

INTO THE WILD

A mobile, inclusive laboratory for research into the social reality of both disability and normality.

„What I tried to define as the „savage mind” is not attributed as specific to whomsoever, be it a part or a type of civilisation (...) In fact, I would say that what I describe as „savage mind” is the system of postulates and axioms who are necessary to establish a code that would allow us to translate - with a minimum of loss - the „other” into the „our” and vice versa, thus, the totality of conditions, under which we can understand each other the best; although there is always a leftover.”

(Claude Lévi-Strauss, „Savage Mind“)

Background

The project *The Desire to Fail* exists since 6 years, 60 performances and several new and altered casts. Following a residency in Russia and an encounter with an inclusive theatre group from Moscow, we had the idea of comparing the principals of our work - the practice of working free improvisation into performance - with those of others, to demonstrate ways of working and to share our experiences of them.

This process is to be simultaneously documented and analysed by those taking part. A first-hand observation of society in a sector which until now has received only sporadic ethnological attention: theatre. Its rituals, conventions, unwritten rules and secret prohibitions have always been a reflection of the society in which it exists.

Such an all-encompassing project is the ideal tool to bring to light and subjectify all these habits. With a social-artistic enterprise like this, all aspects of intercultural interaction can be processed and documented. Whether a society views so-called "disabled people" as shamans, a nuisance, a mystery, prime ministers, artists or economic failures, will become immediately obvious and subjectified.

The aim of the project is a dynamic process of interaction, a laboratory (not a finished product). This work will automatically lead to an event in the host society. The whole does not remain static in observation and documentation, rather it represents an interaction from the start, through the immediacy and directness of the "specialists of otherness." And precisely that should be the content and result of the event. As Levi-Strauss puts it, the "Wild Mind" is the tool with which we can translate our codes into others, that is, the method with which we can cross all borders, not just in language. And it is into this "Wilderness" that we want to break out.

Implementation

The participating actors present their work processes in a workshop of several days, a laboratory situation. Here the emphasis is on practical work. The primary method is showing by example, and imitation.

The methods of supervised free improvisation are demonstrated by "Theater Hora." The clear advantage of this apparently paradoxical method of work lies in the fact that it can be communicated largely non-verbally. Through very simple games - often learnable through imitation and participation without the need for explanation - complex improvisations are developed.

An example:

1. first the task is given that three people should always be on stage at any one time. All players sit around the play area and are collectively responsible for maintaining this balance.
2. then the game is extended by the task that one of the players should always be lying, one standing and one sitting.
3. Finally, this task can be combined with an activity: having a conversation, making music, passing around an object or similar.

Firstly, this exercise awakens a consciousness of the important difference between "on and off": being on stage, taking part, even when only standing and watching; or being outside the activity, but supporting it through focussing and concentration. It becomes immediately clear that the number of players on the stage is already a story, that the coming and going of the actors is already a scene. In the next stage the attention on both sides is heightened still: continual contact, readiness to react, knowing where the other person is and what he's doing. Consciousness (once again, this is not about certain knowledge, rather about practice and experience) of the stage, of one's position on stage, of the position of the audience: new stories are continually created. When the third stage is reached, the simple behaviour rules are no longer recognisable in some cases. A complex game arises: to the uninitiated it appears to follow enigmatic rules; to the players it gives the possibility of freely acting out a scene within a form which is instinctive to comprehend and can be followed automatically.

Specifically, the techniques of the hosts and those of the guests are to be practiced alternately during the course of the communal work. At the end of each day a performance of c.30-60 min. is to be attempted. The musician who accompanies us records during the work. These sounds are processed, turned into music and developed as a soundtrack parallel to the work process. In the final performance they have a structuring function: introducing scenes; creating atmosphere; acting as cues for the performers. At the same time, the participants document the process: interviews, sounds, films and photos offer further means of communication. One shares what is found to be interesting and important, what is experienced as special or foreign. In this way a new level is created, functioning like a journal. This can then be published in a variety of forms, initially as a blog. Once a degree of material has been collected together, it can be formed into a book, brochure, documentary film, CD...a world atlas of the international community of "experts of otherness."

Targets

And here begins the list of targets of this work:

1. Worldwide networking with people who work in the field of inclusive theatre and performance, and who are interested in an exchange of artistic concepts and ways of working.
2. An examination and appraisal of "foreign" techniques and aesthetics for the expansion of our own spectrum.
3. The observation and documentation of a process, which, without using language, attempts to build a bridge between societies; which establishes a space in which specialists in "unconventionality" - the experts of otherness - can interact.
4. The discovery, invention or development of a technique with which it is possible, "with the least possible amount of loss, to translate "the other" into "the own" and the other way around".
5. The "world atlas of the international community of the experts of otherness".