

the magdalena project – wales - october 25th - 31st 1999 –
chapter, cardiff

the br/leeding ground

interaction and debate - induced by performance process and product
a proposal for a week of work that confronts and explores the role of the artist in a time of political crisis

Commissions

The Magdalena has invited and challenged a number of theatre artists to work together in collaboration for one week. They are artists with very different approaches and, in all cases, are have never met or worked together previously. Their brief is simply to produce a short work, in response to the issues and questions outlined, and to present this as part of events on the day of Public Debate - October 30th.

The 3 partnerships are:

Sioned Huws (Wales) & Jolanta Krukowska (Poland)
Michael Brookes (Wales) & Geddy Aniksdal (Norway)
Gerald Tyler (Wales) & Madeline McNamara (New Zealand)

Silent Witness:

There will be a selected team of ‘silent witnesses’ who will follow the process of the commissioned works as they progress during the week. The role of the ‘witness’ is to be a present but silent observer. No interaction with the process, or discussion about the work should take place, either in or out of the working space and time. Some ‘witnesses’ will offer their thoughts in response to their observations at the Public Debate on Saturday 30th. Commissioned Artists and Silent Witnesses will be invited to dine together, at our expense, each evening.

You can apply to take the role of a Silent Witness but places are very limited. Please write a brief outline (300 words max) stating why you would like to take this role and include a brief biography or CV. Successful applicants will be informed immediately. We cannot provide any remuneration or expenses for Silent Witnesses

Oct 25th – 29th Workshop:

Dijana Milosevic from DAH TEATR, Belgrade will lead a week long workshop/ collaboration with performers working towards a piece to be presented on October 30th as part of the Public Debate events.

To apply please write a short letter outlining your experience and reasons why you would like to take part in this work. Successful applicants will be informed immediately. There will be no fee.

Oct 26th:27th:28th International Programme.

Tuesday - October 26th 8pm 'Blue is the Smoke of War' by Geddy Aniksdal of Grenland Friteater – Norway.

This solo performance enters the remarkable world of the Eighth Century Chinese poet Tu Fu. His words dared to sum up all human history, as he saw it in his age. 'Blue - is the smoke of war, White - the bones of men' Contemporary Norwegian poet Geog Johannesen began to excavate and recreate Tu Fu in his writings; Geddy Aniksdal follows and embarks upon transforming it into the language of theatre.

Wednesday – October 27th 8pm 'Little Red Riding Hood' & 'Coming' by Jolanta Krukowska of Academie Ruchu from Warsaw, Poland. Jolanta's enigmatic work is always welcome to Magdalena Projects – her precise and exacting physical and visual skills coupled with her intriguing theatrical metaphors never fail to cause controversy. Some are spellbound while others admit to feeling utterly bemused.

AND

New Works by Sioned Huws.

An uncompromising talent, Welsh dancer and choreographer Sioned Huws returns from Portugal, where she has received support for her work, to take part in The Br/leeding Ground commissions and to present her latest ideas in her home country.

Thursday 28th October 8pm – Balkan Excerpts – an evening of videos and presentations of work from colleagues from the former Yugoslavia. Not all the artists we wanted to invite can be present. Their work is therefore represented though video or oral testimony. The evening will reveal some of the realities of making work during the extremes of the political conflict over last eight years.

To book call chapter box office below

Oct 30th - The Br/leeding Ground – a day long public debate

This day long debate will be the culmination of the weeks' activities bringing together all of the various strands of work explored. The debate will be initiated by an international panel of politicians, writers, scholars, journalists and practitioners who will address the issues outlined and the day will be interlaced by the commissioned performances; who will address as the day progresses, and the key note presentations, panel discussion and work shown provokes critical response we envisage the debate becoming increasingly dynamic. Our aim will be to break down any initial formality to allow considered and impassioned ideas, analysis and discourse to emerge.

9.30am (registration) – 5.30pm. To apply call chapter box office below

There will be late, and very fine, dinner for all those who book in advance. (£7.50). Open Platform performances will take place during the evening from 5.30 pm till late and will continue into Sunday if there is demand.

Open Performance Forum

This platform will be one part of a week long series of work. It offers an informal opportunity to showcase either short pieces of finished performance work or works-in-progress to peers and members of the general public who will be gathered to debate the inherent issues proposed by the Br/leeding Ground event. Performances will take place from 5.30 pm on October 30th in Chapter Arts Centre. In the event of there being a lot of high quality submissions the Open Platform would extend into Sunday 31st from 11am.

Financial resources for this project are very limited but we can offer space, technical back up and free access to all other Br/leeding Ground events. See the forum as an opportunity to expose and share ideas. Pieces should be short (20mins maximum) and need minimum technical requirements as the get-in and turn around times will be tight.

To apply please write a brief synopsis of your performance or proposed work and describe how you feel it attempts to confront the questions and issues outlined. (300 max). You should also enclose all technical requirements and a brief personal biography or CV. Send to the postal or e-mail address below. Deadline: October 1st. Successful applicants will be informed immediately.

Booking Information

All events held at Chapter, Market Road, Canton, Cardiff. CF5 1QE
To book call +44(0)1222 304400

Evening Performances (Oct 26,27,28) £6.50 and £4.50 concessions
The Br/leeding Ground Debate registration £12 and £9 conc.

To apply to the Open Performance Forum, for the Workshop with Dijana Milosevic, or to be considered as a 'Silent Witness' please contact: The Magdalena Project. Email magdalenaproject@dial.pipex.com or write c/o Chapter, Market Road, Canton, Cardiff, CF5 1QE. Wales. UK. Enclosing details as requested above.

Tel/fax +44(0)1239 654136. For any further information on travel, accommodation or any other issues relating to the Br/leeding Ground.

Produced by the Magdalena Project in collaboration with Chapter with support from the Arts Council of Wales.

the br/leeding grounds – a personal reason why

The day Nato started its bombing campaign on Serbia was day 3 of the Magdalena Aotearoa Theatre Festival in New Zealand — that evening the theatre group DAH from Belgrade were programmed to perform.

Amidst the panic of trying telephone their children, spouses, parents, rearranging flights in order to get back home, they had to field endless ambivalent commiseration's from other festival participants. That evening they did perform— it was their response and only weapon of opposition. I knew that since the group formed in 1992 their theatre work has been focussed on resistance against their government through daily direct protest actions on the streets of Belgrade and the more hidden metaphorical protest in their touring performances.

As witness to this situation I experienced a deep sense of uselessness. Anything said in comfort sounded hollow – words of outrage equally empty..

In recent history we can highlight many examples, of the part that theatre and its community have played in the process of political change.

Immediately prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall , theatre workers in eastern Europe took a significant and influential role in challenging the communist regimes.

In Colombia, a country engaged in a perpetual internal war, Patricia Ariza of Teatro La Candelaria, works to make a renowned Rap Opera with street children and music theatre pieces with women and children whose husbands and fathers have been murdered in the drug wars - despite the fact that during the extreme political repression of the early eighties she was one of many artists on the official death list.

At a theatre festival in Peru in 1988 I saw a piece by a theatre group from Ayacucho a town caught in the cross fire of the Sendero Luminoso and the military. I thought the work amateur. But later when I was informed that the group, 3 in number, once had 16 members and that the rest had disappeared one by one – I realised I had seen an extraordinary piece of work.

And recently I read about a man who had a tiny photography business in Macedonia. In two months he has taken passport photos, free of charge, for any incoming refugee who has come to him. His attempt to help give back a hope of identity. To date he has taken nearly 27,000 leaving himself thousands in debt. The images themselves are raw in quality, but as a body of work or as an act, their power is undeniable.

The above are all examples of artistic actions that have moved me, have made me question my relationship to theatre. I have found it hard to cite actions or work that I can recognise as having this 'effect' in my own, current Western European/North American, theatre culture.

So Why The Br/leeding Ground?

I have to speak very personally way. I left New Zealand with a nagging voice telling me that I had to 'do my job much better', and to question the relevance that a theatre practice in Wales has to the situation of conflict in other people's countries.

I would like to explore these questions:

whether there is an effective artistic response in a time of political crisis and conflict?

whether it is feasible for those of us safe from the 'firing line' to artistically comment from the comfort of our studios?'

what is our role is as theatre artists in a time of war?

whether art can be an act of passionate or kind heroism?

or whether it can it have more effect by making detached commentary or interpretation?

Is art an act of resistance by definition?

**Should art be distanced – or should it be right in there at the front.
Or should art's place be precisely on the cross-roads of the two?**

The BR/LEEDING GROUND event, constructed from process, collaboration, contemplation, debate and testimony is one attempt to examine these questions. It is an opportunity to witness the response of distinct artists and intellectuals to the complexity of the problem of the role of art in politics and the role of politics in art.

Concurrently, as we in Wales elect our first national parliament for 600 years, the Arts Council is shifting its policies radically by slashing the funding of a number of internationally recognised companies (including the Magdalena Project) and the innovative individual work of young independent Welsh performers. Wales, they argue, must have a National Theatre and Dance Company, work for and give testament to our nations talent; and it is towards this aim that the funds are redirected.

What legacy does this policy leave to the new generation of young artists? Will they ever be able to consider their art, their job, as an act of effective resistance or a tool of political change.

Jill Greenhalgh
Artistic Director of the Magdalena Project
June 1999

The Key Players in the Breeding Ground Event (to date 29.09.99)

Geddy Aniksdal (Norway) has been a member of Grenland Friteater for the last twenty years. She is an actress and director and a fine teacher. She is editor of the Open Page published once a year and giving a forum to women's writings on theatre.

Jolanta Krukowska (Poland) is a founding member of Academie Ruchu (Academy of Movement) one of Poland's leading political theatre companies founded in the '70's. as well as performing in the companies' main performances Jolanta has toured throughout the world with her solo work. She is also a fine teacher.

Sioned Huws (Wales) has been making both solo performances and choreographing highly successful and innovative community works with among others children, choirs, traditional dancers and harp players. Her work has been commissioned by the South Bank. She is currently working in Portugal.

Mike Brookes (Wales) studied fine art at Cardiff Art School. He has become renowned in Wales over the last ten years for his innovative work in theatre design and lighting and in creating installations and environments for the enabling of innovative performance.

Gerald Tyler (res. Wales) Actor, director, choreographer, writer, carpenter and technician. His work crosses many disciplines; most recently he has taken major roles, incorporating his specific, very edgy diatribe material, in Earthfall Dance productions and has directed the Equilibre Horse Theatre this summer.

Madeline McNamara (Aotearoa/New Zealand) is an actress in both film and theatre and is co-director (WITH Sally Roadwell) of Magdalena Aotearoa which staged the first major international festival of women's theatre in New Zealand in March of this year. She is currently working on her first solo performance.

Dijana Milosevic (Serbia) is director of Belgrade's DAH Teatr. Since they founded in 1992 their work has been influenced and affected on a daily level by the political situation in the Balkans. The company is multi-national and since the onset of the bombings this year the company's American and British members have had to leave the work their performances have halted for now. Dijana is also the programmer for the INFANT festival which took place this June in Novi Sad.

Organisers

Heike Roms. Heike Roms studied literature, theatre, musicology and philosophy in Hamburg. She has been involved in organising performance projects since 1985, including a number of years as assistant director at the Internationales Sommertheater Festival Hamburg. Now a doctoral candidate at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, she is currently undertaking research into theatrical performances of cultural identity at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies, for which she has received scholarships from the Evangelisches Studienwerk Villigst, the British Academy and the Daimler-Benz Foundation. She was recently appointed administrator for 'Performance Studies international', the new association for scholars and artists in the field of performance. She is a contributing editor of Performance Research, the performance studies journal published by Routledge, and writes a column on theatre and performance for the Welsh cultural magazine, Planet.

Gordana Vnuk (Croatia) is currently the theatre programmer at Chapter Arts centre. She is also the founding artistic director and programmer of Eurokaz Festival which takes place in Zagreb every year.

Jill Greenhalgh (Wales) is the founding artistic director of the Magdalena Project _ international network of women in experimental theatre. (founded '86). She is also a director and performer and her latest performance CHILD continue to tour regularly. She is the producer and instigator of this event.

Panel Members/Speakers/Contributors/Silent Witnesses confirmed. (10/8/99)

Anna Furse (England) is currently a lecturer in Theatre and Performance at North London University. She is a writer and director.

Icica Boban.(Croatia) Director and theatre activist.

Patricia Ariza (Colombia) Director. Actress. Founder member of Teatro La Candelaria of Bogota. President of the Corporacion de Teatro Colombia.

Sally Rodwell (Aotearoa/New Zealand) is a performer and director. She is one of the founders (together with Alun Brunton and Deborah Hunt) of the legendary Red Mole Theatre. She has also founded Toadlilies, and Roadworks an ensemble of young immigrant performers in Wellington which she directs among others. She is the co-director of Magdalena Aotearoa and she is a film maker. Sally will be documenting the process of the Br/leeding Ground assisted by **Miff Moore**.

Kaite O'Reilly (Wales) is primarily a playwright. Won 1998 Peggy Ramsay Award for YARD. Worked as volunteer dramtherapist and director in former Yugoslavia. 1993 - current with women's peace movement, theatre makers and in frontline towns and 'collective centres' during the war with humanitarian relief agencies.

Dr. Aleksandra Jovicevic (Belgrade) lecture in the department of theatre studies at Belgrade University.

Erik Ehn (USA) Playwright. Graduate of New Dramatists. Co-Founder/co-artistic director of Tenderloin Opera Company.

Kathy Randles (USA) performance artist from New Orleans most recently living and working in Belgrade with Dah Teater. Since the most recent conflict in Yugoslavia Kathy has been making work in protest to the US interventions. Kathy will present some new work in progress at the **Open Performance Platform**.

