would be much fonder of this director.

The detachment that we occasionally feel among Latvians when encountering the artistic language of Serebrennikov is explained mainly by differences in culture, mentality and temperament. Personally, I very much enjoy the fact that with his artistic expression, Serebrennikov represents the Russian temperament and aesthetic traditions alongside a deep understanding – or at least an active interest - in Western European art and

culture. These differences are a sound justification for the invitation of any guest director, because we are interested in this difference, we are interested in acquainting ourselves with diversity or gaining a new perspective on things that we already know. We cannot look upon ourselves from the outside it seems, so is there a better way to do it than through the eyes of another, honest person?

By the way, most people are only interested in themselves, and as ancient wisdom reveals – to know oneself is a precondition for a successful existence.



Elmārs Senkovs

Reinis Dzudzilo, set designer

Elmārs Senkovs, in his own way, embodies the opposite of the meaning of the word “director”. With this statement, I am referring to a director as an authoritative person with a clear and unyielding aim. The fact that this notion does not apply to Elmārs, is his distinct advantage when directing a performance. He is equal to each person with whom he is staging the production, and therefore the responsibilities of generating ideas for the production, as well as for the staging itself, are divided. Elmārs takes a collective road, rather than an individual one.

Elmārs is also a teacher; he has graduated from the Pedagogical Academy and taught theatre workshops to children over a number of years. I suspect that in that job, his role was that of teacher and school friend. Currently, at the Latvian Academy of Culture, Elmārs is teaching together with Māra Ķimele, who once trained him in theatre directing. This close relationship - teacher-student-teacher – is embedded deep within Elmārs, and as a result, these designations can be interchanged. It is about mutual respect and attentive listening. It can also be labelled as lifelong learning.

Elmārs loves the actor. An actor who is loved by a director will probably love the director in return – therefore Elmārs has very good relationships with actors, and vice-versa.

Elmārs is like a mother for the actors. He is a careful, generous and sensitive maternal figure. In his gentle approach to work, or rather his approach to people, a person is actually a Person.

Do you think you will always be a director?

Elmārs Senkovs: The question seems foolish, but in its essence it’s very precise, because this is how I try to explain why I work as a director. I really want to work in the theatre for as long as it seems interesting, while I still find people and the mission of the theatre difficult to understand, until I come to the realization that I understand everything. Then dullness and self-satisfaction will set in, and it will be the end. I really hope that I’ll be smart enough to leave the theatre at that point. Otherwise I’ll become boring for the theatre. However, I can’t answer whether I’ll be a director (in the real meaning of this word) forever.

What was your relationship in “The Dance of Death” with the fourth “actor”, as the space was called in a number of reviews?

ES: The fourth actor (the space) created a secret, tension and fear. There’s something simultaneously frightening and seductive about emptiness. The empty spaces in the audience are associated with a dead theatre, or with the silence before the audience come in. The space is lonely. I really wanted to fill this space with a silent scream. I treated this “actor”, created by set designer Andris Freibergs, with respect. The space demanded an expression of love and hate from the actors, and offered a very wide range of opportunities. I just had to find the right mise en scene for it to say what I wanted it to.



Dmitrijs Petrenko

Justīne Kļava, playwright

The director Dmitrijs Petrenko, to my mind, stands out with his excellent ability to define the theme which he wishes to address in a comprehensible way. At the same time, he does not force his opinion about what the performance should be like and how it should be created on any member of the creative team. Endowed with endless patience and respect towards others, he allows his colleagues to try various ways to achieve their vision. Leaving space for constructive suggestions, he becomes not a director, but rather the leader of a team, who inspires and drives the work forward. It is easy to work with him.

I met Dmitrijs for the first time three years ago at the Dirty Deal Teatro event “Dramaturg Battles”, in which mixed teams of playwrights and directors had to come up with and present an idea for a production. Together with Dmitrijs we presented a story about a bee keeper, who fell in love with a girl who played the oboe. To win her love, the bee keeper rubbed himself with honey and courageously approached the bee hive. Despite his attempts, the oboe player walked away. He was left alone, and stung all over.

Although it might sound strange, this story, based on the best traditions of romanticism, did not gain the support of the viewers. However, it outlined a theme which, to my mind, Dmitrijs examines in many of his works today.

When we were interviewed on TV about the performance “All Her Books”, I said that the story is about love, but you said...

Dmitrijs Petrenko: ...it's about loneliness.

Also in the performance “It's About Time, Rabbit!” there is a scene in which Rabbit goes to Hedgehog and Bear to tell them about his terrible dream, in which he suddenly found himself alone, and...

DP: ...Bear says to him “We are all alone”.

Do you agree that “we are all alone”?

DP: I'm currently reading a book about the Middle Ages in Russia, about a doctor who tamed a wolf. The wolf is dying, the doctor tries to heal it, but the wolf leaves home. The grandson asks the doctor: “Why did the wolf leave us?”, and the grandfather answers that animals always do this to remind us that when we die, we will also be alone. Therefore, to answer your question, yes, we are alone. We have family, friends, but at the moment of dying, which is not just a physical act, you'll nevertheless be alone. You'll be talking to Him. To God.

Do people go to the theatre to be together with someone, or to be alone?

DP: I think that people undoubtedly go to the theatre to be alone. I sometimes consciously used to go to the theatre alone. The theatre is too intimate to go with someone else... Then I have to tell the other person about what I have dragged them to, and then I begin to watch the show through their eyes, and I immediately find things I don't like. I think that, if it's good theatre, it is a moment of truth. I think that people go because it is an opportunity, the same as church, to be with themselves. Theatre is not always enjoyable. It can also be cruel, and precisely because of that you see yourself. Apparently every person is scared of being lonely. I'm not scared of physical loneliness, but rather of spiritual loneliness. In art you are alone. You can ask for advice on how to do things, but only you know what is right for you. You are alone against the world.

A director once said that in the theatre one should live, get married and give birth...

DP: I often chastise myself for being too involved in producing a show. You should not *produce* shows.

There's always a moment when you have to return to yourself and very honestly look at what it's about, what are the themes. Therefore I chastise myself, because I sometimes get carried away with the fact that I want to *produce* a show, rather than say something very important through the language of art. This is only possible if you are just friends with theatre, rather than two parts of a whole. I hope that the time will not come when I say that theatre is everything that I have. I don't want this to happen because it can't be everything. Of course it is not just work. It's something more, but I want to view it in a healthy light. I like it, when I get the chance to go somewhere and watch real people, rather than live through the theatre.



Kristīne Vismāne

Ieva Kauliņa, set designer

I distinctly remember the first time I saw Kristine, and I thought that a curious creature had entered our ranks. I saw her among sheepishly uneasy guests of a theatre premiere – utterly untamed, so different, turning cartwheels, and doing backbends, and laughing almost indecently loudly and with too much sparkle.

Later I worked together with the young choreographer and dancer at the Theatre *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris* for director Andrejs Jarovojš. Enthusiasm and explosive energy were my first impressions of Kristine. It was also clear that there is now someone among us who is keen on searching for a new language of theatre and choreography. In her work Kristine searches for ways of talking to her audience, rather than offering abstract images to stir up their associations.

Kristine's performance “Interview With Madonna”, in which she attempted a socially significant and simultaneously also very personal dialogue between herself and the audience, seemed to me to be too extreme, too violent a way of inciting a discussion on socially important issues (single mothers). But, I must admit, the performance made me think a lot both about the issues it touched upon, as well as the role of an artist, their opportunities and courage.

Working with Kristine on the performance “Catch Me”, I have discovered an extraordinary person. At times, I listen with admiration to the ways Kristine substantiates her creative choices, and I understand that nothing in her life happens for no reason, out of sheer momentum.

This performance is based on an archive of movement, built during workshops with children throughout Latvia. Kristine has this astounding talent of kick-starting children's creativity. Later we looked at the movements, behaviour, mutual relations of particular children in great detail. Everything that happened between these kids when they were given freedom made us contemplate the nature of grownup society. Children in their natural mischief leap so quickly from emotions of love to manifestations of hate and intolerance, and, without even noticing it, create a story that makes you wonder about current events and processes in the world.

During the next stage, when Kristine started working with the parents of the children who had to study and learn the ways their kids express themselves, turned out to be more complicated and challenging. I saw Kristine's doubt, and the desire to write her idea off as a failure. But, I think, the process in and of itself has been a great success for her – it takes a special person to drag people with no connection to the art of theatre out of their everyday lives and captivate them so strongly that they agree to become a medium of art themselves.

One of your favourite questions to the kids in workshops is “what is dance?”

Kristine Vismāne: Kids usually say: “dance is movement, performed in the rhythm of music.” But

when thinking of what movements exist, what is music and rhythm, in the end we arrive at very philosophical conclusions, and realise that all movement can be dance. And, as everything is in perpetual motion, you could think that everything is a dance, but is that so?

Look at these people, these fish, trees, birds, ants and other living creatures whose actions look like an intricately produced dance. To me dance is something never-ending, and open to anyone. What is and what isn't dance is determined by the boundaries of each individual's perception, their style and interests.

What is a conversation with a spectator/observer for you?

KV: A conversation is a consciously created event in which during the performance an action by the performer triggers an internal process for the spectator. It can be reflection, insight, questions or desires. The results of a conversation can be numerous. Equally, a conversation may not happen, it may be one-sided. It's possible that my conversation partner (the spectator) may also fall asleep and miss my “thoughts”. Anything can happen, and that is really great. What's most important is the event itself, when people come together to listen, watch and react. I'm very interested in the live process, in which, on the one hand, there are clear boundaries between the spectator and the performer, but on an intangible level during the course of the performance these boundaries are erased.

Do you imagine a specific conversation with a spectator when performing?

KV: I don't imagine conversations during a performance. Even when I'm asking specific questions to the audience, like I do in “Interview With Madonna”. Besides, the Latvian audience (I'm sad to say) don't give direct answers. More often you can read their answers from the look in their eyes. The only thing that has something to do with an imagined conversation is the interpretation of the performer of what silence, or a tiny gesture of a spectator, could mean. What is most important is this moment between the question asked, and the expectations. Uncertainty and the desire to find out is what urges you to move forward.



Valters Sīlis

Jānis Balodis, dramaturg and performer

In my opinion, Valters Sīlis is not just a director.

Since 2012 we have worked on seven performances together. The process of creating these performances has mostly gone something like this – Valters has an idea, he tells me about it, and I say: “well, we could do this.” What does that mean? It means that Valters as the initiator of the story ensures that it's as alive and interesting as possible.

A great deal of the time I operate as the technical dramaturg – I search for, collect, and compile information, and share it with Valters. Whereas Valters works as the conceptual dramaturg, who never drowns in the abundance of available information and is therefore able to look at the collected material and choose the main anchor points.

Our latest collaboration project “Trip to Kiev Two Days before Ceasfire” was presented as a part of “War Notes” at Dirty Deal Teatro. Thanks to Valters, the ceasefire, which was supposed to be agreed that month but never was to a full extent, became the central event of these notes on war in Ukraine, and Jānis, who goes to Kiev to visit his father, became the main character.

Valters wants to create new stories, but he chooses not to take a direct route. His work asks big and important questions, but he chooses to arrive at them inconspicuously, by taking a side road. Sometimes even concluding one story, and then starting a new one, thus leaving the audience with two aftertastes, and letting them choose which one to keep.

This opportunity to choose is characteristic to the work Valters creates and the nature of his creative process. I think the only director-dictator type of condition Valters sets for the team is that each of them has to choose their way to participate in the performance.

Valters taking the side road is also manifested in his choice of stories. Our next collaboration project at Kaunas State Drama Theatre is going to be the story of a man who hid in the forest for fifty years, the duration of the Soviet occupation. But this man did not fight against the Soviet authority. He was kind of there, but kind of not there at the same time. If you manage to enter the world of this man, you can see a whole era through the eyes of an onlooker.

This onlooker position in Valters' work is significantly complemented by humour. Actually, one of the tasks of looking at things from a distance is to see jokes, because, as Valters says, "silly ideas are good ideas."

It was exactly this principle that played a great part in making it possible to turn the book "Lost Antarctica", a complicated scientific text by the marine biologist James McClintock, into a performance. Each of the creators of the performance searched for their own place within it, which resulted in stunning drawings by Ieva Kaulina, a wonderful original score by Edgars Raginskis, and a lot of jokes by everyone.

Valters and I sometimes talk about what happens when everything is understood – maybe we should think of a different way. Is everything understood? You have to think, and doubt. And that's what Valters does, and does it well.

Which of all the plays in the world would you like to have written and why?

Valters Silis: The first that came to my mind was Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar". I don't know if I'd want to write it, but it certainly was a "wow" moment when I read it ten years ago. What you can do with that story was a big surprise for me – you do something you don't entirely believe in yourself, and then you become the main spokesman to advocate other people's ideas. I thought it was a very interesting piece.

Why is the joke important?

VS: Wittiness can only emerge when the idea is a bit different, taking a different turn. I think the theatre needs wittiness. Without it we're just sadly looking at something that's slowly moving ahead, but you need something to kick you about a bit all the time, no matter whether it's comedy or drama.

What is not a joke?

VS: A lot of things aren't. If you're talking about people in your performance, and you humiliate them, that's not a joke. Although jokes can make yourself humble. A joke humbles someone who has grown a bit too big for their boots. For example, in political satire you joke so that it's shaming, but not an outright offence. In politics satire is very necessary, so that, hopefully, the shame works on the politician and they can't bring themselves to do something criminally stupid. But if you just humiliate them, they won't understand why. What else is not a joke in art? Often enough what started out as a joke, will not be one in the end.



Viesturs Meikšāns

Mārtiņš Meiers, Valmieras Theatre actor

Viesturs Meikšāns studies the uncomfortable and sensitive aspects of our existence, buried in the depth of our ego; ones which would cause unease and anxiety if addressed openly. Yet the path through the deformed human nature, which Meikšāns has chosen to lead his audience through, is not painful, rather it emboldens, and is playful, like luring an exhausted and wayward animal out of a swamp.

In order to experience a real revelation and transformation, spectators have to free themselves from fear of straying from the familiar. In each of his productions, Meikšāns plays with our perceptions. If the audience surrenders, he reveals the infinity of the spirit and along with it the peace, which, let's be honest, everyone is searching for.

In the production "Wine and Weeds" (based on the films "American Beauty" and "Magnolia", Valmieras Theatre, 2010) the tangles of human relationships are woven together so tightly that it seems this status quo can be changed only by death. In the final scene a parallel world is unveiled to the audience, a large hall, which has stood alongside the dysfunctional families and their decisions to live locked in the cages of their own assumptions, the entire time.

Meikšāns throws himself, the viewer and the actors from the conceited tower of prior knowledge. In "The Golden Horse" (Valmieras Theatre, 2009), the main protagonist, the third-born son, rides thrice up the glass mountain in order to wake the princess. Meikšāns makes a principled decision to extinguish the ability of the main hero to experience a spiritual awakening, leaving him in tortured apathy. Thus, a frightening, socially uneasy paradox is illuminated: that we discover the deepest form of life only in the presence of death. Having felt this, we become immune to fundamental change, and accept that the intense and difficult quality of existence is the only confirmation of reality.

When working with the actor, Meikšāns does not allow them to logically build their character. He indicates two points between which the actor has to build a bridge over a bottomless gorge – crossing it is a process of self discovery, that demands a change in thinking. He also demands the same bravery of himself, viewing dramaturgy as only one of the aspects of the production. In the performance "Seven Faustus" (based on "Faust" by J.V. Goethe, Latvian National Theatre, 2011), the meeting with Mephistopheles is played out twice, widening the space and time for the interpretation of the actors, and breaking the assumptions about the continuum of space and time in our existence.

Meikšāns uncovers the gaps in our world view, and it is up to us to look into them and examine them. As the performance progresses, the actor can suddenly interrupt it and remind the viewer that they are watching a play, thus destroying another illusion in order to get a little closer to the truth and to honest self examination.

Meikšāns' passionate and rebellious desire to stir up the current order, is not an irresponsible "post-" or any other kind of "ism". Sometimes when everything is arranged in neat boxes, we start to view boxes themselves as the true order of things. Meikšāns breaks these boxes, attempting to see that which really holds everything together. Suddenly space and time become conspirators. Suddenly the clock stops at 5:05 and does not move forward, offering us all the time in the world to see existence the way it really is.

Have you had a viewing experience which fundamentally transformed your understanding of theatre and illuminated the way in which you wish to see and produce theatre?

Viesturs Meikšāns: At the time you see a fundamentally transformative performance, you don't see it as such. Years can pass before you understand the meaning of it. I have experienced a number of pieces and artists this way. In some, I appreciate the perfectionism of the director, in others – the ability to open in me chakras of art perception, which I was not previously aware of. But moving in this direction in my productions is not my aim. I want to achieve freedom in my creative process, I want to be in control of the widest nuances of the profession, all of the tricks and the detail, so that I can freely find space for emotionality. I simply want to master the profession.

It is necessary to have great belief in yourself and self reliance to not become tired of this challenging profession and to be successful. What is your inner driving force?

VM: The joy of creation. There is no other driving force.

Today the original play is only one source of the resulting performance. But, what are the advantages of dramaturgy in the production of a performance?

VM: For me dramaturgy is not literary material. It's the directing, which functions according to dramaturgical rules. Therefore, theatre for me is also dramaturgy.



Vladislavs Nastavševs

Inese Pudža, Valmieras Theatre actress

Saint Petersburg. London. Riga. In my opinion these are three significant landmarks in the life of Vlad. Just Vlad, that's how we, actors, address him.

After not having seen him for a long time we meet at the cafe to talk about life (though less about that and more about theatre, as always). Vlad has just finished work on a production of Dostoyevsky's "The Idiot" at the Latvian National Theatre, and rehearsals have started at the New Riga Theatre. Since I've known Vlad, and that's been quite a few years already, he has always been working. It seems there's not a single moment when he's not directing a production somewhere. As Vlad himself admits – I don't really have anything else besides theatre... I think it says a lot about how Vlad relates to theatre, to himself – everything is at stake, no exceptions, no allowances.

As an actress I've worked with Vlad several times. When answering colleagues' questions about how Vlad works, as there are different legends about working with him, over the course of time I've arrived at the conclusion that each actor hits their own wall when working with Vlad, both in the human and the professional sense. Vlad has this knack of captivating people. He often makes you follow him where you haven't ventured before, he demands hard work, he demands that you create and search together – at the rehearsal, on the phone outside working hours, at the lunch table. He seldom lets attention stray from the role, the abacus in his head is never quiet, except, I assume, when he is asleep, but even then, as we know, there are dreams.

After my own experience with Vlad I'm always happy for the actors who have just started working with him. I believe the experience is worthwhile, and the next choices are up to each actor themselves. When working with Vlad, an actor will never be comfortable – you won't be pampered with an educational approach, you'll never know, often even up to the premiere, whether what you're doing even counts as something or not, rehearsal times are occasionally outside the realm of time as such, and more, and more, and more... And besides all that, at the back of your mind, at least for me, there's always this feeling that the very reason why there is a meaning in the actor's profession is going to show itself. I don't want to call it a certain name, it'll sound too pathetic. And parallel to all that is the harsh and unrelenting assembly line system of the repertory theatre, grinding everyone into a uniform soup, like in a hamster wheel. In that case it's undoubtedly better to make this grinding wheel work towards some meaning, which Vlad is always tirelessly championing for, than to comfortably teeter to the theatre and back without really knowing whether what you're doing as an actor has substance.

How are you doing?

Vladislavs Nastavševs: I haven't really recovered after "The Idiot". I'm already sitting in rehearsals at the New Riga Theatre, where the actors are wonderful, they offer suggestions left and right, and I do understand it's possible this way and that way, but there's weariness above all of it. "The Idiot" was difficult for me, it was not bad, but it has to be brilliant, I always want it to be brilliant. I realize I should now step aside from that production, let the actors breathe. But it's hard... What's important is for the actor to allow everything to simmer inside, technique alone is not enough, maybe the spectator doesn't always notice, but nevertheless, you have to allow it to happen. It's not easy, but it has to be done.

What do you do these days, when you're not at a rehearsal?

VN: I'm refurbishing my apartment. It'll be beautiful. I'm looking for antiques. The floor is probably going to be parquet. It's what I'm working for, and right now I'm doing a new production at New Riga Theatre about my refurbishing experience.



Dance of Death

DANCE OF DEATH

Wednesday, May 20 / 17:00

Theatre *Zirgu Pastas*, Dzirnau street 46

Duration 2h 40

In Latvian with English translation

Author August Strindberg

Director Elmārs Senkovs

Set design Andris Freibergs

Costume design Evija Pintāne

Music Edgars Mākens

Lights Krišjānis Strazdits

Performers Ieva Puķe, Aigars Apinis, Ivo Martinsons

Producer Valmiera Drama Theatre (www.vdt.lv)

Premiere on January 23, 2015

What at first glance seems to be another trivial tale about unhappy marriage, gradually turns into a story about the entropy of emotions of people locked up in a room with no exit. Neither Alice, who once wanted to become an actress, nor Edgar, a retired artillery captain who never became a mayor, admit that their lives have had no meaning. Out of boredom they start to play with their feelings and sexuality, involving Alice's cousin Kurt in their game. He manages to escape the hell created by the two spouses, who continue living in it.

Elmārs Senkovs (1984) has studied pedagogy and theatre, and is one of the most active and intriguing theatre practitioners of the young generation. He started his professional career in independent theatres, but was soon invited to work at the Latvian National Theatre, Valmiera Theatre and Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre. For Elmārs the theatre stage is like a playground on which he constantly tests new forms and ideas, coming up with unexpected results each time. His long-term collaboration with set designer Reinis Dzudzilo and visual artist Krista Dzudzilo has resulted in some incredibly strong visual metaphors and spatial propositions that have already made their mark in the history of Latvian contemporary theatre.

MY BLASTER HAS DISCHARGED

Wednesday, May 20 / 20:00

Latvian National Theatre, Kronvalda boulv. 2

Duration 1h 30

In Latvian with English translation

Author and director Konstantin Bogomolov

Set and costume design Larisa Lomakina

Video projections Andris Vētra

Performers Agnese Jēkabsons, Inese Kučinska, Everita Pjāta, Gatis Maliks, Kaspars Kārklīšs, Mārtiņš Kalīta, Ģirts Lukevics

Producer Liepāja Theatre (www.liepajasteatris.lv)

Premiere on April 17, 2015

Following his debut production “Stavanger. Pulp People” at Liepāja Theatre, Russian director Konstantin Bogomolov returns with his own piece “My Blaster has Discharged” – a sequence of scenes featuring strangers of different ages, professions, and world views brought together by unbelievable coincidence of circumstances. It is a story about people, relationships, worries, and that strange pastime – life.

Konstantin Bogomolov (1975) is among the most distinct theatre practitioners in Russia. His productions

present a polemic and non-orthodox vision of reality, often provoking heated responses. In his works Bogomolov challenges the traditional approach to literary text and the very understanding of the nature of theatre. He has staged performances in all the leading theatres in Moscow, and received numerous awards. His staging of the contemporary play “Stavanger. Pulp People” at Liepāja Theatre in 2013 won the annual Latvian Theatre Award for Best Production and Best Director, and was shown at Wiener Festwochen in 2014.

FROM VECMĪLGRĀVIS WITH LOVE

Thursday, May 21 / 14:00

Theatre *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris*, Ģertrūdes street 101a

Duration 1h

Some spoken text in English

Author and choreographer Koen Augustijnen

Co-authors and performers Eva Vancāne, Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs, Aldis Liepiņš, Evita Birule, Kristīne Vismāne, Katrīna Albuze, Elīna Lutce

Producer New Theatre Institute of Latvia (www.theatre.lv)

Premiere on March 21, 2015

This piece follows the production conceived and presented last summer in one of Riga's most remote neighbourhoods – Vecmīlgrāvis. Flemish choreographer Koen Augustijnen collaborated with a group of young Latvian dancers to produce a physical and energetic piece blending impressions from the neighbourhood, tradition of Latvian folk dance and popular culture.

Koen Augustijnen (1967) has been working closely with “les ballets C de la B” since 1991, initially as a dancer in performances staged by Alain Platel. In 1997, he became one of the dance company's in-house choreographers, earning international recognition with his performances “bâche” (2004), “IMPORT/EXPORT” (2006) and “Ashes” (2009). Recently Augustijnen has worked outside the company, creating works in Palestine, Australia, Switzerland and Germany.

THE IDIOT

Thursday, May 21 / 17:00

Latvian National Theatre, Kronvalda boulv. 2

Duration 3h

In Latvian with English translation

Author Fyodor Dostoevsky

Director Vladislavs Nastavševs

Set and costume design Vladislavs Nastavševs

Performers Arturs Krūzkops, Dita Lūriņa, Līga Zelģe, Anta Aizupe, Kaspars Dumburs, Ģirts Liuziniks, Jānis Vimba, Imants Strads

Producer National Theatre (www.teatris.lv)

Premiere on April 7, 2015

“The Idiot is about our relationship with God, it is also a story about Russia”, says director Vladislavs Nastavševs. “Each one of us would like to call God and have a chat. Whether we admit it or not, our lives are ongoing conversations with God. Some choose to call it a conversation with one's alter ego or consciousness. For Dostoevsky, it is God people are talking to. Russia today

disseminates a feeling of apocalypse similar to the one we all felt in 1989 before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Times are changing, Russia is not. This is another topic important for Dostoevsky, who cared about the destiny of his country”.

Vladislavs Nastavševs' (1978) directorial début on the Latvian theatre stage in 2010 marked the start of a new relationship between the linguistic and visual forms of the performance. He takes great care of the production as an integrated art work where the space is shared equally by performers, the set, objects, sound and light. In most of his productions Nastavševs is also the set, costume, sound and light designer. Nastavševs studied acting at the Academy of Theatre Arts in Saint Petersburg and directing at Central Saint Martins College of Arts & Design in London. He has worked at Dirty Deal Teatro, Valmiera Theatre, National Theatre, New Riga Theatre in Latvia, Teater NO99 in Estonia, and the Gogol Center in Russia. Last season his performance “Travellers by Sea and Land” at the New Riga Theatre received the annual Latvian Theatre Award for the Best Large Stage Production.

TRAVELLERS BY SEA AND LAND

Thursday, May 21 / 19:00

New Riga Theatre, Lāčplēša street 25

Duration 3h 10

In Latvian with English translation

Author Mikhail Kuzmin

Director Vladislavs Nastavševs

Set and costume design Monika Pormale

Music Vladislavs Nastavševs

Performers Vilis Daudziņš, Mārtiņš Upenieks, Kaspars Znotiņš, Sandra Kļaviņa, Maija Apine, Baiba Broka, Andris Keišs, Ģirts Krūmiņš, Iveta Pole, Edgars Samītis

Producer New Riga Theatre (www.jrt.lv)

Premiere on January 29, 2014

The novel “Travellers by Sea and Land” was written by poet, novelist, composer, critic and translator Mikhail Kuzmin, who belongs to the Silver Age of Russian poetry. The novel describes bohemian life in the capital city of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, the time between two influential revolutions. Kuzmin himself was one of the most extravagant figures found in the artist cabarets and prestigious literary magazines of Saint Petersburg. “Travellers by Sea and Land” is a visually striking collection of thinly veiled portrayals of well-known bohemian legends and their decadent relationship patterns.

LOST ANTARCTICA

Thursday, May 21 / 21:00

Dirty Deal Teatro, Maskavas street 12 k-2

Duration 1h 30

In English

Based on the book “Lost Antarctica” by James McClintock

Dramaturg Jānis Balodis

Director Valters Silis

Set design Ieva Kauliņa

Music Edgars Raginskis

Lights Jānis Sņikeris

Performer Toms Liepājnieks

Producer Dirty Deal Teatro (dirtydeal.lv/teatro)

Premiere on February 5, 2015

The creative team behind “Lost Antarctica” invites us on an audiovisual journey to see Antarctica through the eyes of the marine biologist, explorer, and one of the leading experts on this continent, James McClintock.

In their previous collaborations director Valters Silis and dramaturg Jānis Balodis have addressed the absurdity of state bureaucratic documents, consequences of the pollution of a local river and the institution of presidency in Latvia, delivering witty and very personal commentary on the effects of decision-making on everyday reality in Latvia. “Lost Antarctica” is their appeal to generate appreciation for something outside the ordinary. Here they offer a close-up and heartfelt look at the wondrous place at the bottom of the world that we are on the brink of losing.

Valters Silis (1985) has worked successfully both on the small independent stage of Dirty Deal Teatro and the big stage of the Latvian National Theatre. In 2010/2011 Silis staged three works in three different theatres that focused on painful and embarrassing events in Latvia's recent history, showing a challenging, non stereotypical and somewhat grotesque approach. In 2014 Silis staged a production in collaboration with Teatro Sotterraneo that was premiered in Santarcangelo festival in Italy.

In 2011/2012 Valters Silis received the prize for the Best Staging of a Latvian Author for his production “Legionnaires”, which he devised together with its actors.



The Twelve Chairs

WAR NOTES

Friday, May 22 / 13:00

Dirty Deal Teatro, Maskavas street 12 k-2

Duration 2h

In English

Reading of the play “Trip to Kiev Two Days before Ceasfire” followed by a discussion with directors Valters Silis, Ģirts Šolis and playwrights Jānis Balodis, Ivo Briedis.

Moderator Inese Voika

Producer Dirty Deal Teatro (dirtydeal.lv/teatro)

“Trip to Kiev Two Days before Ceasfire” is a text written and performed by playwright Jānis Balodis, and staged by director Valters Silis.

“I see freshly painted bridge railings. Yellow at the bottom, blue at the top. They were not like that before. Lamp posts – yellow bottom, blue top. They were not like that. Flags on the roofs of garages. It used to be like that few years ago in Moscow – garage, shed and Russian flag – but it is new in Kiev. Ukrainian flags on high-rise apartment blocks. A year has passed, my father works in Kiev again, and I visit him”, says Jānis Balodis.

“War Notes” is a reaction of a number of playwrights and directors to the current regional and global geopolitical situation. The texts are inspired by news in the media, public speeches, texts by bloggers, and are staged as public readings followed by a discussion.

The project is brought to life by playwrights Ivo Briedis, Aiva Birbele, Matīss Gricmanis, Jānis Balodis, Justīne Kļava, Sergejs Timofejevs and directors Kārlis Krūmiņš, Ģirts Šolis, Dāvis Auškāps, Valters Silis, Dmitrijs Petrenko, Viesturs Meikšāns.

ALL HER BOOKS

Friday, May 22 / 17:00

Daile Theatre, Brīvības street 75

Duration 1h 40

In Latvian with English translation

Based on the book “The Reader” by Bernhard Schlink

Dramaturg Justīne Kļava

Director Dmitrijs Petrenko

Set and constume design Sintija Jēkabsone

Music Reinis Ozoliņš

Lights Māra Valjkova

Performers Esmeralda Ermale, Dainis Grūbe

Producer Daile Theatre (www.dailesteatris.lv)

Premiere on November 19, 2014

He is a teenager from a respectable family in post-war Germany. She is a grown-up woman. They start an affair. He reads books to her. After several months she mysteriously disappears. They meet many years later in a war-time trial. Based on the award-winning book and film “The Reader”, the story tackles the issues of human guilt, shame and forgiveness.

Dmitrijs Petrenko (1981) studied communications and sociology before he turned to stage directing. He has worked as a journalist at the Latvian national broadcaster LTV, as a political analyst at the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, and was the editor in chief of the portal politika.lv. His professional theatre directing debut came in 2013.

DREAMS OF RAINIS

Friday, May 22 / 19:00

Latvian National Theatre, Kronvalda boulv. 2

Duration 1h 45

In Latvian with English translation

Author and director Kirill Serebrennikov

Dramaturg Ieva Struka

Set and costume design Kirill Serebrennikov

Choreographer Evgeny Kulagin

Music Jēkabs Nimanis

Conductor Artūrs Ancāns

Lights Igors Kapustins

Performers Lolita Cauka, Maija Doveika, Ainārs Ančevskis, Kaspars Aniņš, Mārtiņš Brūveris, Gundars Grasbergs, Ivars Puga, Romāns Bargais, Jurgis Spulenieks, Uldis Siliņš

With participation of Emīls Dārziņš Choir

Producer National Theatre (www.teatris.lv)

Premiere on January 29, 2015

For his third production at the Latvian National Theatre, the Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov has chosen to focus on a Latvian national icon – the great Latvian poet and playwright, left wing politician and visionary Rainis. Avoiding biographical details and focusing instead on dreams and nightmares that Rainis carefully recorded throughout his life, Serebrennikov presents Rainis’ ambiguous personality through fast changing and visually gripping scenes. Thus he paints a precise, striking, poetic, at times comic, at times tragic image gallery of Latvian collective subconsciousness.

Kirill Serebrennikov (1969) is considered to be one of the most talented and forward-looking theatre and film directors of modern Russia. He has received practically all Russian film and theatre awards and the Grand Prix from the Rome Film Festival.

In 2012, Serebrennikov took over the artistic direction of the declining Gogol Centre, a traditional repertory theatre in Moscow. Engaging young directors, as well as stand-out talents from Russian provincial companies and beyond, Serebrennikov has set out to define new rules of the game.

MARTYR

Saturday, May 23 / 12:00

New Riga Theatre Museum stage, Talsu street 1

Duration 1h 45

In Latvian with English translation

Author Marius von Mayenburg

Director Viesturs Meikšāns

Set design Reinis Suhanovs

Costumes Monika Pormale

Performers Elita Kļaviņa, Gatis Gāga, Vilis Daudziņš

Producer New Riga Theatre (www.jrt.lv)

Premiere on March 26, 2015

A schoolboy is convinced that he can tell right from wrong. He studies the Bible and his views on morality are extreme. He does not accept mistakes. People around him want to silence the young Messiah. They are looking for peace instead of interpretations.

During his rather intense artistic career Viesturs Meikšāns (1980) has staged more than 15 performances and has received several Latvian theatre awards. He used

to be in-house director at the Valmiera Theatre, eagerly experimenting outside the conventional theatre frame. In 2012 Meikšāns worked at the Moscow Art Theatre. He returned to the Latvian stage last year with “Mikhail and Mikhail play chess”, a sophisticated production of the complex opera by composer Kristaps Pētersons and librettist Sergejs Timofejevs about the famous chess match between Mikhail Botvinnik and Mikhail Tal in 1960.

CATCH ME

Saturday, May 23 / 15:00

Theatre *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris*, Ģertrūdes street 101a

Duration 1h

In Latvian with English translation

Idea and directing Kristīne Vismane

Choreographers Lukass Gronskis, Taisija Timofejeva, Emīlija Āne, Oskars Stolde, Katrīna Sīle, Šarlote Bērziņa, Kristīne Vismane

Performers Iveta Vaivode, Evita Bērziņa, Nauris Bērziņš,

Anna Sīle, Viktorija Fomenko, Kate Āne

Composer and musician Rihards Libietis

Set and costume design Ieva Kauliņa

Lights Dāvis Burmeisters

Producer Zane Estere Gruntmane

Production assistant Laima Jokste

Producer PIGEON-BRIDGE (www.pigeonbridge.com)

Co-producer Theatre *Ģertrūdes ielas teātris* (www.git.lv)

Premiere on May 18, 2015

“Catch Me” is about six parents daring to attempt mimicking the movements of their children in dance. For several months the behaviour and movement of their children was observed, the parents worked on their physical endurance and precision, and struggled with their inner fears. Will the parents succeed in reflecting the movements of their own kids? The children will be present at the performance and be able to answer that question themselves.

Kristīne Vismane (1987) is a choreographer and performer, one of the most active young generation dance artists in Latvia. She has created several solo pieces, but also works collectively. Two of her pieces were nominated for the annual Latvian Theatre Award in 2013. Kristīne regards choreography as a lifestyle, drawing inspiration for her work from everyday experiences and people she encounters.

THE TWELVE CHAIRS

Saturday, May 23 / 17:00

New Riga Theatre, Lāčplēša street 25

Duration 4h

In Latvian with English translation

Based on the book “The Twelve Chairs”

by Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov

Director Alvis Hermanis

Set design Alvis Hermanis

Costumes Kristīne Jurjāne

Performers Andris Keišs, Gundars Āboliņš, Ģirts Krūmiņš,

Baiba Broka, Guna Zariņa, Sandra Kļaviņa vai Elita Kļaviņa,

Jana Čivžele, Vilis Daudziņš, Ivars Krasts, Jevgēnijs Isajevs,

Varis Piņķis, Regīna Razuma, Edgars Samītis, Andis Strods

Producer New Riga Theatre (www.jrt.lv)

Premiere on December 7, 2014

In his most recent theatre production the internationally acclaimed Latvian director Alvis Hermanis adapts “The Twelve Chairs”, the iconic Soviet satirical novel from the 1920s. In this story about unlikely companions on a treasure hunt in post-revolution Russia, Hermanis has returned to grotesque theatre (as in his brilliant “The Government Inspector” from 2002) and chosen to make this famously sharp and witty satire of Soviet life into a tale of Jewish jokes.

Alvis Hermanis (1965) is recognized as one of the most significant directors of his generation in European theatre. His productions differ from each other quite markedly in terms of style and content, however, they are consistent in being orientated around the work of the actor, and showing scrupulous precision in the choice of their form and theatrical vocabulary.

Since 1997 Hermanis has been the artistic director of the New Riga Theatre where he has staged numerous productions, building a devoted audience and receiving critical acclaim. Since 2003 his company has been touring intensively in Europe and beyond, while Hermanis was regularly invited to create performances in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy. For the last three years Hermanis has been staging productions in European opera houses occasionally returning to dramatic theatre. His most recent theatre production is “Die schönsten Sterbeszenen in der Geschichte der Oper” at Schauspielhaus Zürich.

Latvian Theatre Showcase 2015, Riga, May 20–23

Time	Venue	Address	Director	Performance
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Wednesday, May 20

17:00–19:40	Theatre <i>Zirgu pasts</i>	Dzirnavu street 46	Elmārs Seņkovs	<i>Dance of Death</i>
20:00–21:30	Latvian National Theatre Main stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Konstantin Bogomolov	<i>My Blaster Has Discharged</i>

Thursday, May 21

13:00–13:45	Introduction to the Showcase programme and artistic selection at Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i> (Ģertrūdes street 101a)			
14:00–15:00	Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i>	Ģertrūdes street 101a	Koen Augustijnen	<i>From Vecmīlgrāvis With Love</i>
17:00–20:00	Latvian National Theatre New Stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Vladislavs Nastavševs	<i>The Idiot</i>
19:00–22:10	New Riga Theatre Main stage	Lāčplēša street 25	Vladislavs Nastavševs	<i>Travellers by Sea and Land</i>
21:00–22:30	Dirty Deal Teatro	Maskavas street 12 block 2	Valters Sīlis	<i>Lost Antarctica</i>

Friday, May 22

11:00	Meeting with directors Konstantin Bogomolov, Valters Sīlis, Dmitrijs Petrenko, Elmārs Seņkovs, Vladislavs Nastavševs at <i>Kaņepes Kultūras centrs</i> (Skolas street 15)			
13:00–15:00	Dirty Deal Teatro	Maskavas street 12 block 2	Valters Sīlis	<i>War Notes / reading of the play “Trip to Kiev two days before cease-fire”</i>
17:00–18:40	Daile Theatre	Brīvības street 75	Dmitrijs Petrenko	<i>All Her Books</i>
19:00–20:45	Latvian National Theatre Main stage	Kronvalda boulv. 2	Kirill Serebrennikov	<i>Dreams of Rainis</i>

Saturday, May 23

12:00–13:45	New Riga Theatre Museum stage	Talsu street 1	Viesturs Meikšāns	<i>Martyr</i>
15:00–16:00	Theatre <i>Ģertrūdes ielas teātris</i>	Ģertrūdes street 101a	Kristīne Vismāne	<i>Catch Me</i>
17:00–21:00	New Riga Theatre Main stage	Lāčplēša street 25	Alvis Hermanis	<i>12 Chairs</i>
Farewell drink after the show at New Riga Theatre				

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The Showcase organiser New Theatre Institute of Latvia (NTIL) is a non-governmental, project based organisation working in the field of contemporary performing arts on local and international level.

In 1995 a group of Latvian theatre artists and professionals organized the first international theatre festival in the newly independent country. It was also the beginning of the New Theatre Institute of Latvia, which has since expanded its activities far beyond the festival scope, yet the biennial International Festival of Contemporary Theatre Homo Novus is still at core of our work. The Festival presents performances by established artists and emerging talents, produces new work by young local artists, and offers a programme of seminars, workshops and other activities while broadening the notion of theatrical space. The next edition of Homo Novus will take place in Riga on September 4–10, 2015.

The Latvian Theatre Showcase is one of our regular activities focused on professional international audiences and done in collaboration with Latvian repertory theatres, independent venues and dance companies. The Showcase gives an overall introduction to the current developments in Latvian performing arts and offers a meeting place for presenters, critics and artists.

We also produce and present local and international projects during the season, serve as a platform for information sharing and develop long term collaboration programmes together with local and international partners. Our interests lie in the expanding of the borders for creation, presentation and perception of artwork and supporting the development of versatile, innovative and committed independent performing arts scene in Latvia. Our work has been to a large extent propelled by active partnership in international networks, and currently we are partners in four networks: Shared Space: Music, Weather, Politics; [DNA] Departures and Arrivals; FIT (Festivals in Transition) new initiative Urban Heat; Imagine 2020 (0.2): Art, ecology & possible futures.

Specifically Latvian Vol.3 is a publication by New Theatre Institute of Latvia

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Printed by Ulma

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