

Theatre and Early
Years

stories of artistic practices



Education and Culture
Culture 2000
with the support of the Culture 2000
programme of European Union

SMALL SIZE PAPERS

These papers are part of a series published by Small size, the European Network for the Diffusion of the Performing Arts for Early Years. It is a collection of thoughts and theories on the relationship between art and education. They are analyses, reflections and experiences that help create a specific literature on the theme of the performing arts for early years. The articles published in each issue provide interdisciplinary and international contributions.

As Small size is a European network, English was chosen as its main language. The pieces of writing included in the papers have therefore been translated, in order to highlight the multi-cultural character of this material. However, the articles are also published in the original language.

No.2
THEATRE AND EARLY YEARS
stories of artistic practices

This publication collects the voices and reflections of those who daily work in theatre for early years, as well as of those who have long been in contact with early childhood and have long analysed it. They are stories about artistic practices that highlight what happens when the performing arts and the youngest of children meet.

Theatre and Early Years



€ 15,00

ISBN 978-88-8342-735-0



9 788883 427350 >



Pendragon

S m a l l s i z e p a p e r s

Theatre and Early Years

stories of artistic practices

THEATRE AND EARLY YEARS **stories of artistic practices**

articles by Gabi dan Droste, Gerd Taube, Charlotte Fallon, Valeria Frabetti, Roberto Frabetti, Wolfgang Schneider.

graphic project and editing by Francesca Nerattini
produced by Small size, the European Network for the Diffusion of the Performing Arts for Early Childhood.

This book is the result of a research undertaken by Small size, the net, a project funded by European Union through the Culture 2000 Programme.

THE EU-CULTURE 2000

Sole responsibility lies with the autor and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

© belongs to each single author

© Edizioni Pendragon / Acción Educativa Asociación Civil / Goml - Gledališče za Otroke in Mlade Ljubljana / Helios 6 Live Art Productions e.v. / La Baracca soc. coop. a r.l. / Polka Children's Theatre Limited / Teatrul Ion Creangă / Théâtre de La Guimbarde

The articles "Kinder brauchen Kunst - Ein Plädoyer für Ästhetische Erziehung, Kulturelle Bildung und eine zukunftsorientierte Kulturpolitik" by Wolfgang Schneider and "Does theatre for children exist?" by Roberto Frabetti, have been written for "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" edited by Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009) and published in this book in original language courtesy from author and editor.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the written permission of the publisher.

Edizioni Pendragon
via Albioli, 10
Bologna - Italia
www.pendragon.it

www.smallsize.org

SMALL SIZE PAPERS

These papers are part of a series published by Small size, the European Network for the Diffusion of the Performing Arts for Early Years. It is a collection of thoughts and theories on the relationship between art and education. They are analyses, reflections and experiences that help create a specific literature on the theme of the performing arts for early years. The articles published in each issue provide interdisciplinary and international contributions.

As Small size is a European network, English was chosen as its main language. The pieces of writing included in the papers have therefore been translated, in order to highlight the multi-cultural character of this material. However, the articles are also published in the original language.

No.2 THEATRE AND EARLY YEARS stories of artistic practices

This publication collects the voices and reflections of those who daily work in theatre for early years, as well as of those who have long been in contact with early childhood and have long analysed it. They are stories about artistic practices that highlight what happens when the performing arts and the youngest of children meet.

CONTENTS

Kinder brauchen Kunst - Ein Plädoyer für Ästhetische Erziehung, Kulturelle Bildung und eine zukunftsorientierte Kulturpolitik <i>Wolfgang Schneider</i> (DEUTSCHLAND - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	9
Children Need Art - A Case for Aesthetic Education and Future- oriented Cultural Policy (TRANSLATION).....	19
Con gli occhi e con la pelle - <i>Valeria Frabetti</i> (ITALY - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	29
With our eyes and skin (TRANSLATION).....	35
Interview mit Barbara Kölling „Ganz am Anfang – FIRST STEPS“ <i>Gabi dan Droste</i> (DEUTSCHLAND - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	41
Interview with Barbara Kölling “Right at the beginning – FIRST STEPS” (TRANSLATION).....	47
Comme un coquillage déposé sur la plage... - <i>Charlotte Fallon</i> (BELGIUM - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	53
Like a shell on the beach (TRANSLATION).....	59
Esiste un teatro per bambini? - <i>Roberto Frabetti</i> (ITALY - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	65
Does theatre for children exist? (TRANSLATION).....	81
Erste Erträge - Zu ästhetischen Eigenarten des Theaters für die Aller kleinsten - <i>Gerd Taube</i> (DEUTSCHLAND - ORIGINAL TEXT).....	97
First Steps - Aesthetic peculiarities of the “theatre for the youngest” (TRANSLATION).....	113
Small size, a short presentation.....	125

KINDER BRAUCHEN KUNST

Ein Plädoyer für Ästhetische Erziehung, Kulturelle Bildung und eine zukunftsorientierte Kulturpolitik *

Wolfgang Schneider

Direktor des Instituts für Kulturpolitik und Dekan des Fachbereichs Kulturwissenschaften und Ästhetische Kommunikation der Universität Hildesheim. Sachverständiges Mitglied der Enquête-Kommission „Kultur in Deutschland“ des Deutschen Bundestages. Präsident der Internationalen Vereinigung des Theaters für Kinder und Jugendliche. **(DEUTSCHLAND)**

Keiner wird mir widersprechen, wenn ich behaupte „Kinder brauchen Kunst“. Und auch wenn ich daraus eine Fragestellung formuliere: „Brauchen Kinder Kunst?“ wird wohl niemand dies verneinen wollen. Natürlich brauchen Kinder zunächst Essen und Trinken, ein Dach über dem Kopf, gesundheitliche Versorgung und soziale Fürsorge. Das ist essentiell; und doch selbst in unserer Welt leider immer noch keine Selbstverständlichkeit.

Keine Angst, ich verschone Sie mit Zahlen und Fakten über Unternährung, über das Flüchtlingswesen, über die Verbreitung von Aids bei den unter 24-Jährigen in Afrika, über Kindermisshandlungen in Europa oder Kinderpornographie in Amerika oder Kinderprostitution in Asien. Ich sammle auch nicht für Caritative Einrichtungen oder für UNICEF, das Weltkinderhilfswerk der Vereinten Nationen. Ich versuche nur einführend das Thema meines Vortrages in Relation zu bringen. Denn wenn wir von Kunst für Kinder und Kunst von Kindern sprechen, müssen wir auch immer die gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen mitbedenken, müssen wir die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit in Beziehung setzen zu dem Wahren, Schönen und Guten, das unsere kulturgeschichtliche Tradition bestimmt hat.

Die einschneidende Entwicklung von der Industrie- zur Informationsgesellschaft wird von manchen mit dem Übergang

* Diese Artikel wurde für "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" herausgegeben von Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009) geschrieben.

von der Agrar- zur Industriegesellschaft verglichen. Ebenso wie im 19. Jahrhundert die Veränderung der Produktionsweisen und der Produktionsschwerpunkte in alle gesellschaftliche Bereiche wirkt, wird heute das Zusammenleben, das Arbeiten und das Wirtschaften durch den Einsatz neuer Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien fundamental verändert. Durchaus vergleichbar geht die Veränderung heute wie damals mit - nur zu gut begründeten - Ängsten, aber auch mit Euphorie einher. Ebenfalls radikal setzt der Wandel eine wirtschaftliche Expansion, ein verändertes Verständnis von Staat, Verwaltung und Bürgern in den Gang.

Kunst und Kultur haben heute bei der Entwicklung der Informationsgesellschaft wie in allen Epochen zuvor entscheidenden Anteil an der Veränderung der Gesellschaft. Die Entwicklung von Kunst und Kultur steht immer schon in enger Wechselwirkung mit den technologischen Möglichkeiten und Verbreitungsformen.

Kunst und Kultur sind Teile des Wandels von der Industrie- über die Dienstleistungs- zur Wissensgesellschaft und sie gestalten als „Inhaltslieferanten“ die Informationsgesellschaft in großem Umfang.

Kunst und Kultur finden nicht abgehoben von gesellschaftlichen und technologischen Veränderungen statt, sondern sind Teil davon. D.h. sie wirken zum einen auf die Veränderungsprozesse zurück, werden aber auch wiederum davon beeinflusst.

Dabei haben wie immer die alten Medien und Vermittlungsformen *nicht ausgedient*, sie werden durch neue *lediglich* ergänzt. Das Augenmerk muss darum auf die Gestaltung der Rahmenbedingungen gerichtet werden, um die wirtschaftliche und soziale Existenz von Kunstproduzenten, -verwertern und -vermittlern zu sichern.

Nur wenn ausreichend interessante Inhalte angeboten werden, werden die neuen Informationstechnologien genutzt. Kulturproduzenten, also die bildenden Künstlerinnen und Künstler, Musikerinnen und Musiker, Schauspielerinnen und Schauspieler, Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftsteller sind gefragter mehr denn je, denn:

- Nur sie können die entsprechenden Inhalte für die weltweiten Medienangebote liefern.
- Nur ihre Forschungen entwickeln die Ästhetik auch der neuen

Medien weiter.

- Nur durch ihre Zusammenarbeit mit Wissenschaftlern und Technikern entstehen neue Produkte.

Kultur und Bildung

Für den Übergang zur unternehmerischen Wissensgesellschaft ist schließlich die Pflege von Kunst und Kultur von herausragender Bedeutung. Kunst und Kultur erschließen Kreativität in einer Bevölkerung. Sie sind keineswegs nur dekorative Elemente. Daher sind Aufwendungen für sie auch kein bloßer Konsum, sondern unverzichtbare Investitionen in die Entwicklung einer Gesellschaft.

Kunst und Kultur sind ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der Informationsgesellschaft. Doch reichen Angebote an Kunst und Kultur allein nicht aus. Insbesondere der kulturellen Bildung ist große Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken. Im Schlussbericht der UNESCO-Kommission „Zukunft der Medien in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft“ wurde mehrfach darauf verwiesen, dass kontinuierliche Weiterbildung der Schlüssel für den erfolgreichen Wandel zur Informationsgesellschaft ist und damit das Bindeglied zur Beschäftigung.

**„Kulturelle Bildung“ ist die Voraussetzung für Weiterbildungsbe-
reitschaft überhaupt. Zur Kulturellen Bildung gehört die erforder-
liche Lesekompetenz ebenso wie die Medienkompetenz. Kultu-
relle Bildung konfrontiert mit Ungewohntem und öffnet damit den
Blick, sie macht zugleich aber Spaß. Und dies ist sicherlich eine
der besten Voraussetzungen für gelungene Bildungsprozesse
überhaupt.**

Damit Kunst und Kultur den Stellenwert einnehmen können, den z.B. die Autoren der Kommission für Zukunftsfragen ihnen beimessen, ist die öffentliche Förderung von Kultureinrichtungen, aber auch von Künstlerinnen und Künstlern jenseits großer Ereignisse erforderlich. Und darunter sind die unterschiedlichsten Kultureinrichtungen in ihrer ganzen Bandbreite von den Musikschulen über die Bibliotheken zu Theatern und Museen zu verstehen.

Kinder und Künstler

„Noch nie ist, denke ich, soviel Schrott auf Kinder gekippt worden wie heutzutage. Ich meine damit vor allem die Produkte, in

denen erwachsene Menschen sich auf ein eingebildetes oder bereits bewährtes Kinderniveau herunterschrauben. Das mag ja auch in Ordnung sein, wenn's darum geht, den Kindern unsere komplizierten gesellschaftlichen Spielregeln über- und durchschaubarer zu machen. Aber wenn es um Leben und Tod geht, um Liebe und Hass, Eifersucht, Lügen, List, Hoffnung, Sehnsucht, Wünsche und so weiter, da wissen diese kurzen Menschen doch verdammt gut Bescheid. Da könnten wir doch eher manches wieder lernen. Weil sich aber Kinder offenbar gerne mit solchem Schrott bekippfen lassen, in dem alles neckisch, lustig, trallala zugeht, scheint diese Frage, ob Kunst für Kinder, so schrecklich normal, dass ich mich manchmal wie von einem anderen Stern fühle, wenn ich keinen Unterschied machen will zwischen Erwachsenen und Kindern, wenn ich Kinder ernst nehmen will und mich, weil meine Erinnerung ans Kindsein und meine Erfahrung mit Kindern mich lehrt, dass Spielen, wie Kinder es tun, dem Tun des Künstlers zum Verwechseln ähnelt“. Friedrich Karl Waechter, ein deutscher Kinderbuch- und Kindertheaterautor, von dem dieses Zitat stammt, will keinen Unterschied machen, wenn es um Kunst für Kinder und Erwachsene geht. Das ist die Ausnahme!

Denn Erwachsene machen allzu oft Unterschiede zwischen Kunst für Kinder und der Kunst, die sie für sich selbst reklamieren. Und Kulturpolitiker sind auch nur Erwachsene. Wenn von Kultur die Rede ist, wird nicht von Kindern gesprochen; wenn von Kindern die Rede ist, geht es nicht um Kultur.

Eine kritische Forderung alternativer Kulturpolitik ist das kulturelle Lernen. Über die Ausbildung aktiver Wahrnehmung mittels kultureller Medien soll jeder Mensch dazu befähigt werden, sich die ihm angebotenen Fertigkeiten und Informationen zu erwerben und nach Erlangung kultureller und sozialer Kompetenz selbst produktiv zu werden.

Eine Forderung, die Hilmar Hoffmann, der frühere Präsident des Goethe-Instituts, in seiner programmatischen Schrift ‚Kultur für alle‘ (1979) übernommen hat. Hoffmann geht von einem Modell ästhetischer Erziehung aus, das mehr mit den Künsten als mit der Pädagogik zu tun hat, und das ich deshalb gerne übernehme. Das Modell umfasst dem Begriff nach die sinnliche Wahrnehmung und steht für den menschlichen Entwicklungsprozess gleichgewichtig neben der kognitiven Ausbildung oder der handwerklichen

Unterweisung. Die gesellschaftliche Misere einer Trennung der Bevölkerung in zwei Gruppen, in kulturell Berechtigte und in kulturelle Depravierte, kommt nicht nur einem Rückfall ins Bildungsbürgertum des 19. Jahrhunderts gleich, es kennzeichnet auch die Unfähigkeit unseres Bildungssystems, Erkenntnisse der Wissenschaft in die Praxis umzusetzen.

Auf ästhetische Erziehung zu verzichten hieße, die Muse der Kinder von vornherein einer exemplarischen Ungerechtigkeit aussetzen, weil sie nur einen Teil ihrer natürlichen Anlagen würden entfalten können, während übrige Entwicklungspotentiale verkümmern und unaufgeweckt nutzlos bleiben für sie selbst und die Gemeinschaft.

Theater als Schule des Sehens

Theater lebt vom Gegenseitigen, vom gegenseitigen Wahrnehmen, vom gegenseitigen Austausch. Theater braucht den Schauspieler und den Zu-Schauspieler. Theater ist immer eine Begegnung, eine Begegnung der Sinne, des Sinnierens, der Sinnsuche. Und deshalb ist Theater auch immer ästhetische Bildung. In den Bildungstheorien werden immer drei Erkenntniswege definiert. Neben dem wissenschaftlich-rationalen und dem ethisch-moralischen Zugriff auf die Welt ist es die ästhetische Erfahrung. Eben jener sinnlichen Wahrnehmung ist das Theater verpflichtet, ebenso der Interpretation von Deutungsmustern und der symbolischen Interaktion. Dass dieser herausragende Aspekt von Theater nicht immer ernst genommen wird, dass dieser idealistische Ansatz von Theater nicht immer als Auftrag verstanden wird und dass diese existentielle Bedeutung von Theater nicht immer konsequent in der Praxis umgesetzt wird, muss an dieser Stelle konstatiert werden. Dabei ist die Zeit reif für ein Theater, das sich insbesondere an ein junges Publikum wendet. Nie gab es bessere Begründungen für Kinder- und Jugendtheater. Nie gab es in einer bildungs- und kulturpolitischen Debatte mehr Anlass für die Notwendigkeit eines Theaters für Kinder und Jugendliche. Die PISA-Studie der OECD über die Schulausbildung, die für einige Länder erschütternd ausgefallen ist, bietet die Möglichkeit, für eine umfassende ästhetische Bildung mittels Theater zu plädieren. Eine der reichsten Nationen der Welt wurde im internationalen Vergleich weit abgeschlagen platziert. Besonders in den Bereichen Lesekompetenz, Problemlösungsstrategien und selbstgesteuertes Lernen, also

denjenigen Fähigkeiten, die sehr eng an ästhetische Bildung geknüpft sind, traten augenfällige Mängel in Erscheinung, vom sozialen Gefälle der Leistungsfähigkeit ganz zu schweigen. Besonders skandalös dabei ist, dass – wie auch immer man die Studie insgesamt fachlich beurteilen will – in den Kriterien nicht nur eine eklatante Vernachlässigung der Künste und der ästhetischen Bildung festzustellen ist, sondern dass sie im Untersuchungsprofil nicht vorkommen. Eines macht die Studie aber bewusst: Die Bedeutung von Bildung und der jungen Generation für unsere Gesellschaft. Und das muss Konsequenzen haben, in der Kulturpolitik, in der Theaterpolitik. Kinder- und Jugendtheater muss Schwerpunkt eines jeden Theaters werden! Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit, ganzjährig; nicht für die Kasse, nicht für die Statistik. Das Kinder- und Jugendtheater ist dort wie in mehr als 75 weiteren Ländern der Welt eine Institution, die einen spezifischen Auftrag hat, der sich stark von dem des gewöhnlichen Theaters unterscheidet.

Kindertheater als Medium der sozialen Phantasie

Kindertheater ist Anschauung des Lebens, Spiegel der Zeit und Anstoß zu einem phantasievollen Umgang mit der Wirklichkeit. Die Stücke entstammen der Realität der Kleinen und Jungen, es geht um Alltagsgeschichten, um Familie, Schule, Freizeit. Die da auf der Bühne haben mit denen da im Publikum etwas zu tun.

Kindertheater ist ein Medium der sozialen Phantasie. Die zweite Wirklichkeit lässt erkennen, zeigt auf und spielt vor, zum Staunen und zum Nachdenken. Integriert die große Welt auf die kleine Spielfläche. Konflikte werden beim Namen genannt und Probleme offen angesprochen. Aufmüpfigkeit wird ausprobiert und Zorn nicht vorenthalten. Auf der Bühne ist vieles möglich. Demokratisches Verhalten und soziales Lernen und natürlich das Träumen.

Kindertheater ist eine Schule des Sehens. Prächtige Bühnenbilder und leere Räume charakterisieren die Inszenierungen. Kostüme und Masken finden Verwendung, der kleine Finger spielt ebenso mit wie ein Gürtel, eine Geige oder ein Scheinwerfer. Das Theater als Zeichensystem, das es zu entschlüsseln gilt. Im besten Falle eine ästhetische Bildung par excellence.

Kindertheater ist ein Erlebnis der Gefühle. Was ist Freundlichkeit, was Lust, was Ärger, was Angst? Ein Wechselbad ohne nass zu

werden, das macht die Qualität guter Stücke aus. Mitzittern, mitfreuen, mitleben. Nicht der Gefühle, nicht des billigen Effekts wegen; wegen der Sache, der verhandelten Geschichte, wegen des existentiellen Gegenstandes. Gerade in diesem Zusammenhang bedarf es der besonderen Sorgfalt, wollen die Kinder und Jugendlichen ernst genommen werden.

Kindertheater ist Erzähltheater. Im besten Sinne: Es war einmal. Leih mir dein Ohr. Ich und du und wir. Von damals und heute. Am Anfang war das Wort. Am Ende ist Erfahrung. Abgründige Geschichten; denn auch die Welt der Kinder ist keine heile. Und deshalb gehören Licht- und Schattenseiten auf die Bretter, die die Welt bedeuten.

Es gibt Kindertheater, die nicht nur dem Vorurteil entgegentreten, für ein junges Publikum dürfe es in Form und Inhalt ein bisschen billiger sein (analog dem Kinderteller im Restaurant: halber Preis und halbe Portion), sondern die auch in der Lage sind, in ihrer täglichen Arbeit zu beweisen, dass gerade die Noch-Nicht-Erwachsenen durchaus zugänglich sein können für Abstraktes und Absurdes sowie für Existentielles und Experimentelles. Das Maß aller Dinge scheint in diesem Zusammenhang die Wahrhaftigkeit der Schauspielerei zu sein, die Kommunikation zwischen Spieler und Mitspieler, zwischen Schau-Spieler und Zuschau-Spieler.

Theater für ein junges Publikum braucht Kulturpolitik

Kinder- und Jugendtheater nehmen einen Bildungsauftrag wahr. Wie diese Zusammenarbeit zwischen Schule und Theater zu verstehen ist, hat die "Schauburg", das Kinder- und Jugendtheater der Stadt München unter dem Schlagwort "Kompliziertheit gegen Vereinfachung" zusammengefasst. "Daraus entstand in der Vergangenheit manchmal der Vorwurf, unsere Arbeit sei zu anspruchsvoll und heimliches Erwachsenentheater. Die Veröffentlichung der PISA-Studie und das jämmerliche Abschneiden deutscher Schüler im internationalen Vergleich haben unseren Arbeitsansatz bestätigt. Es reicht nicht, Kindern und Jugendlichen Einfaches vorzusetzen. Es reicht nicht, komplexe Sachverhalte herunter zu transformieren auf den kleinsten Nenner in einfacher Sprache und einfacher Spielweise in einfachster Bühnen-Ausstattung. Es genügt nicht, Kindern und Jugendlichen den Kinderteller an Bildung, an Kultur zu reichen, der immer nur aus vollfetten Pommes Frites mit Ketchup besteht. Sie brauchen ein ernsthaftes, komplexes Angebot dessen, was

der Bildungs-Warenkorb bietet. Wer Kinder und Jugendliche an den Katzentisch setzt, bekommt durch PISA die Quittung" (www.schauburg.net).

Dabei geht es nicht darum, während der Schulzeit Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare oder Lessing im Theater abgesehen zu haben. Bildung ist eine Form der Weltaneignung, und deshalb muss ein Theater für junge Zuschauer deren Sehweise in den Mittelpunkt rücken. Als Zuschauer kann man im Theater Fähigkeiten trainieren, die Grundvoraussetzung von Wissensaneignung sein können: Die Fähigkeit nämlich, die in ihrer Aktualität wahrgenommene Welt entschlüsseln zu können. Theater ist ein Medium der Zeichen.

Man kann im Theater, wenn es gut gemacht ist, lernen, Zeichen zu dechiffrieren, Symbole zu deuten. Diese Form des abstrakten Denkens ist eine Schlüsselqualifikation, die junge Menschen für ihre Zukunftsfähigkeit dringend brauchen. Die Zeichen der Zeit lesen zu können, ist eine schöpferische Kraft, die dringend gefördert werden muss.

Das Theater ist das außergewöhnliche Ereignis, das es ermöglicht, alles was sonst gilt, auf den Kopf zu stellen, die gewohnten Gesetze außer Kraft zu setzen. Damit ist eine ganz andere Qualität angesprochen, als die, die wir gewöhnlich dem Begriff des Lernens zuordnen, das doch eine gewisse Beherrschung von Zusammenhängen, Erfahrungen und Wissensgegenständen hervorbringen soll, Orientierung und Übersicht geben soll und die Möglichkeit, das Gelernte reflexiv zu beurteilen und auf die jeweiligen Kontexte zu beziehen. Im Kinder- und Jugendtheater geht es – im besten Falle – um ästhetische Vieldeutigkeit, wird – im besten Falle – eine überschneidende Sinnenfreude inszeniert und kann – im besten Falle – ein Erfahrungsraum geschaffen werden, der Beweglichkeit im spielerischen Sinne freisetzt.

Kinder- und Jugendtheater kann als außerschulischer Lernort der schulischen Bildung zuarbeiten. Das wäre doch eine große Chance für die Ganztagschule: Die Kombination von schulischer und außerschulischer kultureller Kinder- und Jugendbildung! Kinder- und Jugendtheater, nicht als Wandertag oder als Lückenbüller, nicht als 7. Unterrichtsstunde als Schule mit anderen Mitteln und auch nicht als Betreuungsangebot um die Nachmittagsstunden mit Programmen von außen zu füllen. Kinder- und Jugendtheater könnte Partner von Schule sein, es könnte integraler Bestandteil des Curriculums werden.

Künstlerische Geschmacksbildung mittels Theater

“Vieles von dem, was menschliche Wesen einander mitzuteilen haben und mitteilen müssen, um stabile soziale Strukturen aufzubauen“, sagt der deutsche Hirnforscher Wolf Singer, lasse sich in rationaler Sprache allein nicht fassen. Darum leitet er die Notwendigkeit ab, auch die nichtsprachliche Kommunikationskompetenz optimal zu entwickeln, und auch diese bedürfen der Einübung und Verfeinerung. Diesen Bildungsauftrag nimmt seit Jahrzehnten das Kinder- und Jugendtheater wahr. Als Mauerblümchen, als fünftes Rad am Wagen. Das sollte sich ändern, das kann sich ändern, denn es muss sich etwas ändern. Zur Entwicklung eines differenzierten Wahrnehmungs- und Urteilsvermögen kann das Theater für Kinder und Jugendliche ebenso beitragen wie zur künstlerischen Geschmacksbildung, indem es mit seinen mehrdimensionalen, dichterischen Bildern sinnliches Anschauungsmaterial liefert. Allein die Bedeutung, die der Geschichte und ihrer dramatischen Darbietung beigemessen wird, kann dazu beitragen.

Es gibt nach meiner Erfahrung überhaupt nur eine verbindliche Forderung an Stücke bzw. Inszenierungen für das Kindertheater, und das ist die nach abgründigen Geschichten, also nach Geschichten, die bis an den Abgrund gehen, die Konflikte nicht bagatellisieren, beschwichtigen, wegkuscheln, sondern in ihrer existentiellen Tragweite den Kindern zumuten.

Das Leben der Kinder ist kein Spaziergang durch ein Paradiesgärtlein. Es kann die Hölle sein – und wenn man Kinder im Theater nicht betrügen will, dann gehört die Hölle auf die Bühne. Wenn das Kindertheater sich nicht scheut vor der Härte der sozialen Praxis, dann erledigen sich auch die Debatten um den Formenkanon. Kinder wollen im Theater nicht geschont werden. Sie fühlen sich erst dann wirklich ernstgenommen, wenn im Spiel auf der Bühne ihre eigenen Grenzerfahrungen sichtbar und erlebbar werden.

Wenn von Kultur die Rede ist, wird meistens nicht von Kindern gesprochen; wenn von Kindern die Rede ist, geht es meistens nicht um Kultur. Kinder und Jugendliche haben aber ein Recht auf Kunst und Kultur, wie es in Artikel 31 der Kinderrechtskonvention der Vereinten Nationen von den Vertragsstaaten vereinbart wurde. Es geht um die volle Beteiligung am kulturellen und künstlerischen Leben und um die Bereitstellung geeigneter

und gleicher Möglichkeiten für die kulturelle und künstlerische Betätigung. Kinder- und Jugendtheater ist dabei nur ein Feld einer Kulturpolitik, die im besten Sinne auch Kinder- und Jugendpolitik sowie Bildungspolitik sein kann. Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung bedarf der besonderen Förderung, lebendige, kulturelle Infrastrukturen für Kinder und Jugendliche in den Kommunen zu schaffen, zu erhalten und auszubauen bedeutet, die Vielfalt der Kultur als Lebensmittel für alle zu stärken und zu beleben.

CHILDREN NEED ART

A Case for Aesthetic Education and Future-oriented Cultural Policy *

Wolfgang Schneider

Director of the Institute for Cultural Policy and Dean of the Faculty for Cultural Studies and Aesthetic Communication at the University of Hildesheim. Member of the German Parliament's Inquiry Commission, "Culture in Germany". President of ASSITEJ, the International Association of theatre for Children and Young People.

(GERMANY)

translated by Sabine Karmrodt

No one will argue with me when I say that „Children need art“. When I state it as a question “Do children need art?” again, next to no one would say no. Of course children first need food and drink, a roof over their heads, healthcare, and social services. These are essential, but even so, not always implicit in our world.

Don't worry, I am not going to stress you with numbers and facts about malnutrition, refugees, the spreading of Aids in under 21 year olds in Africa, child abuse in Europe, child pornography in America or child prostitution in Asia. I am also not collecting for charity organizations or for UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. I am only trying to bring the theme of my presentation into context. Then when we speak of art for children and art by children, we must always speak of them in relation to the social contexts they belong to. We must look at the challenges of our times in relation to the qualities of truth, beauty and goodness determined by our cultural history and traditions.

The dramatic transformation from an industrial to an information society is often compared to society's transition from agricultural to industrial in the 19th century. Just as the changes in production methods and priorities had an impact on all aspects of society in the past, the adoption of information and communication technologies have fundamentally changed the homes,

* This article has been written for “Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three” edited by Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

businesses and economies of today. These changes, today as in the past, seem to evoke mixed feelings: of well-founded fear, but also accompanied by euphoria. Also radical, is the movement towards economic expansion, as well as a changed understanding of the role of state, administration and its citizens.

As in earlier times, as the shift towards an information society takes place, arts and culture are playing a deciding role. The development of arts and culture has always been in close interaction with technological potential and new ways of diffusion.

First Thesis

Arts and culture are actively involved in the transformation of society - from the service sector to the knowledge sector - acting to a large extent as “content delivers” for the information society.

Arts and culture are not separate from social and technological change, rather a part of them. For this reason, they impact the change process, as well being impacted by it. In the process, we do old media and diffusion methods are *not disposed of*, instead they are simply *supplemented* by new ones. Our focus must therefore turn to the design of the basic elements in order to convince arts agents, diffusers and producers of their economic and social value. The truth is that only when enough interesting content is offered, will new information technologies be used. Arts producers, as well as trained artists, musicians, actors and writers are needed more than ever because:

- Only they can deliver the content that the world-wide new media requires.
- Only their research can further develop the aesthetic of the new media.
- Only through their cooperation with technicians and scholars can new products be developed.

Culture and Education

Support of arts and culture is important for the transition to an entrepreneurial knowledge economy. Arts and culture foster creativity in a population. They are by no means just decorative elements. In this sense, spending on art should not be seen as useless consumption, rather a priceless investment in the

development of society.

Arts and culture are an integral part of the information society, however arts and cultural offerings are not enough on their own. Large attention is currently being given to cultural education. In the UNESCO commission's final report "The Future of the Media in Economics and Society" there are several mentions of the importance of further education for a successful transition into the information society, and key to securing employment.

Second Thesis

Cultural education is the prerequisite for further education readiness. Included in a cultural education are strong reading and media skills. Cultural education confronts people with things they aren't accustomed to, thus opening their views, and is at the same time fun. This is certainly one of the best conditions for a successful educational process.

So that arts and culture can take the place of significance that it continuously demands, as also seen in policy statements, it is essential that cultural institutions and artists work toward publicly promoting the arts and culture, beyond just major events. This includes the entire spectrum of cultural institutions: from art and music schools to the libraries at theatres and museums

Children and Artists

"Never before, in my mind, has there been so much junk dumped on children as there is today. I mean, just look at the products that adults scale down to an imagined or already-proven level for a child. But the truth is, when it comes to matters of life and death, love and hate, jealousy, lies, cunning, hope, longing, desires and so on, these little people know their way around. It is we who could stand to re-learn a few things. However because children openly allow themselves to be bombarded with this whimsical, funny, "tralala" junk, the question, about children and art, seems so terribly normal that I sometimes feel like I am from another planet when I don't want to make a difference between adults and children. When I want to take children seriously. My memories of being a child and my experience with children have taught me that the way a child plays and the way an artist plays are not at all dissimilar". This quote comes from Friedrich Karl Waechter, a German children's author and playwright. He does not want to make a difference between art for children and for adults. This

is the exception!

Third Thesis

Adults all too often make a distinction between what is suitable for children and for themselves. And cultural policy makers are adults too. When we speak of culture, children are left out of the discussion. When we speak of children, culture is not considered.

A critical requirement of alternative cultural policy is cultural learning. Through training in active perception by means of cultural media, every person should be capable of acquiring any skills and information that are offered. This leads to higher personal productivity due to increased cultural and social competence. I use an aesthetic education model, more tightly connected to the arts than to pedagogy. The model looks at the period after sensual perception takes place, examining human development process in relation to theoretical and technical training. The social misery resulting from a separation of the population into two groups, one culturally entitled and one culturally deprived, does not only result in a relapse to 19th Century class-based education practices, it also marks the inability of our education system to convert current knowledge into practice.

Keeping children from receiving aesthetic education means exposing them to exemplary unfairness from the beginning, since only a small part of their natural talents are given the chance to surface. Further potential isn't given a chance to develop, remaining inaccessible to the individual and the community. Let me use an example to demonstrate what role the arts can play in an aesthetic education, concentrating on my own reflections on theatre for young audiences.

The Arts as a School of Sight

The arts live on mutuality, on mutual observations, on mutual exchange. The arts need the actor and the audience. The arts are always a meeting, a meeting of the senses, of ideas, and the search for meaning. The arts are therefore always aesthetic education. Educational theory defines three major ways of learning. Next to the scientific-rational and the ethical-moral views, lies the aesthetic experience. The arts are committed to sensual perception, and likewise, the interpretation of the meaning of patterns and symbolic interactions. That this

exceptional aspect of the arts is not always taken seriously, that this idealistic quality of the arts is not always understood to be part of it, and that this existential impact of the arts is not always converted into practice, must be recognized here. The time is ripe for the arts focused specifically on young audiences. Never before have there been more reasons to support the arts for children and the youth. Never before has an educational and politico-cultural debate more strongly demonstrated a case for the necessity for the arts for children and young people. The Study on Education "PISA" (Programme for International Student Assessment) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which for some countries proved quite eye-opening, provides an opportunity for the art to campaign for a role in comprehensive aesthetic education. One of the richest nations of the world was, in international comparison, far behind. Particularly weak results were seen within the areas of reading competency, problem solving and self-directed learning, areas which are very closely related to aesthetic education. However, there is seems to be silence about this social decline. Particularly scandalous is that - however one wants to technically judge the study - not only do the criteria show a striking neglect of the arts and aesthetic education, but also that they were never even considered in the study profile.

One thing, however, is clear from the study: the importance of education and of the young generation for our society. This must have ramifications in cultural policy and in youth politics. Theatres for children and the youth must become the emphasis of every cultural institute! Not only at Children's Day, but all year round; not for the ticket sales, not for the statistics.

Children's theatre as a medium of social fantasy

Children's theatre is a view of life, a mirror of the times and a fantasy-full look at reality. The pieces represent the realities of children and youth. They deal with everyday life stories, with family, school and free time. Those on the stage have a relationship with their audience. Children's theatre is a medium for social fantasy. A second reality can be seen, showed and played, causing reason for astonishment and providing reason to reflect. The whole world is integrated onto a small playing space. Conflicts are named and problems are openly talked about. Insubordination is tested out and anger isn't held back.

A lot is possible on the stage: Democratic behaviour, social learning and of course, dreaming. Children's theatre is a school of seeing. Magnificent sets and empty spaces characterize the productions. Costumes and masks find use, and a small finger plays along just as a belt, a violin or a headlight. The theatre is like a code needing to be unscrambled. At its best, an aesthetic education par excellence.

Children's theatre is an experience of feelings. What is friendliness, desire, annoyance, fear? Being able to take a bath without getting wet, that is what constitutes a good piece. To shiver together, enjoy together, experience together. Not the feelings caused by some cheap effects, but feelings evoked because of a story, because of a real situation. Care needs to be taken in this context, as children and youth want to be taken seriously.

Children's theatre is storytelling theatre. Stories that are not always pretty, because children's worlds are not perfect either. Therefore both light and shadow belong, because they are part of life. There are children's theatres, that do not only fight against the prejudice that the form and content of theatre for a young public is allowed to be a bit cheaper (similar to a child's menu in a restaurant: half price for a half portion), but that are also in the position to prove through their daily work that the not-quite-adults can be quite open to the abstract and absurd, as well as for the existential and experimental. The measure of all things seems to be the truthfulness of the acting/playing, the communication between players and between actors and audience members.

Theatre for Young Audiences needs Cultural Policy

Children and young people's theatre are taking the issue of education seriously. A co-operation between schools and theatre, the "Schauburg", through Munich's Children and Young People's theatre, has formulated a summary of the theme as "complexity versus simplification". "In the past there was sometimes the complaint that our work was too demanding and more secretive than adult theatre. The release of the PISA study and the deplorable results of German students in relation to international standards confirmed a case for our work. It is not enough to just simplify. It is not enough to transform complex content down to the smallest denominator in simple language, using simple methods, with only the simplest staging. It is insufficient that children and young people are given a "children's portion

sized" education, and access to culture that consists solely of fatty french-fries and ketchup. They need to be offered a serious, complex basket full of educational possibilities. Whoever sets children and young people at the cat's table, should receive a receipt from PISA" (www.schauburg.net).

The point is not that students be presented Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare and Lessing during school. Education is a form of world appropriation, and therefore theatre for young audiences must move the issues of young people to the centre. Basic theatre skills can be taught to audience members: The ability to be able to decode the reality of one's world. Theatre is a medium of signs and symbolism.

Fourth Thesis

When theatre is good, it provides the opportunity to learn how to decode and interpret their meanings. This form of abstract thinking is a key skill that young people desperately need to develop for their future success. To be able to read the signs of the times, is a creative strength which must be firmly promoted.

Theatre is a most unusual experience in that it allows us turn everything that exists on its head, to set the usual rules off balance. Therefore, it refers to a completely different quality than we usually think of as learning. Nevertheless it should bring a certain mastery of connections, experiences and knowledge, as well as the potential though orientation and overview of the big picture to use what is learned for critical self-reflection and to better interpret these situations. In children and young people's theatre the greatest hope would be for an aesthetic ambiguity where an intersecting joyfulness is staged in an environment where movement, in the playful sense, is set free.

As an extracurricular learning place, children and young people's theatre can help supplement school education. What a chance for the full-day school: The combination of in-school and extracurricular cultural education for children and young people! Children and young people's theatre, not as a field trip or makeshift filler, not as an additional lesson as schools with other means, and also not as a babysitting service to fill afternoons with programs from the outside. Children and young people's theatre could partner with schools. It could become an integrated part of school curriculum.

Education in Artistic Taste by Means of Theatre

"Much of that what people are able to share with each other and need to share to share with each other in order to build stable social structures", says German brain researcher, Wolf Singer, "does not allow itself to be completely communicated in rational speech". That is why he emphasizes the importance of developing non-language based communication competencies, saying that these require practice and refinement. Children and young people's theatres have been taking these ideas seriously for decades. The wallflowers. The fifth wheels. That should change, can change, and must change somewhat. Through the development of a differentiated means of judgement and perception, the theatre for children and young people can contribute to the formation of artistic taste, as it provides multidimensional, poetic pictures that appeal to the senses. Alone the meaning attached to a story and its dramatic presentation, can contribute.

Fifth Thesis

In my experience, there is only one absolute necessity for arts productions, for children and young people, and that is that they must go to the edge. They must be stories that don't avoid, diminish, or appease conflict, rather realistically portray its consequences to children.

A child's life is no walk through the garden of paradise. It can be Hell, and when we don't want to lie to the youth in the arts, than Hell also belongs on stage. If the arts for children do not shrink away from the harshness of social reality, then the debates will take care of themselves. Young people do not want to be protected in the arts. They first feel taken seriously when the arts make their own bad experiences visible and real.

When culture is being spoken about, it is rare that children are mentioned. Likewise, when we speak of children, culture is not usually in the picture. Children and young people have a right to arts and culture, as was agreed upon by the Contracting States in Article 3 of the United Nations' Children's Rights Convention. It concerns children's rights to full participation in cultural and artistic life, as well as access to suitable opportunities for cultural and artistic development. Children and young people's theatre is thereby only one field of cultural policy, which also includes child and youth policy as well as educational policy. Cultural education for children and young people has the task of creating,

maintaining and expanding active cultural infrastructures for children in their municipalities, thereby strengthening and invigorating the variety of culture as food for all. And the arts can only have this function of offering key-competencies to children and young people, if they truly reach and inspire them.

CON GLI OCCHI E CON LA PELLE

Valeria Frabetti

Direttrice Artistica,
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi
Bologna **(ITALIA)**

Creiamo storie... favole e fiabe, racconti lunghi e racconti corti. Storie per bambini...

Iniziamo con la storia di un compleanno: Il Teatro e il Nido compie ventidue anni.

Nel 1987 nasce "Acqua" il primo spettacolo per i bambini del nido. I bambini del nido sono bambini piccolissimi, alcuni di loro non parlano ancora, non camminano o hanno imparato a camminare solo ieri.

E prima del 1987? C'erano i piccoli delle "materne".

Nella nostra storia di compagnia teatrale il pubblico dei bambini piccoli c'è sempre stato, come pure il pubblico dei bambini più grandi e degli adolescenti.

Siamo nati come Teatro Ragazzi e creare spettacoli per loro è sempre stato un atto di volontà, necessario e cosciente. Poi abbiamo incontrato i piccolissimi ed è successo "qualcosa". È successo che abbiamo iniziato a comprendere l'importanza "degli occhi e della pelle". È cominciato così un viaggio avventuroso alla scoperta di nuove piste, ricco di incontri con bambini, educatori, artisti, genitori, studiosi, appassionati della prima infanzia, gente di paesi diversi.

Gli incontri e i confronti fanno crescere artisticamente.

Così i confini di ricerca si sono allargati, i linguaggi mescolati, si sono cercati altri simboli ed immagini. Procedere in questa ricerca ha significato sì incontrare quel particolare tipo di spettatore sconosciuto ai più, ma anche rapportarsi con un teatro di semplicità.

Sono nate nuove visioni e ci siamo imposti un'ulteriore sfida...

Un teatro di stupore e sudore.

Fare spettacoli per bambini piccolissimi può essere preoccupante...

All'inizio lo è stato... Cosa fare? E come fare...?

Non avevamo la memoria del nostro essere stati piccolissimi che ci aiutasse.

C'erano le testimonianze, il sostegno di adulti, educatrici e pedagogisti, che li frequentavano e sostenevano il progetto, ad aiutarci, ma non bastava...a "far scattare la molla"...

La molla è scattata con l'esperienza relazionale sul campo e la frequentazione continua di questo pubblico imprevedibile che ci ha regalato il desiderio di non finire mai di imparare e di continuare a sognare. Il desiderio e il sogno sono sostegni di questa ricerca che dura da vent'anni.

Una ricerca che è "un dare e un ricevere", per cui ci siamo spogliati di certezze acquisite e abbiamo scoperto su di noi nuovi occhi e una nuova pelle.

I piccolissimi comunicano con gli occhi... per questo devi averli vicini e con gli occhi devi imparare a raccontare, senza strafare...

Parlano col corpo e allora devi imparare a riconoscere il linguaggio del corpo, ascoltare il loro respiro, interpretare una mano che si muove, un sussulto, una risata non contemplata dal tuo tempo teatrale...

Il tempo teatrale lo possono a volte stravolgere, o meglio stravolgono il tuo concetto di tempo e di fine del tempo.

Uno spettacolo ha un inizio ed una fine. Ed esiste un tempo dello spettacolo, pensato giustamente per loro: più corto, circa mezz'ora... altrimenti non reggono...

Ma poi succede, una volta e poi anche un'altra, che lo spettacolo finisce e questo pubblico, che non applaude, perché imparerà domani, resti silenzioso, seduto, con gli occhi in attesa che tu continui...

Ma è finito!

È finito, ma non per loro! Restano lì... in attesa. Il significato del finito non lo hanno ancora imparato, lo impareranno domani!

E impariamo noi a prolungare quel tempo, che diventa necessario, rompendo la barriera della parete teatrale ed entrando, in punta di piedi, in un'altra dimensione: quella del gioco... fino a quando altri adulti, che il concetto di fine ce l'hanno, li portano via.

E dopo tanti anni continua a succedere e quando restano lì "incantati", tu teatrante adulto continui a stupirti, e poi ti emozioni perché si è verificata una magia...

Quella magia tra chi fa e chi riceve, che è il senso del teatro: una relazione non di convenzione, ma di verità. La magia che dipende da te!

Fare spettacoli per bambini piccolissimi può essere molto *faticoso*.

Anche se lo spettacolo ha una durata inferiore a quelli per bambini più grandi... si fa fatica, fatica fisica.

Perché la pelle e i muscoli devono restare all'erta, le orecchie tese, gli occhi attenti (anche quello posteriore) e il cuore deve battere per ognuno di loro e allo stesso tempo per tutti loro.

Essere attenti, disponibili, presenti e veri, è faticoso... Ma questo non è il "lavoro" del Teatro?

Fare spettacoli per bambini piccolissimi può essere molto *complicato*.

Perché devi essere semplice e lavorare in sottrazione per arrivare sempre più all'essenza e alla sostanza di quello che proponi.

Devi essere sincero e non spaventato per affrontare ed offrire tematiche forti con leggerezza, che raccontino della vita, inseguendo il come attraverso il cosa, senza mai pensare che non capiscano, che non gli arrivi, solo perché alla fine dello spettacolo non hai verifiche o risposte razionali, ma talvolta "solo" alcuni baci e abbracci...

Preoccupante, faticoso, complicato e, proprio per questo, bello.

Perché comunicare attraverso il teatro è difficile, ma le difficoltà sono eccitanti.

Perché la relazione emozionale tra chi agisce e chi assiste, non avviene per caso, ma è qualcosa che ha che fare con il piacere di fare e che dà il senso di ciò che si fa.

Perché c'è bisogno di curiosità, di mettersi continuamente in discussione, evitando cliché consolidati, di essere sempre alla scoperta di nuove possibilità, riconoscendo che è una fortuna l'essere sempre in partenza, con la valigia piena di sogni e desideri, e di non essere già arrivati...

Raccontare l'esperienza con i piccolissimi era necessario per parlare poi di quelli un po' più grandi, ma che appartengono ancora al mondo dell'infanzia.

La differenza di età non è tanta, eppure sono diversi.

Ma il senso profondo di un teatro preoccupante, faticoso e complicato, che si serve degli occhi e della pelle, non cambia e non cambia neppure il pensare a loro.

Uno spettacolo è un regalo che hai il piacere di fare. Quando fai un regalo devi pensare alla persona a cui lo fai. La devi conoscere e quindi la devi osservare a lungo, sentirla e devi

essere attento a raccogliere anche i piccoli particolari. Se vuoi fare un regalo giusto devi pensare a quella persona.

La persona in questo caso è un "tre-seienne" che impara e continua ad imparare, continua a conoscere, a sperimentare... ed usa sempre più la parola.

È una persona anche sottoposta a bombardamenti di informazioni, la maggior parte delle quali avviene attraverso le immagini, immagini che si affollano, si stratificano e portano con se nuovi ritmi temporali.

Gli spazi e i tempi e le modalità del gioco per un tre-seienne diventano altro.

Il teatro allora assume una responsabilità sociale ed educativa per la sua valenza di rapporto umano diretto e non mediato e per avere la possibilità di accompagnare il bambino su sentieri di un immaginario diverso.

Per questo è importante pensare a un teatro necessario, un teatro in movimento, che è formazione infinita.

Un teatro che ha bisogno di frequentare il pubblico bambino in continua mutazione.

Un teatro di ricerca e alla ricerca.

Un teatro che ha bisogno sempre di nuovi incontri.

Un teatro di rischio, che permette ed accetta anche l'errore.

Un teatro di sfida.

Una sfida artistica continua, dove l'attore è un mediatore attivo che stimola ed evoca l'immaginario attraverso la suggestione narrativa.

Una sfida. Un'offerta di ritmi comunicativi diversi da quelli di altri media che dichiarano troppo e abituano l'occhio del bambino all'evidente.

Una sfida infinita.

Che merita di essere affrontata per raccogliere l'emozione di un silenzio pieno di tensione, o di un pieno di voci che ti accompagna solidale.

Per questo continuiamo a creare storie per l'infanzia.

Ma continuiamo anche per catturare la poesia che l'infanzia possiede, perché non vada dispersa.

Per lottare contro il tempo che via via cerca di annullare l'immaginazione bambina.

Per il legame con lo spettatore piccolo che è un legame particolare; ed è affascinante esserci per ognuno di loro, perché lo spettatore piccolo vive lo spettacolo come rapporto

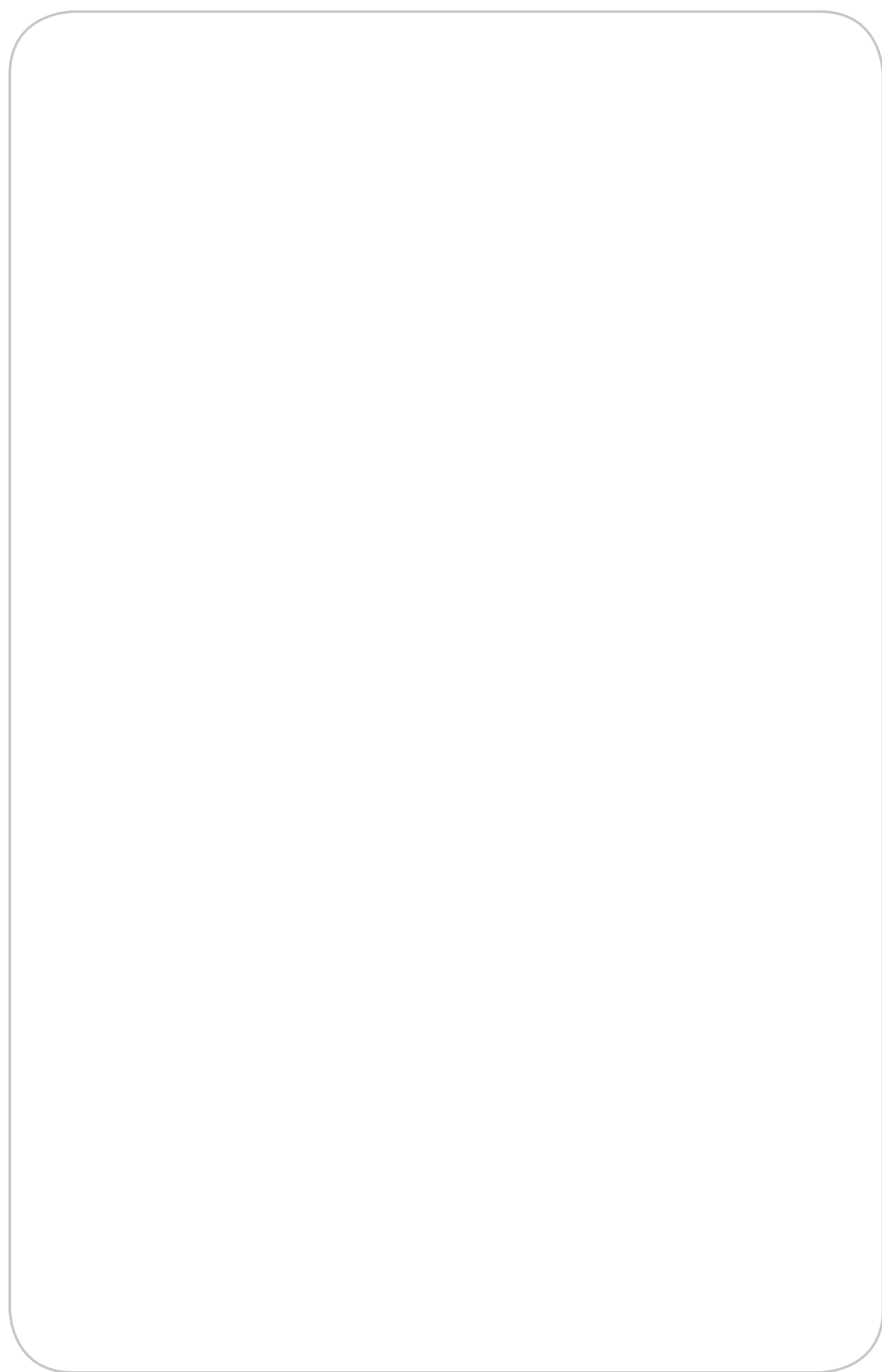
personale, ma nello stesso tempo esserci per tutti e trovare un ritmo comune, per non perdere nessuno.

Il teatro ha nella sua forza una grande fragilità: si può perdere il pubblico in un attimo e il pubblico dell'infanzia, che non ha idee precostituite, è il pubblico che ti abbandona più facilmente se non ti poni costantemente in relazione con il tuo dover essere interessante. Ma il concetto di interessante, come ci ha spiegato Peter Brook, non può essere separato da quello di essere interessato.

L'interesse parte dall'emozione dell'attore, che si riconosce in quello che fa e dice, un attore fedele e soprattutto vicino ai bambini, che si mette alla loro altezza e li guarda negli occhi, che respira e corre con loro scuotendoli con forza e con dolcezza.

Una poetica alla ricerca dello stupore, attraverso storie originali ed anche tradizionali, racconti epici, favole, storie d'avventura.

Una poetica che è nata e continua a svilupparsi in una dimensione prevalentemente di gruppo, in cui si mescolano parole, corpi, intenzioni, suoni, gesti... in cui l'immaginazione di ognuno contribuisce alla tessitura creativa, incontrando via via altre visioni... le visioni di chi scrive, di chi crea luci, musiche, suoni, scenografie, immagini e anche di chi fa la messa in scena, per arrivare a una forma che non dovrebbe mai essere un atto concluso, ma piuttosto un divenire che cresce negli incontri con il pubblico... alla ricerca continua di quel momento magico in cui tra chi agisce e chi assiste scatta l'emozione, in una relazione giusta di incontro.



WITH OUR EYES AND SKIN

Valeria Frabetti

Artistic Director,
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi
Bologna **(ITALY)**

translated by Letizia Olivieri

We create stories and tales, short stories... long stories. Stories for children...

Let us start with the story of a birthday: "Theatre and Nursery School" is twenty-two.

In 1987, "Water" was the first show for nursery children. They are the youngest, some of them do not even talk or walk, or maybe they have just learnt how to do it.

And what before 1987? Then, there were only the children attending "crèches".

As a theatrical company, we have always had young children as an audience, as well as older children and teenagers.

We started our artistic career as a theatrical company for young audiences and creating shows for them has always been a wilful and necessary act. Then we met the very young, and something happened. What happened was that we started to understand the importance of "eyes and skin". And we embarked on an adventure to discover new paths, full of meetings with children, educators, artists, parents, scholars, early childhood enthusiasts, people from different countries.

Meetings and exchanges make you improve as an artist.

So the boundaries of our research have expanded, languages have blended, we have explored other symbols and images. Undertaking this research meant meeting that particular kind of audience, but at the same time, it meant getting involved in a simple kind of theatre.

New visions have come about and we took up another challenge.

A theatre of sweat and wonder.

Creating shows for very young children can be worrisome...

At the beginning, it actually was. What should we do? And how should we do it...?

We had no memory of being so young ourselves, and that could have helped.

There were, however, the accounts and the support of adults, educators and pedagogues, who were really in touch with them and at the same time they supported our project and helped us, but this was not enough to... "activate the mechanism"...

It was thanks to our fieldwork that we could activate the mechanism, and to the constant contact with this unpredictable audience who gave us the strength and the urge to keep on learning and dreaming. Strength and dreams were cornerstones of this twenty-year-old piece of research.

This research is a "give and take": we got rid of our certainties and discovered that new eyes were being laid upon us and that we had a new skin.

Very young children communicate with their eyes... this is why you need to have them close to you and to learn how to tell stories with your eyes, without overacting...

They talk with their body and you need to be able to decipher body language, listen to their breath, interpret the movement of a hand, a start or laugh which you did not plan while calculating your theatrical time...

They can sometimes upset the concept of theatrical time or, better said, your concept of time and of the end of the time.

Shows have got a beginning and an end. And shows have their time, which is planned according to the children's needs: about half an hour, otherwise they will not cope.

But then it happens once, and it happens twice... that the show ends and this audience - who never clap their hands, because they will learn how to do it tomorrow - keep silent, sitting and watching you waiting for you to go on...

But it's over!

It's over, but not for them... They just stay there... waiting. They have not learnt the meaning of end... they will learn it tomorrow!

So it is us who have to learn how to extend that time, breaking through the barrier of theatrical walls and entering, tiptoeing, another dimension: the dimension of play... until other adults - for whom the concept of end is very clear - will take them away.

And after so many years, it still happens and when they just sit there so "astonished", you keep being amazed and thrilled because something magical happened... This "magic" happens between those who give and those who take, and it represents

the real sense of theatre: not an agreement, but something extremely true.

This magic depends on you!

Creating shows for very young children can be *exhausting*.

Although they are shorter than those for older children... it is exhausting...

Because your skin and muscles need to be responsive, your ears receptive and your eyes wide open (also the one you have at the back of your head), and your heart needs to beat for each and every one of them and for all of them at the same time.

To be attentive, willing, present and true is exhausting... But isn't this the "task" of Theatre?

Creating shows for very young children can be very *complicated*.

Because you need to be as simple as possible and to try and get to the essence of what you want to show them.

You need to be true and not frightened in order to deal with themes regarding life in a "light" manner; you need to explain "hows" and "whats" and never think that they do not understand, that they do not get it just because at the end of the show you do not get any rational feedback or response, but maybe "just" a few hugs and kisses...

Worrisome, exhausting, complicated... this is why it is so wonderful.

Because it is difficult to communicate through theatrical language, but difficulties are exciting.

Because the relationship established between those who act and those who watch is not accidental, but it is something that has to do with the pleasure of doing and that gives meaning to what you do.

Because there is the need to be curious, to constantly challenge yourself, to try and discover new possibilities, considering yourself lucky because you are always ready to depart, with your bag full of wishes and dreams, and you haven't arrived anywhere yet...

The experience with the very young is helpful to introduce the one with older children, even though they still belong to the world of childhood.

They are a couple of years older, but they are different.

The meaning of a worrisome, exhausting and complicated theatre, however, does not change; it still involves your eyes and your skin, and the way you need to think about the children does

not change, either.

A show is a gift. It is a pleasure for you to give someone this gift. When you give a gift, you need to think to the person you are giving it to. You need to know them and therefore you need to observe them, feel them; you also need to pay attention to details.

In our case, the person you are giving the gift is a three/six-year-old, who is learning and will be learning; they are exploring... and they increasingly use words.

They are also bombed with information, especially through images, which blend together, then layer and finally bring about new concepts of time.

Three/six-year-olds play with and in spaces, timings and ways that are very different.

Theatre has at this stage a social and educational role as it represents a direct human relationship with no mediators, and as it is also able to take children to a different kind of imagery.

This is why a necessary, moving, endlessly-under-construction theatre is important.

This kind of theatre needs to be in touch with young audiences, because they are constantly changing.

A kind of theatre that does research and is always in search of something.

A kind of theatre that always needs new meetings.

A kind of theatre that accepts and allows for mistakes.

A challenging kind of theatre. A constant artistic challenge, where actors are active mediators who encourage imagination and evoke images through storytelling.

It is a challenge; it is offering communicative rhythms different from the ones provided by other media, so straightforward that children's eyes get used to what is patent.

It is an endless challenge, and it deserves to be taken up just to enjoy a silence full of emotions or many sympathetic voices.

This is why we keep creating stories for young audiences.

We keep doing it also to seize the poetry of childhood, in order for it not to be lost.

We keep doing it to fight against time, which increasingly tries to annihilate children's imagination.

We keep doing it for the special bonds you create with young children; it is involving to be there for each and every one of them, because they experience shows as a personal relationship,

but at the same time you are there for all of them and you need to find a shared rhythm, so that no one "gets lost".

Theatre is very weak in its strength: you can "lose" your audience in a second and very young audiences, with their unbiased ideas, are the ones that get lost more easily if you are not constantly interesting. The concept of "interesting", however, cannot be kept separated from the concept of "interested", as Peter Brook explains.

Interest lies in the involvement of the actors, who believe in what they do and say and, most importantly, who are close to the children, who look them in the eye and breath and run with them and shake them with strength and sweetness.

It is a poetic style that uses original as well as traditional stories, epic tales, fairy tales, adventure stories... to have both their audiences and actors amazed.

It is a poetic style that keeps developing within groups, in which words, bodies, intentions, sounds, movements blend together... in which the imagination of every single person involved plays a part in creating the plot, bringing about new visions... the visions of those who write the plays, as well as of those who design and project lights, music, sounds, sets, images, of those who actually do the "mise-en-scène". All of this is aimed at obtaining something non-finished; on the contrary, it is something always under construction that is being built while audiences experience it... always waiting and looking for that magic moment in which something clicks between those who act and those who watch.

INTERVIEW MIT BARBARA KÖLLING „Ganz am Anfang – FIRST STEPS“

Gabi dan Droste

Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum
in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Berlin (**DEUTSCHLAND**)

Barbara Kölling, Kunstvoll Direktor
Helios Theatre

Gabi dan Droste: Wie kommt man in einer Stadt wie Hamm auf die Idee, Theater für die Aller kleinsten zu machen?

Barbara Kölling: Auf die Idee kommt man in einer Stadt wie Hamm wahrscheinlich wie in jeder anderen Stadt auch, oder auch nicht. Uns bewegten interessante Arbeiten, die wir gesehen hatten. Wir stellten fest, dass es eine Theaterform gab, die uns noch unbekannt war und uns sehr interessierte.

Gabi dan Droste: Welche Theaterform war das?

Barbara Kölling: Wir haben Künstler gesehen – stärker aus dem bildenden oder musischen als aus dem darstellerischen Bereich kommend – die sich mit philosophischen Fragen auseinandersetzen, wie zum Beispiel mit dem Thema Verschwinden und wieder Auftauchen oder dem Wachsen, Werden und Vergehen oder mit Geburt oder dem Phänomen von Schwarz und Weiß. Sie verhandeln diese für junge wie alte Menschen wichtigen, elementaren Fragen. Sie tun dies auf eine Art und Weise, die eine bewegende Einfachheit hat.

Das war für uns hochinteressant. Ich verstehe Einfachheit als eine Kategorie, die nicht simpel, sondern „einfach“ meint, im Sinne von „den Dingen auf den Grund gehen“.

Hier in Hamm haben wir viel „Anfang gemacht“. In einer Stadt ohne eigenes Theater und Theatertradition mit den Kleinsten anzufangen ist folgerichtig.

Gabi dan Droste: Ich würde mich gern noch einmal dem theaterästhetischen und dem philosophischen Moment widmen. Kannst du eine Entwicklung für euch beschreiben? Kannst du

den Werdegang eurer eigenen Inszenierungen beschreiben?

Barbara Kölling: Die erste Arbeit haben wir nicht bewusst in diesem Bereich gemacht. Wir haben „Trommeltropfen“ produziert, ein Stück über Wasser. Das war 2002. Wasser tropft von oben aus Schirmen, mit Wasser wird gespielt, es wird gesammelt, es fließt usw. Die Inszenierung war sehr rhythmisch, spielerisch und hatte nur sehr wenig Worte. Die Arbeit haben wir für Kinder ab 3 Jahren angesetzt, weil uns diese Altersstufe bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt als die unterste Grenze, ins Theater zu gehen, erschien. Nun passierte das, was du oft hast: es kommen jüngere Geschwisterkinder mit und wollen in die Vorstellung und da habe ich gesagt: „Wir probieren es aus“. Tatsächlich hatte „Trommeltropfen“ für Zweijährige eine große Faszination. Sie saßen in der Aufführung und beobachteten die einfachen Vorgänge: Tropfen, die auf den Boden oder ins Glas fielen und dadurch ein Geräusch machten, Tropfen, die in unterschiedlichen Rhythmen fielen und zu einem See wurden.

Gabi dan Droste: ... ein sehr sinnlicher Vorgang.

Barbara Kölling: Ja, absolut! Die Zweijährigen waren bei der Sache, weil es ein sinnlicher Vorgang war, da bin ich mir ganz sicher. Mit allen Sinnen angesprochen zu sein: das beschreibt am ehesten das Theater für die ganz Kleinen. In dem Moment, in dem die Kinder die Tropfen auf der Haut nachspüren, ist die Aufmerksamkeit auch schon bei einem ganz kleinen Menschen da.

Gabi dan Droste: Wie entwickelte sich eure Arbeit weiter?

Barbara Kölling: Es interessierte mich sehr, mit den ganz Kleinen im Theater zu sein. Sie zu erleben beim Betreten eines für sie fremden Raumes, ihre Vorsicht, ihren Mut wahrzunehmen. Wir haben dadurch, dass wir unser Theaterhaus vor zweieinhalb Jahren eröffnen konnten und es inhaltlich komplett selbst bestimmen können, eine große Gestaltungsmöglichkeit. Wenn wir etwas ausprobieren wollen, vor oder nach der Vorstellung, dann tun wir das einfach. Wir können Dinge ausprobieren, was im Theater für die Aller kleinsten eklatant wichtig ist. Es stellen sich Fragen wie:
Wie nehme ich den Eltern oder den Erwachsenen die Sorge

ihr Kind könnte sich „falsch“ benehmen? Wie kläre ich sie auf, dass die Aufführung kein Mitspieltheater ist, und dass sie die Verantwortung für ihr Kind nicht aus der Hand geben, wenn sie den Theatersaal betreten?

Gabi dan Droste: Das sind Fragen, die in einem jungen, noch unbearbeiteten Feld entstehen. Diese Fragen teilt ihr mit anderen Kollegen, vor allem mit Künstlern aus dem internationalen Kontext. Wie sind der Kontakt und der Austausch entstanden?

Barbara Kölling: Das ist sehr früh entstanden. Auf der Suche nach Produktionen für unser erstes internationales Theaterfestival „hellwach“ sind wir 2002 erstmalig direkt auf Produktionen für die Allerkleinsten gestoßen, vor allem aus Frankreich, bei denen wir den Eindruck hatten, die müssen stärker in die Diskussion kommen – das waren z.B. „Uccellini“ und „Syncope“ der Association Skappa, „Griboullie“ von Francesca Sorgato.

Im Vorfeld der Eröffnung unserer Spielstätte haben wir ein Symposium zum Thema „KinderTheaterHäuser“ veranstaltet. Wir haben „La Baracca“ aus Italien eingeladen, nicht weil sie Theater für die Allerkleinsten machen, sondern weil sie eine interessante Konzeption für ihr Kulturhaus „Testoni Ragazzi“ in Bologna haben. Sie kamen mit „Il colori dell'acqua“, einer Produktion für die Allerkleinsten. „La Baracca“ kennen zu lernen war für uns eine Begegnung mit Theaterleuten, die ihr Theaterhaus in einer ähnlichen Art und Weise ansehen, wie wir das vorhatten: ein Theaterhaus, in dem auch Theater mit Kindern stattfinden kann und in dem man sich dafür interessiert, was vor und nach einer Aufführung bei den Kindern passiert.

Gabi dan Droste: Es waren also zwei Punkte gegeben, die den Austausch mit Künstlern aus Europa initiierten.

Barbara Kölling: Ja, es gab die Affinität zu den Italienern und gleichzeitig die Produktionen aus Frankreich, die wir gesehen haben. Dann hat sich sehr viel von allein entwickelt. Wir sind recht bald von „La Baracca“ gefragt worden, ob wir in das europäische Netzwerk „Small size“ einsteigen wollen, um das Theater für die Allerkleinsten im europäischen Raum weiter zu entwickeln. Wir hatten große Lust dazu. Es ging relativ schnell, dass die internationalen Bezüge da waren, viel schneller als wir

es für uns geplant hatten.

Gabi dan Droste: Welche Fragen aus dem europäischen Kontext sind für euch interessant?

Barbara Kölling: Eine viel diskutierte Frage betrifft den Zugang des Künstlers zu seinem Tun auf der Bühne. Verhält er sich in seinem Tun als erwachsener Künstler oder meint er, eine andere Haltung einnehmen, sehr klein, kindlich und süß werden zu müssen? Dieses Missverständnis existiert und es wird sehr grundlegend diskutiert. In der Frage des Zugangs existieren immer noch die größten Missverständnisse. Es gibt die Auffassung, alles müsse ganz freundlich, ganz zart sein bis hin zur Selbstaufgabe des Künstlers. Es stellt sich demgegenüber die Frage, mit welcher Haltung ich als erwachsener vierzigjähriger Mensch mit meinem Anliegen den kleinen Kindern begegnen kann.

Gabi dan Droste: Die Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen den kindlichen Zuschauern und dem erwachsenen Künstler impliziert die Frage nach dem Selbstverständnis des Erwachsenen als Künstler, aber auch die nach seinem Kindheitsbild – in welchem Verhältnis sieht er sich, wie definiert er es?

Barbara Kölling: Absolut! In welchem Verhältnis sehe ich mich da? Habe ich ein Interesse daran? Wenn das Interesse an kleinen Kindern nicht da ist, dann wird Kunst für Kinder auch nicht funktionieren. Ganz junge Kinder sind mehr als ältere in der Lage, die Aufführung zu stören, zu zerstören, sich desinteressiert abzuwenden, etwas anderes als die Bühnenaktion interessanter zu finden. Es sind so viele Fragen, die sich an das Ego des agierenden Künstlers auf der Bühne richten. Wenn er nicht in der Lage ist, sie für sich in einer Art und Weise zu beantworten, bei der ganz sicher sein Ego zurückgestellt werden muss und andere Fragen nach vorne kommen müssen, dann wird es wahrscheinlich nicht funktionieren oder man hat nur Glück gehabt!

Gabi dan Droste: Gibt es über die Kommunikation zwischen Zuschauerraum und Bühne, das Selbstbildnis des Künstlers und das Kindheitsbild hinaus Fragen aus dem europäischen Kontext, die du für euch in Hamm oder für die Diskussion in Deutschland für interessant erachtetest?

Barbara Kölling: Eine weitere interessante Diskussion entstand mit der Produktion „Erde, Stock und Stein“, da wir die Kinder nicht automatisch nach der Aufführung auf die Bühne ließen. Das ist ungewöhnlich, weil die allgemeine Erwartungshaltung ist, dass die Theateraufführung nur ein Teil ist und anschließend agieren die Kinder auf der Bühne. Das passiert in vielen Aufführungen für die Aller kleinsten. Bei „Erde, Stock und Stein“ entsteht am Ende der Aufführung ein Bild aus Erde auf der Spielfläche. Wir wollten, dass das angeschaut werden kann und dass die Kinder nicht auf die Bühne laufen, darin herumspringen und ein großes Gematsche entsteht. Der gemeinsame Akt der Akteure und der Kinder nach „Erde, Stock und Stein“ nach der Aufführung ist ein anderer: gemeinsam Möhren essen. Als wir mit der Inszenierung in Europa tourten, hat das für Diskussion gesorgt. Es wurde darum gestritten, ob man damit nicht den Kindern etwas Wesentliches nimmt. Man landet schnell bei sehr grundlegenden Diskussionen.

Die Kinder – und das behaupte ich auch ganz klar weiterhin – sind absolut damit zufrieden, vor der Bühne zu sitzen, mit den beiden Spielern in Kontakt zu sein, mit ihnen gemeinsam die Möhren zu essen und alles noch auf sich wirken zu lassen. Dies ist das stimmigste Ende für dieses Stück. Es zeigt sich, dass die Erwartung der Erwachsenen, Kinder unbedingt selbst noch mal auf die Bühne schicken zu wollen, eher eine theoretische Annahme oder eine Gewohnheit ist.

Ich denke, man muss immer wieder eine Tradition überprüfen oder man sollte zumindest nicht Gewohnheiten entwickeln und der Ansicht sein, man wisse wie es geht.

Gabi dan Droste: Gibt es Überschneidungen in den Diskussionen über eure Stücke hier vor Ort und denen aus dem europäischen Kontext oder sind die Reaktionen sehr unterschiedlich?

Barbara Kölling: Wir waren überrascht über die Reaktionen hier vor Ort. Am Anfang haben wir mehr Befremden, mehr Widerstände erwartet. Wir dachten, mehr Eltern verlassen das Theater, weil sie mit den Stücken nichts anfangen können oder weil sie eine andere Erwartung haben. Wir haben mit größerem Widerspruch gerechnet, weil wir 2002 beim ersten Festival „hellwach“ mit Missverständnissen zu kämpfen hatten. Ein Elternpaar ging beispielsweise davon aus, dass die Aufführung ein Mitspieltheater sei und schubste die zweijährige Tochter

immer wieder auf die Bühne. Ein Vater ging auf die Bühne, um seine Tochter im Zuschauerraum zu fotografieren. Er hatte kein Bewusstsein für das, was er in dem Moment darstellte und dass er zum Mitspieler wurde. Es gab so große Missverständnisse von dem Theater für kleine Kinder, dass wir dazu übergingen, dem Publikum vorher etwas zu sagen. Uns stellte sich dann die Frage, ob nicht dieses „DAVOR“ schon ein Teil des Theaterstückes ist und wie man es am stimmigsten gestaltet. Die Missverständnisse können weniger werden, ganz und gar ausgeräumt sind sie auch in den anderen europäischen Ländern nicht.

Gabi dan Droste: Aber in Frankreich ist das Theater für die Allerkleinsten seit fünfzehn Jahren eine Selbstverständlichkeit.

Barbara Kölling: Und dennoch wird immer wieder diskutiert, wie zart, leicht und lustig etwas sein muss, damit es für kleine Kinder gut ist. Wie schaue ich das kleine Kind an, und wie nehme ich es an die Hand, um ihm die Welt zu zeigen?

Diese Fragen sind immer wieder neu zu diskutieren und zu klären. Das gleiche höre ich aus den Niederlanden. Da gibt es zahlreiche Produktionen für die Allerkleinsten. Ganz oft sind es Hüpfburgen für Babys in hellblauem und rosafarbenem Interieur.

Da kommen wir noch einmal auf ein ganz anderes Thema. Dadurch, dass diese Babywelt ein so wunderbarer, großer, lukrativer Markt ist, wird sie von Bonbons und Zuckerwatte beherrscht. Das wird in Deutschland ein Thema werden und in Frankreich und in den Niederlanden, in Italien auch. Für die Theatermacher bedeutet dies, immer wieder Kraft aufzubringen, dem etwas entgegensetzen, immer wieder von Neuem sich zu behaupten und noch einmal wieder neu zu argumentieren.

INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA KÖLLING
"Right at the beginning – FIRST STEPS"

Gabi dan Droste

Children's and Young People's
Theatre Centre in the Federal
Republic of Germany, Berlin
(GERMANY)

Barbara Kölling, Artistic Director
Helios Theatre

translated by Jon Reynolds

Gabi dan Droste: In a city like Hamm, how does one come upon the idea of creating theatre for the very youngest children?

Barbara Kölling: In a city like Hamm you probably get the idea just like in every other city, or maybe not. We were spurred on by interesting work that we had seen. We found that there was a form of theatre that was still unknown to us and interested us a lot.

Gabi dan Droste: Which form of theatre was that?

Barbara Kölling: We saw artists, more from educational or musical fields than from the field of performance, who engaged with philosophical questions such as the subject of disappearance and reappearance or growing, becoming and decaying, or birth or the phenomenon of black and white. They deal with these themes that are important, elementary questions for young as well as old people. They do it in a way that has a moving simplicity. That was very interesting for us. I understand simplicity as a category that does not mean simplistic, just simple in the sense of "getting to the bottom of things". Here in Hamm we have made the first steps. In a city without its own theatre and theatre tradition, it is logical to start with the very youngest.

Gabi dan Droste: I would like to turn again to the aesthetic theatrical aspect, as well as the philosophical aspect. Can you describe how the development was for you? Can you describe the development of your performances?

Barbara Kölling: The first piece of work was not consciously set in this field. We produced "Trommeltropfen" [Drum Drops], a piece about water. That was in 2002. Water drips from umbrellas up above, water is played with, it is collected, it flows etc. The staging was very rhythmical, playful and had only very few words. We aimed the work at children of 3 upwards because this age range seemed at that time to be the lowest limit for going to the theatre. What happened then is what you often get: younger brothers and sisters come along too and want to see the show and I said, "We'll try it". "Trommeltropfen" actually had a great fascination for two-year-olds. They sat in the performance and observed the simple processes: drops that fell on the floor or onto glass and made a noise, drops falling with different rhythms and creating a lake.

Gabi dan Droste: ...a very sensory process.

Barbara Kölling: Yes, absolutely! The two-year-olds were engaged with it because it was a sensory process, I am quite certain. To have all senses stimulated: that is the most convenient way to describe theatre for the very young. In that moment when the children feel the drops on their skin you have their attention, even with a very small child.

Gabi dan Droste: How did your work develop further?

Barbara Kölling: I was very interested in being in the theatre with very small children. To see them as they enter a space that is foreign to them, to observe their caution, their bravery. We were able to open our own theatre space two years ago and we have complete control of how it is set out. This gives us a great creative opportunity.

When we want to try something out, before or after a performance, we simply do it.

We can try things out - this is incredibly important in theatre for the very youngest children. Questions arise, such as how to take away from parents or grown-ups the worry that their child might "misbehave"? How do I explain to them that the performance is not participatory theatre and that they do not relinquish responsibility for their child when they enter the auditorium?

Gabi dan Droste: Those are questions that come about in a new, unexplored field. You share these questions with other colleagues, chiefly with international artists. How did this contact and exchange come about?

Barbara Kölling: It came about very early on. In 2002, while searching for productions for our first international theatre festival "hellwach" [wide-awake], we came across productions for the very youngest children for the first time, chiefly from France. We had the feeling that they ought to feature more heavily in the discussion – these were e.g. "Uccellini" and "Syncope" by Association Skappa, "Gribouille" by Francesca Sorgato. Prior to the opening of our own theatre, we organised a symposium on the topic of "KinderTheaterHäuser" [Theatre Spaces for Children]. We invited "La Baracca" from Italy, not because they produced theatre for the very youngest children, but because they have an interesting concept for their cultural centre "Testoni Ragazzi" in Bologna. They came with "Il colori dell'acqua", a production for the very youngest children. For us, getting to know "La Baracca" was an encounter with theatre people who viewed their theatre space in a similar way to us: a theatre space in which theatre for children can also happen and where there is an interest in what happens for the children before and after a performance.

Gabi dan Droste: So there were two points that were initiated by the exchange with artists from Europe?

Barbara Kölling: Yes, there was the affinity with the Italians and at the same time the productions that we saw from France. A lot of development then happened of its own accord. We were very soon asked by "La Baracca" if we wanted to join the European network "small size" in order to further develop theatre for the very youngest children within Europe. We were really keen to join. The international relations came about very quickly, much more quickly than we had planned.

Gabi dan Droste: Which questions interest you from the European context?

Barbara Kölling: A question that is often discussed concerns the approach of the artist to his performance on the stage.

In this performance does he behave as a grown-up artist or does he think that he has to take on another way of being, to become very small, childish and sweet? This misunderstanding exists and it is discussed very fundamentally. There are still great misunderstandings in the question of approach. There is the view that everything has to be very friendly, very gentle, culminating in the self-abandonment of the artist. In opposition to this there is the question as to how I, as a forty year old adult, can approach the children with my subject matter.

Gabi dan Droste: The question of the relationship between the child audience members and the adult artist involves the question of the self-image of the adult as artist, but also the question of his image of childhood – in what relation does he see himself, how does he define it?

Barbara Kölling: Absolutely! In what relation do I see myself to it? Am I interested in it? If the interest in small children is not there, then art for children will not work. Very young children are more in a position than older children to interrupt the performance, to destroy, to turn away in disinterest, to find something else more interesting than the on-stage action. There are so many questions aimed at the ego of the artist acting on the stage. If he is not in a position to answer them in some way for himself, and in doing so to put his ego to one side, then it will probably not work. Or you will just be lucky!

Gabi dan Droste: Apart from the communication between auditorium and stage, the self-image of the artist and the image of childhood, are there other questions from the European context that you consider to be interesting for yourself in Hamm or for discussion in Germany?

Barbara Kölling: A further interesting discussion arose with the production "Erde, Stock und Stein" [Earth, Stick and Stone], as we did not automatically let the children onto the stage after the performance. That is unusual because the general expectation is that the theatrical performance is only one part and afterwards the children get to play on the stage. That happens in lots of performances for the very youngest children. In "Erde, Stock und Stein" a picture made from soil appears on the stage at the end of the performance. We wanted it to be looked at and for the

children not to run on the stage, jump around in it and create a huge mess. The joint activity of the actors and children after a performance of "Erde, Stock und Stein" is something else: to eat carrots together. This was a cause for discussion when we toured the show in Europe. People argued over whether this was taking something fundamental away from the children. You quickly get involved in fundamental discussions.

The children, and I will continue to claim this, are absolutely content to sit in front of the stage, in contact with the two actors, eating carrots with them and letting everything sink in. This is the most appropriate ending for this production. It goes to show that the adult expectation of always wanting to send the children onto the stage is more of a theoretical assumption or a habit.

I think that a tradition must constantly be examined or you should at least not develop habits and have the opinion that you know how everything works.

Gabi dan Droste: Is there overlap in the discussions about your shows at your base here and those in the European context or are the reactions different?

Barbara Kölling: We were surprised by the reaction at our base. In the beginning we expected more surprise, more opposition. We thought that more parents would leave the theatre because the show would be lost on them or because they had other expectations. We thought we would face greater resistance because during the first festival ("hellwach") in 2002 we did have to fight misunderstandings. For example, one set of parents assumed that the performance was participatory theatre and kept pushing their two year old daughter onto the stage. One father stepped onto the stage to take a photograph of his daughter in the auditorium. He had no awareness of what he represented at that moment, and that he had become a member of the cast. There were such vast misunderstandings of theatre for young children that we started to say something to the public beforehand. Then we had to address the question of whether this "beforehand" was a part of the play and how best to create it. Misunderstandings could become fewer and further between, although they have not been totally eradicated in other European countries.

Gabi dan Droste: But in France, theatre for the very youngest children has been a matter of course for fifteen years.

Barbara Kölling: And yet it is repeatedly being discussed how gentle, light and funny something has to be in order to be suitable for small children. How do I look at the small child and how do I take it by the hand and show it the world? These questions must constantly be discussed anew and clarified. I hear the same thing from the Netherlands. There are numerous productions for the very youngest children there. Quite often they are bouncy castles for babies with a light blue and pink interior. And here we come to a quite different subject. Because the baby world is such a wonderful, large, lucrative market, it is governed by sweets and candy floss. This will become an issue in Germany, in France, in the Netherlands and also in Italy. For theatre practitioners this means continually mustering new strength to counter things, continually asserting themselves afresh and once again finding new arguments.

COMME UN COQUILLAGE DÉPOSÉ SUR LA PLAGE...

Charlotte Fallon
Metteur en scène
La Guimbarde
(BELGIQUE)

Quel théâtre pour les tout-petits ?
Pourquoi ? Comment peut venir ce désir à un artiste ?
Qui sont ces spectateurs ?
Qui donne et qui reçoit ?
Comment ? Avec qui ? Quand ?

*« Comment pouvez-vous vérifier quoi que ce soit, ces enfants ne parlent pas encore !
Et que comprennent-ils, le savez-vous ?
Est-ce que vous n'abusez pas du fait qu'ils ne peuvent pas choisir pour seulement vous faire plaisir ? »*

Il y a des années, je me souviens d'avoir vu Brigitte Maisonneuve du Théâtre Athénor (France), interprétant pour un groupe d'une dizaine d'enfants de un à deux ans « Câlins ».

Vêtue de blanc, elle tient devant elle une coupe remplie d'eau transparente. Elle y baigne un bébé ou plutôt, elle joue avec un essuie de bain qu'elle plonge dans l'eau. Pas une parole, des sons, des bribes de chants, une voix lyrique qui voyage avec force et douceur. Les enfants assis sur le sol, les yeux grand ouverts, suivent ces gestes et frémissent au son de sa voix. Certains se lèvent, lèvent les bras et laissent leur voix suivre celle de la chanteuse. Je suis bouleversée par la force d'attention des enfants, par le courant d'émotion qui relie les enfants à l'artiste et inversement, j'ai l'impression de pouvoir toucher ce lien des yeux.

C'est clair, quelque chose s'est passé, un spectacle «vivant». Pourquoi du théâtre pour les petits ? Pour cela, pour ces moments forts qui peuvent laisser des traces, des semences dans l'imaginaire en construction des enfants.

Près de Bruxelles se trouve une carrière profonde, au fond de laquelle je suis descendue pour rejoindre son eau transparente et sa petite plage. Sur la paroi tranchée à vif dans la terre, j'ai pu lire son histoire. Des couches superposées de pierres roulées,

de galets, de sable, de roches de grés calcaire (celles avec lesquelles sont construites les maisons de la Grand Place),... Et tout en haut, l'argile, la végétation. Les couleurs chantaient: orange, rouge, jaune doré, jaune presque blanc, brun, vert, noir, une racine d'arbre fossilisée, des dents de requins, les fossiles de petits animaux et de fines couches de coquillages comme si la marée venait de les y déposer. Au toucher, ils se décomposent et pourtant ils sont là depuis des milliers d'années, depuis le jour où la mer les y a déposés.

Cette image me fait penser à notre monde intérieur, à tous les événements, les émotions, les sensations qui nous ont construits. Ce moment partagé durant le spectacle « Câlines » a pu être l'occasion de laisser dans l'imaginaire en construction de l'enfant une trace. Du sable, des coquillages, une pierre rosée, verte ou noire, cela dépendra de son vécu à ce moment-là.

L'intensité du partage, le sentiment de pouvoir offrir ce que j'ai de meilleur à donner à de tout jeunes enfants, comme un coquillage déposé après la marée, sont des raisons suffisantes pour animer en moi le désir de créer.

Etonner, émerveiller, réjouir, faire rêver, nous faire plaisir ensemble ! Ces mots président au spectacle mais aussi à son temps de création.

Le tout petit enfant va à la découverte du monde avec son corps, ses sensations, son cœur, ses émotions, sans mettre de barrières. Il est ouvert au monde et naturellement curieux.

Il perçoit la vie avec l'intensité des « premières fois », il est très concentré et présent au moment qu'il vit. Il est à la fois fragile et fort. Il ne se lasse pas de suivre le chemin de sa curiosité.

Quel spectateur idéal ! Mais immédiatement après vient la question du respect de sa fragilité.

Quand, plus grands, nous vivons un événement pour la première fois, notre cerveau le classe dans une ou l'autre catégorie de nos expériences connues, cela nous permet de nous sécuriser, d'évaluer la situation pour réagir à notre manière.

Que serait une vie faite de premières fois, supporterions-nous encore une telle intensité ?

Toutes ces questions nous amènent à réfléchir aux thèmes des spectacles, à leurs rythmes, au jeu des comédiens, à la scénographie, à la disposition des lieux où nous jouons, au nombre de spectateurs, à leur accueil, à l'attitude des adultes

qui accompagnent l'enfant spectateur...

Les thèmes des spectacles naissent d'un désir, d'une rêverie, d'une rencontre avec un matériau, d'une question. L'inspiration fait partie de la vie, elle mûrit lentement ou très vite, elle attend l'occasion et les moyens pour se réaliser.

La genèse d'un spectacle : « Terres »

Un jour, en jouant avec de l'argile, j'ai pensé à un spectacle dont les personnages et le décor, modelés par un sculpteur, sortiraient d'une grande boule de terre pour y retourner, l'histoire terminée.

L'idée mûrit deux ans. Parallèlement, un comédien de la compagnie, Stéphane Klaric, s'est mis à la sculpture...

Face à cette boule de terre encore vierge d'histoire, nous avons envie de raconter aux enfants l'évolution de l'univers jusqu'au temps présent où la terre est là pour eux, pour qu'ils la découvrent et y exercent leur curiosité.

Nous commençons par le big bang, la création de l'univers, les planètes, la mer, les protozoaires, les premiers reptiles sortant de la mer,... Stéphane, assis sur 70 kilos d'argile, vole en déséquilibre dans le néant, puis arrache des poignées de terre qui... s'aplatissent par terre.

Nous allons dans une crèche pour tester auprès des enfants et des puéricultrices nos premiers pas. Les enfants rient beaucoup de voir Stéphane lancer des boules de terre, ils apprécient la mer et les animaux et surtout, ils adorent jouer dans la terre.

Chez nous viennent les doutes : en quoi cette histoire concerne les petits, ils n'ont pas encore conscience du temps qui s'écoule.... Comme à chaque création de spectacle, nous allons rencontrer une psychologue pour vérifier la congruence entre nos rêves et le public à qui nous voulons nous adresser.

Positive et valorisante, elle nous dit qu'actuellement, il y a des chercheurs qui pensent que nous avons dans nos cellules la mémoire de toute l'histoire de l'humanité et que donc nous nous adressons peut-être à la mémoire cellulaire des enfants.

Pourquoi pas ? Mais nous aimons être un peu plus directs dans notre langage théâtral.

Vient alors le déclic : prendre l'histoire dans l'autre sens, du point de vue de l'enfant qui découvre le monde. C'est parce qu'il vient au monde et qu'il perçoit l'univers que l'univers existe pour lui.

Ce chemin trouvé, il ne reste plus qu'à travailler...

Stéphane ouvre la boule de terre, en sort un morceau et crée un petit personnage. Il lui donne un nom : Tchipodzé. Du centre de la terre, naissent 10 petits êtres aux noms étranges et parce qu'ils sont là, apparaissent deux arbres, et vient la nuit. Le matin, les oiseaux chantent, les enfants s'éveillent et vont à la découverte du monde qui les entourent, un éléphant, un chien, une girafe, une montagne où grimper et la mer pour partir en voyage sur un bateau ...

Le comédien modèle les personnages et les éléments de l'histoire et les manipule pour leur donner vie. Pas de paroles mais un univers sonore créé par Sylvie Nawasadio avec sa voix, l'eau et la musique de petites percussions et d'instruments ethniques.

Sylvie est d'origine africaine, sa voix dans ce spectacle est la voix profonde de la terre. Avec les instruments, elle crée un décor sonore plein d'humour et de vitalité.

Retour chez la psychologue. Elle nous dit qu'en modelant les personnages et les animaux devant les yeux des enfants, nous allons à leur rencontre dans leur chemin d'évolution puisqu'ils sont eux-mêmes à l'âge où ils manipulent les choses pour les connaître. Le plus souvent, les enfants jouent avec des jouets déterminés : un canard, une auto ... Leur proposer de voir naître les personnages à travers les gestes de Stéphane est une belle expérience.

Fort des remarques de notre psychologue, nous décidons d'investir les moments de modelage, de rendre les gestes de Stéphane clairs et théâtraux. Quand les enfants jouent dans la terre après le spectacle nous pouvons voir comment ils reproduisent ces gestes avec la terre : arracher, jeter, empiler, déchiquter, piétiner... Ils se sont appropriés ce langage manuel.

La connivence entre les acteurs, leurs regards aux enfants soutient leur attention : ils sentent que les comédiens partagent leurs jeux et leur plaisir, ils sentent que les comédiens leur donnent le spectacle.

Il n'est point question ici de les séduire, mais d'être là, dans la découverte de l'instant, comme eux, pour la première fois.

Nous jouons principalement dans les crèches. L'espace est souvent encombré de jeux et de meubles. La scénographie doit, dans cet espace réduit, provoquer une distance avec le quotidien. Elisabeth Schnell trouve pour chaque spectacle une scénographie qui tient dans ces petits espaces et nous fait rêver.

Pour «Terres», elle a utilisé une toile de parachute qui englobe l'aire de jeu et les spectateurs. Un tapis de danse gris clair également est le lieu de la terre.

La terre est blanche, de petits spots au niveau des sculptures leur donnent du relief. C'est très simple et très efficace, dans cet univers dépouillé toute l'attention va aux sculptures.

Les comédiens sont vêtus simplement mais dans des couleurs chaudes, ils sont en contraste avec la terre.

Comment jouer dans les crèches en annonçant d'emblée que les enfants iront jouer dans la terre après le spectacle et qu'il faudra peut-être les laver ?

Durant les répétitions, nous avons été plusieurs fois dans les crèches tester notre travail. Nous avons travaillé avec une terre noire très spectaculaire, les enfants ont beaucoup joué dans la terre et se sont promené dans la crèche les mains toutes noires. La terre était très collante, le sol, les murs, les portes étaient couvertes des traces des mains et des pieds des enfants. Les dames chargées du nettoyage ont tellement apprécié le plaisir des enfants qu'elles n'ont pas protesté.

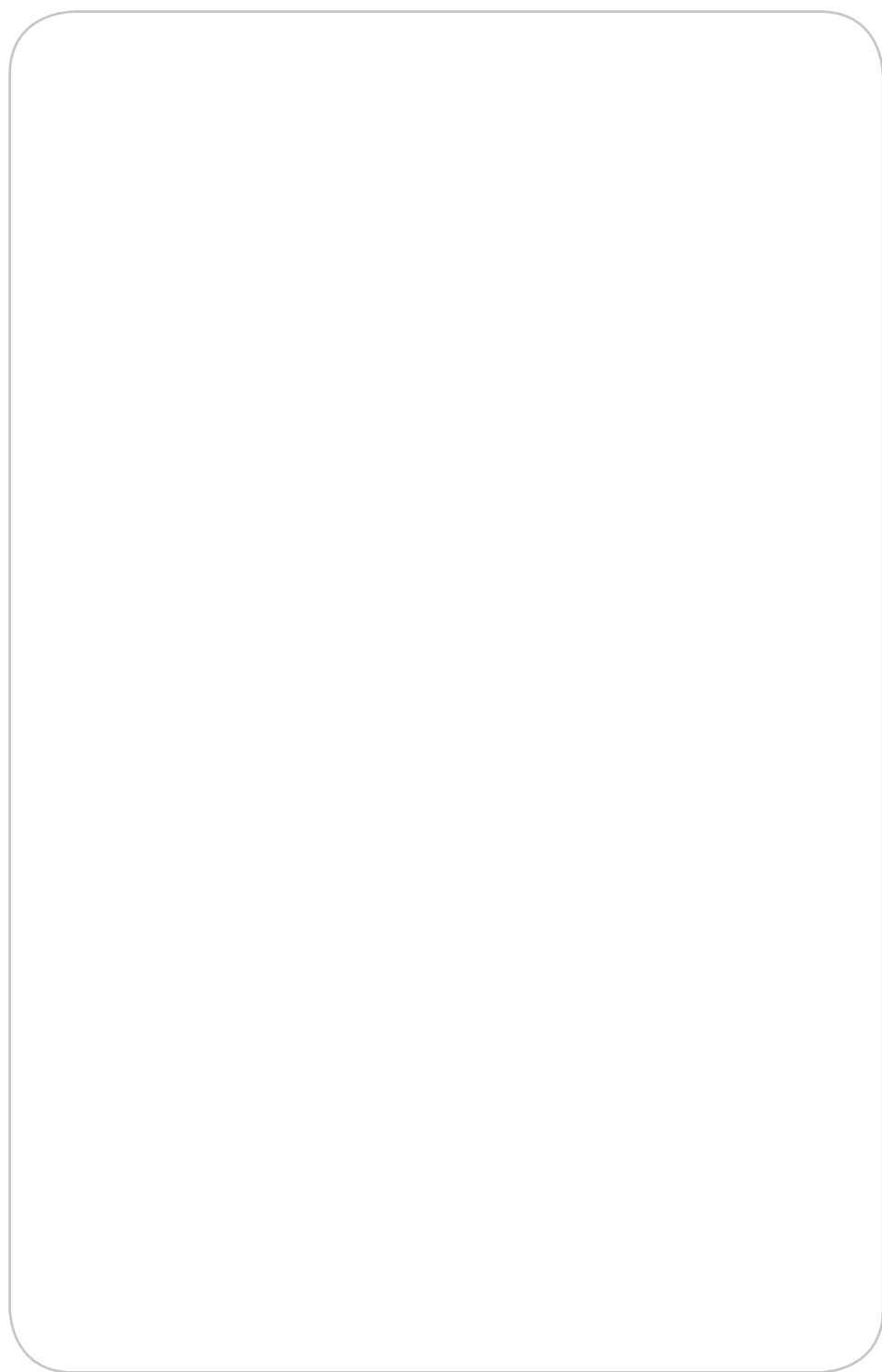
Nous avons choisi une terre blanche, non toxique et moins collante.

Ce spectacle a été l'occasion de formations pour les professionnelles de la petite enfance et dans des écoles de puéricultrices.

Jouer avec la terre, retrouver le plaisir de la manipulation, travailler les yeux bandés pour être en contact avec nos sensations, modeler nos paysages intérieurs et les relier avec les autres sont autant de propositions qui leur sont faites. En espérant que ces formations permettent de mettre en place dans le quotidien des crèches des moments de jeu dans la terre où les adultes partagent le plaisir des petits et les laissent à leur rythme faire leurs expériences.

Chaque spectacle a sa dynamique de création avec ses questions et ses doutes qui rendent le travail passionnant.

Ensuite, avec des professionnelles des crèches, nous réfléchissons à l'environnement du spectacle : accueil, formations, animations. Tout cela afin que le spectacle ne soit pas qu'un moment de consommation mais une occasion de réfléchir aux enfants, à leurs besoins, à leur manière de percevoir le monde, à notre qualité d'attention à leur égard et qu'ainsi, ensemble, nous fassions évoluer notre savoir-faire.



LIKE A SHELL ON THE BEACH

Charlotte Fallon

Director - La Guimbarde

(BELGIUM)

translated by Letizia Olivieri

What kind of theatre for the very young?
Why? How can such a desire arise in an artist?
Who is this audience?
Who gives and who takes?
How? With whom? When?

"How can you possibly prove anything, these children do not even speak yet!

And do you know what they really understand?

Aren't you taking advantage of the fact that they cannot chose, just to satisfy yourselves?"

Years ago, I remember seeing Brigitte Maisonneuve of Théâtre Athénor (France) playing "Câlins" for a group of ten children between one and two years old.

Dressed in white, she had a cup full of transparent water in front of her. She bathed a baby in it, or rather she played with a towel which she plunged in the water. Not a word; sounds, fragments of songs, an opera voice waving powerfully and gently. The children sitting on the floor, with their eyes wide open, followed these gestures and were thrilled at the sound of her voice. Some of them stood up, raised their arms and let their voice follow the singer's. I was astonished at the power of the children's attention, at the flow of emotions tying the children to the artist and vice versa; I felt I could touch this bond with my eyes. It was clear that something had happened: a "living" show.

Why making plays for children? Because of this; because of these strong moments which can leave a trace, a seed in the children's evolving imagination.

Near Brussels there is a deep sandpit: I went down to the bottom of it to reach its transparent water and its small beach. I could read its history from the wall cut sharply in the earth. From the layers of rounded stones, of pebbles, of sand, of calcareous

stoneware rocks (those with which the buildings of the Grand Place were built)... And, at the top, clay and vegetation. The colours were singing: orange, red, golden yellow, almost-white yellow, brown, green, black, a fossilised tree root, shark teeth, small animal fossils and thin layers of shells, as if the tide had just set them down there. If you touch them, they crumble, and yet they have been there for thousands of years, from the day the sea laid them there.

This image makes me think of our inner world, about all the events, the emotions, the feelings which have made us what we are. The moment I shared during the "Câlins" show was a chance to leave a trace in the children's evolving imagination. Whether sand, shells, a rose, green or black stone, this depends on their life experiences in that very moment.

The intensity of sharing, the feeling of being able to give my best to very young children, like a shell laid down by the tide, are enough to light up inside of me a desire to create.

To surprise, to fill someone with wonder, to amuse, to arouse someone's dreams, to please ourselves together! These words are crucial not only to the show but also to the timing of its creation.

Toddlers discover the world with their bodies, their sensations, their hearts, their emotions, without putting up barriers. They are open to the world and naturally curious. They live their lives as if it was always the first time, they are focused and attentive to the moment they are living. They are fragile and strong at the same time. They never grow tired of following the path outlined by their curiosity.

What an ideal audience! But then comes straightaway the issue of how to respect their fragility.

When, as adults, we live an event for the first time, our brain classifies it in one or another category of our known experiences. This allows us to feel secure, to evaluate the situation in order to react our way.

What would be a life made exclusively of first times? Would we still be able to tolerate such intensity?

All these questions lead us to consider the themes of our shows, their rhythms, the actors' play, the settings, the arrangement of the places where we play, the number of spectators, how to welcome them, the attitude of the adults accompanying the children...

The shows' themes arise from a desire, from day-dreaming, from the encounter with a material, from a question. Inspiration is part of life. It takes shape slowly or very quickly and waits for the opportunity and the means to become real.

The origin of a show: "Terres"

One day, while playing with clay, I thought of a show whose characters and stage objects, moulded by a sculptor, would come out of a big globe made of earth and would return to it when the story would be over.

The idea took shape in two years. In parallel, an actor from the company, Stéphane Klaric, devoted himself to sculpture...

Faced with this blank sphere of earth, we felt like telling children the evolution of the universe until the present, until this moment when the earth is there for them to be discovered and to be used as a place to practice their curiosity.

We started with the big bang, the creation of the universe, the planets, the sea, the Protozoa, the first reptiles coming out of the sea... Stéphane, sitting on 70 kilos of clay, flew unbalanced into the nothingness, and then he grabbed handfuls of earth which... squash onto the ground.

We went to a crèche to test our first steps with the children and their carers. The children laughed heartily when Stéphane threw balls of earth; they liked the sea and the animals and they especially adored playing with earth.

However, some doubts were arousing: what had this story got to do with children? They were not yet aware of the passing of time...

As always when we create a show, we went to meet a psychologist to check the consistence between our dreams and the audience we want to address.

She told us in a positive and encouraging way that some researchers currently think that we all have the memory of the whole history of mankind in our cells and that therefore we address the children's cellular memory.

Why not? But we like being a bit more direct in our theatrical language.

Then, the turning point came: to develop the story the other way, from the point of view of children discovering the world. The universe exists for them because they were born and because

they feel it. After finding this path, all we had to do was working. Stéphane opens the earth sphere, takes out a piece of clay and creates a small character. He gives him a name: Tchipodzé. From the centre of the earth 10 little creatures with strange names take shape, and because they are there, two trees appear and the night comes. In the morning, birds sing, children wake up and start discovering the world around them: an elephant, a dog, a giraffe, a mountain to climb and the sea to set off on a journey by boat...

The actor gives shape to the characters and elements of the story and he manipulates them to give them life. There are no words, but a universe of sounds created by Sylvie Nawasadio with her voice, water and the music of small percussions and ethnical instruments. Sylvie is of African origin: in this show, her voice is the deep voice of the earth. With the instruments, she creates a musical background full of humour and vitality.

Back to the psychologist, she told us that by giving shape to the characters and the animals in front of the children's eyes, we are meeting them in their evolution path, because they are in the age in which they touch things to understand them. More often, children play with specific toys: a duck, a car... It is a beautiful experience to invite them to see characters taking shape through Stephane's gestures.

Confident thanks to our psychologist's advice, we decided to invest in the moulding moments, to make Stephane's gestures clear and theatrical. When the children play with earth after the show we can see how they reproduce these gestures: they grab, throw, pile, tear earth to shreds, trample... They have taken possession of this gestural language.

The bond between the actors and the glances they cast on the children make them pay attention to what is happening on stage: they feel that the actors share their games and their enjoyment; they feel that the actors are giving them a good show.

The point here is not to captivate them, but to be there, in the discovery of something, like them, for the first time.

We mainly play in crèches. The rooms are often cluttered with toys and furniture. In such a limited space, the stage has to create a distance from everyday life. For each show, Elisabeth Schnell finds objects suitable for these small rooms and which make us dream.

For "Terres" she used a parachute canvas which encompasses the acting area and the audience. Similarly, a light-grey dance carpet covers the ground.

The earth is white. The sculptures are highlighted by some small spotlights. It is very simple and very effective: in this bare universe the focus is on the sculptures. The actors are very simply dressed but with warm colours, in contrast with the earth.

How can we play in crèches and announce straightaway that the children are going to play with earth after the show and that maybe it will be necessary to clean them afterwards?

During the rehearsals, we tested our work in crèches several times. We worked with a very spectacular black earth. The children played a lot in the earth and walked around the crèche with their hands black. The earth was very sticky.

The ground, the walls, the doors were covered with the children's hand and foot marks. The cleaning women appreciated so much the children's enjoyment in playing that they did not complain.

We chose a white, non-toxic and less sticky white earth.

This show gave rise to vocational training for childhood professionals and in paediatric nursing schools.

We offer them to play with the earth, to enjoy again the pleasure of touching things, to work blindfolded to get in touch with their sensations, to mould our inner landscapes and to connect them with the others. Our hope is that the training will allow setting up moments of play with the earth within the daily routine of the crèches, during which the adults can share the children's enjoyment and let them make their experiences at their own pace.

Each show has its own creative process made of questions and doubts which make the job exciting. Then, we think about the environment of the show with the crèche professionals (welcome, training, activities). In this way, the show is not only a consumer event, but also an occasion to think about the children, their needs, the way in which they see the world, the quality of the attention we pay to them, so that our own expertise can be enhanced.

ESISTE UN TEATRO PER BAMBINI? *

Roberto Frabetti

Attore, autore, regista
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi
Bologna (ITALIA)

Esiste un teatro per bambini? - un modello improbabile

Esiste un teatro per bambini?

Forse sì o forse no

Ma riproporsi questa domanda oggi, mentre inizio a scrivere questo articolo, non è un esercizio accademico.

Questa domanda me l'hanno posta tante volte.

Oppure me ne hanno fatte altre, che sono sorelle di quella esposta.

Domande come "Ma il teatro per bambini è veramente teatro?" o "Perché dividere il pubblico dei bambini per fasce di età, il teatro non è sempre teatro?" o "quando uno spettacolo è bello, non è per tutte le età, non va bene allo stesso tempo sia per i bambini, sia per gli adulti?"

Ora, pur rispettando le tante e diverse opinioni, mi piace andare in direzione "ostinata e contraria" (come suggerisce il titolo di una bellissima raccolta dedicata ad uno dei più grandi poeti italiani del novecento, Fabrizio De Andrè).

Non solo penso che il teatro per bambini esista, penso anche che abbia anche una sua dimensione specifica, che sia un entusiasmante sottoinsieme (nel senso matematico) di quell'insieme meraviglioso che è il teatro.

Penso anche che il teatro per bambini sia a sua volta un insieme, composto di tanti sottoinsiemi, gli uni distinti dagli altri.

La specificità è separazione, ma non necessariamente contrasto. Unità differenti coesistono e creano un'unica grande unità. È su questo che si basa l'insiemistica.

Ma.

Se non vediamo i sottoinsiemi, le particelle; se non vediamo che ognuna di esse ha un equilibrio particolare; se non osserviamo la delicatezza di quell'equilibrio a volte così simile alla perfetta

* Questo articolo è stato scritto per "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" a cura di Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

ragnatela di un ragno, allora rinunciamo a porci di fronte alla meraviglia della creazione.

Ritornando alla prima domanda. Non solo penso che esista un teatro per bambini, ma penso anche che esistano particolarità per ogni specifico insieme di età.

Gli adolescenti, i bambini di 8-10 anni, quelli di 6-7, i bambini della scuola dell'infanzia o i piccoli, i piccolissimi, i due - tre anni o gli 0-1 anni, quelli che molti chiamano "bebè", usando una parola che non mi piace, perché non ne rappresenta la complessità.

Se non pensassi che il teatro per bambini esiste, non continuerei da venti anni a frequentare il mondo dei piccolissimi attraverso il teatro.

E a farlo senza frustrazione, vivendo con intensità un teatro che forse da tanti non sarà mai riconosciuto come teatro.

Anzi a farlo in modo ostinato, perché si va sempre in direzione contraria.

Ora io non devo dimostrarlo a me stesso.

Perché io provo un grande piacere nello stare davanti a quel pubblico imprevedibile che è il pubblico dei bambini.

E a vivere tutte le volte la sfida, che, quando va bene, si conclude con la sorpresa e lo stupore che ancora una volta si siano fidati di te. E abbiano ascoltato, con le loro orecchie sensibili, te e le tue storie, figlie di un immaginario che gli stessi i bambini continuano ad alimentare.

Quindi rimandando alle pagine successive il racconto di questa bellissima avventura, il fare teatro per i piccolissimi, che ho avuto la fortuna di vivere, vorrei soffermarmi per un attimo sul perché penso che esista un teatro per i bambini.

Anzi che esistano tanti teatri per i bambini, diversi per le età, ma diversi anche per contesti culturali e sociali.

Provo a spiegarmi, anzi provo a cercare una spiegazione che abbia una sua parvenza logica. Un modello possibile.

Una spiegazione proto-scientifica.

Faccio teatro per bambini da trenta anni e da sempre ho sentito molti teatranti per bambini giustificarsi e dire che no, non c'è un teatro per bambini, che no, non c'è differenza, che sì il teatro è teatro, e se uno spettacolo è bello piace a tutti.

E questo forse è vero. Anzi è senz'altro vero. Un buon spettacolo per bambini può toccare a volte una sensibilità adulta.

Ma.

Ma non è vero il suo contrario ovvero che uno spettacolo per

bambini sia bello per i bambini solo quando tocca le sensibilità adulte.

Secondo me uno spettacolo per bambini può essere bellissimo per coloro a cui è dedicato, i bambini di un'età particolare, e lasciare perfettamente indifferenti gli adulti.

Perché?

Perché è tutta una questione di tempo e di spazio.

E il tempo e lo spazio sono unità di riferimento imperfette.

Un'unità temporale ha ampie contiguità con altri frammenti di tempo.

E così vale per lo spazio la cui misurazione è relativa e convenzionale.

Gli uomini hanno il delirio di misurare tutto, ma a volte dimenticano che ogni misura è strettamente relativa e possibile.

Immaginiamo che esistano più ambiti temporali e più dimensioni spaziali.

Che oltre ai modelli fisici di spazio e di tempo esistano anche dimensioni personali, frammenti spazio/tempo percepiti.

Se arriviamo a ritenere possibile questo, allora possiamo ipotizzare che ognuno di noi abbia una diversa percezione del tempo e dello spazio.

È quasi ovvio.

Ma andando oltre possiamo anche arrivare a dire che le diverse percezioni tempo/spazio possano avvicinarsi quando esistono condizioni simili, per cultura e perché no per età.

Aggiungiamo un elemento.

Alla base di una creazione artistica, qualunque sia l'arte percorsa, sta "l'arte" di saper possedere i fondamenti della composizione.

Il numero aureo degli antichi greci, l'arte di Fidìa, ci porta immediatamente a riflettere su quanto l'opera d'arte, creata in modo più o meno consapevole, comunque risponda ad una particolare e ben riuscita "composizione".

E la composizione poggia sui rapporti tra gli elementi dello spazio, tra quelli del tempo e sulla relazione che può intessersi tra tempo e spazio.

Detto questo, riaffermando il presupposto che spazio e tempo siano gli elementi base della composizione, possiamo anche affermare che i bambini abbiano una visione propria e non adulta dello spazio e del tempo.

Un adulto che vuole relazionarsi con loro attraverso l'arte

deve cimentarsi con uno spazio e un tempo infantili, facendoli condividere e convivere con il proprio spazio/tempo adulto.

È da questo che nasce la particolarità di un'opera d'arte realizzata da un adulto per i bambini.

Un'opera creata da chi cerca di navigare in altri tempi e in altri spazi.

Un po' avventuriero, un po' incosciente.

Non è la ricerca del proprio essere bambini.

Anzi con questo non ha nulla a che vedere.

È l'andare per territori non più noti, sapendo di essere altro.

Avendo la coscienza di essere un elefante o un orso che cammina in mezzo ad un prato di nontiscordardimé.

La ricerca di una delicatezza impossibile che può diventare possibile per la capacità fisicamente improbabile di un nontiscordardimé di saper abbracciare un orso, di un bambino più o meno piccolo di accogliere un adulto, le sue storie che inaspettatamente si aprono e respirano nuovi spazi e altri frammenti di tempo.

Fare teatro per bambini è un andare verso la semplicità delle unità del tempo e dello spazio.

È un andare verso la complessità della composizione e la sua necessità di essere semplice per essere efficace.

Una "semplice complessità" è un ossimoro.

Una figura retorica che svela l'alchimia del contrasto che non separa, ma identifica.

Del possibile incontro tra opposti, del loro convivere ed esaltarsi reciprocamente.

In fondo anche l'incontro tra un adulto e un bambino potrebbe essere raffigurato con un ossimoro.

In fondo è un ossimoro anche aver cercato di unire il nido al teatro.

Il nido e il teatro - Il perché di un'esperienza

"Il Nido e il Teatro" è un'esperienza che ha coinvolto e continua a coinvolgere i Nidi d'Infanzia di Bologna.

È una ricerca iniziata da La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi di Bologna, in collaborazione con il Comune di Bologna - Settore Istruzione - Servizi 0-6, per indagare sulle opportunità che il teatro può offrire, perché adulti e bambini, anche piccolissimi, possano incontrarsi.

Il rapporto con i bambini dei Nidi d'infanzia è una delle tante

avventure che il Teatro-ragazzi italiano ha vissuto in questi anni della sua breve storia.

Una storia che nei suoi momenti migliori è stata caratterizzata da un bisogno forte di contatto con l'infanzia, con i ragazzi, con l'altro da sé.

Dove la ricerca dello stupore, ma anche quella dello stupirsi hanno guidato progetti apparentemente improbabili, come quelli rivolti ai bambini da zero a tre anni.

Una storia fatta di mille campanili, di grandi distanze, di differenze, ma anche di improvvise convergenze e/o di percorsi paralleli.

Uno di questi è quello che dalla metà degli anni '80 ha portato alcune compagnie italiane a confrontarsi con una ricerca sul teatro per la primissima infanzia, con conseguente produzione di spettacoli appositamente ideati per i bambini che frequentano i Nidi d'Infanzia.

Seppure il numero di compagnie non sia elevato è significativo che solo in Francia o nei paesi del Nord Europa ci sia stato un movimento equivalente per dimensioni e qualità delle proposte.

Se oggi, in numerosi paesi europei, un numero consistente di compagnie di teatro per ragazzi ha iniziato a cimentarsi con il pubblico dei bambini sotto i tre anni forse è anche merito di quelle poche compagnie italiane che hanno provato a percorrere questa affascinante pista di ricerca: dal Tam di Padova a Giallo Mare Minimal Teatro di Empoli, da Stilema di Torino al Drammatico Vegetale di Ravenna, dalla Baracca di Monza al Kismet di Bari, dal Teatro Mangiafuoco di Milano a Il melarancio di Bernezzo, al Teatro dell'Angolo di Torino a noi de La Baracca-Testoni Ragazzi di Bologna.

Nella loro diversità, gli spettacoli prodotti costituiscono un piccolo patrimonio.

Un insieme di pensieri, di intuizioni artistiche e di visioni pedagogiche appassionatamente dedicate alla prima infanzia.

Se l'Italia è stata uno dei paesi all'avanguardia nel campo della ricerca per un teatro dedicato ai piccolissimi, il merito è da attribuire congiuntamente alle compagnie di teatro per ragazzi e alle istituzioni educative per la prima infanzia italiane.

Per quanto possiamo trovare difetti al nostro Paese, è difficile trovare in altri paesi europei una rete pubblica di servizi per la primissima infanzia come quella presente in Italia, sia in termini quantitativi, sia, e soprattutto, in termini qualitativi.

E lasciando da parte alcuni paesi del nord Europa, dove vige una legislazione sulla maternità decisamente più favorevole e dove, pertanto, il bambino ha i primi contatti con il sistema educativo dopo i 2 anni, dobbiamo prendere atto che nella grande maggioranza dei paesi europei le istituzioni riservate ai bambini sotto i tre anni hanno il carattere di servizi assistenziali, non educativi, nei quali operano puericultrici e non educatrici.

Inoltre in Italia ha avuto ampio sviluppo la ricerca pedagogica rivolta ai bambini da zero a sei anni. Sia quella a livello universitario, sia, e soprattutto, quella curata sul campo dai pedagogisti di molti enti locali. A questo si è accompagnata una grande attenzione agli accorgimenti strutturali, normativi e legislativi.

Infine in merito all'argomento che stiamo trattando, nello specifico educativo per la prima infanzia ha avuto grande importanza l'attenzione dedicata alle "arti".

Il termine "arti" al posto del singolare "arte" è voluto e non casuale.

Da anni è diffusa in Europa, e non solo, una grande attenzione in ambito educativo alle arti plastiche o figurative.

Ritengo interessante che in Italia sia stata spesso presa in considerazione anche la ricerca nel campo di altre arti quali la musica, la danza, il teatro.

A partire dal modello reggiano, l'esperienza italiana ha toccato e fortemente suggestionato la sensibilità di tanti osservatori europei, come ho potuto più volte verificare direttamente, in questi anni di contatti con operatori di altri paesi.

Parallelamente il teatro per ragazzi italiano, tra i suoi tanti interessi artistici e comunicativi, non ha mai disdegnato di produrre per i bambini della scuola dell'infanzia, riservando ad essi alcuni dei suoi migliori momenti di ricerca.

Il teatro per ragazzi italiano ha tra i suoi meriti quello di avere avuto sempre un'alta considerazione dei bambini e dei ragazzi, sia come soggetti, sia come pubblico.

Questo ha portato le compagnie a produrre spettacoli che sono stati molto attenti alle particolarità di ogni età, senza mai abbandonarsi a facili semplificazioni.

Inoltre, vuoi per quanto appena detto, vuoi per l'ego infinito che ci contraddistingue, in Italia abbiamo dato vita ad una ricchissima drammaturgia contemporanea, utilizzando solo marginalmente il repertorio classico, per dare vita a nuove e originali elaborazioni.

Questo ha fatto sì che, ad esempio, in Germania siano molto rappresentati, da compagnie tedesche, spettacoli di autori di teatro per ragazzi italiani. In particolare per i testi riservati ai bambini piccoli.

La vivacità del teatro per ragazzi italiano ha inoltre comportato una ricca attività di tournée in Europa, che ha permesso di conquistare una buona credibilità all'estero.

Quella credibilità che ha fatto sì che le proposte del teatro ragazzi italiano per i bambini piccolissimi non venissero accantonate come velleitarie, ma fossero osservate prima con curiosità e poi con stupore.

È stato a partire da questa situazione che la ricerca fatta in Italia congiuntamente da compagnie teatrali ed istituzioni educative ha forse stimolato a partire dalla fine degli anni '90 una nuova produzione europea nel campo del teatro per i piccolissimi.

Nuove compagnie di altri paesi che in breve tempo sono diventate a loro volta motori del processo di ricerca, come testimonia, ad esempio, l'esperienza del Théâtre de la Guimbarde di Charleroi - Belgio, che, da quando ha iniziato nel 2000 a produrre spettacoli rivolti ai piccolissimi, è divenuto uno dei punti di riferimento europei nel campo del teatro per la prima infanzia, creando nuovo interesse e nuove occasioni produttive.

Oggi il teatro per piccolissimi, pur rimanendo un fenomeno ancora di nicchia, trova una propria ragione di essere in tanti paesi europei.

Per questa ragione nel 2005, con il sostegno della Commissione Europea e del programma Cultura 2000, è stata fondata *Small size* una Rete europea per la diffusione delle arti performative per la prima infanzia.

Una casa non si costruisce dal tetto - Tracce di un progetto teatrale

Una casa non si costruisce dal tetto, i bambini hanno bisogno di teatro.

È una frase che abbiamo voluto scrivere nell'atrio del nostro teatro, il Testoni Ragazzi di Bologna, un teatro nel quale si produce e si programma solo per bambini e ragazzi.

La seconda parte della frase l'abbiamo "rubata" dal Kinder und Jugend Zentrum di Francoforte, la prima ce la siamo inventata. Non sappiamo se sia efficace, ma abbiamo voluto dichiarare quello che molti di noi ritengono ovvio.

Ovvero che il rapporto con l'arte debba iniziare il prima possibile, perché la "casa/essere umano" abbia buone fondamenta.

Forse è per questo che nel 1986 abbiamo iniziato la ricerca de "Il Nido e il Teatro". È una ricerca molto particolare e raccontarne alcuni aspetti è un modo per raccontare un'idea di rapporto tra i linguaggi artistici e i bambini. I nidi d'infanzia in Italia sono le istituzioni educative che accolgono i bambini da 0 a 3 anni. Il termine "Creche", la mangiatoia - il presepio, dato dai francesi a queste istituzioni e ripreso dal tedesco "Krippe", è molto più diffuso in Europa del nostro "Nido" per definire queste istituzioni. Ma io trovo molto bello il termine italiano, Nido, forse perché più laico, o forse perché se è vero che porta con sé il concetto di cura e di "svezzamento", mette in evidenza anche quello di luogo da cui spiccare il volo, da cui iniziare un percorso di autonomia. Che per un bambino significa il rapporto con gli altri, con una socialità diffusa, con una cultura collettiva. In Italia il Nido d'infanzia è un luogo culturale, frequentato da bambini di età variabile tra i tre mesi e i tre anni appena compiuti.

Per un adulto "gli abitanti dei nidi" sono lontani.

Quando pensiamo ad un bambino "piccolo", difficilmente riusciamo a "vedere" un bambino di questa età, se non viviamo con lui o con loro un rapporto quotidiano. Provate.

Il bambino "piccolo" che vediamo ha la faccia di un neonato o le parole di un bambino di quattro, cinque anni.

Da zero a tre anni ci sono in tutto trentasei mesi, ma sono trentasei mesi di mutazioni continue.

Ogni volta che mi trovo davanti dei bambini del "nido", mi stupisco.

E dallo stupore nasce un fortissimo desiderio di contatto.

Per stabilire un contatto con un bambino piccolo, credo che l'attore, sempre in equilibrio tra il raccontare e l'ascoltare, debba privilegiare quest'ultimo.

Cercare dentro di sé il piacere di ascoltare, ascoltare con tutti i sensi a disposizione e comunicare tale piacere ai bambini.

L'ascolto è complesso.

È l'attenzione anche al non detto, all'invisibile, all'evocato...

È l'attenzione all'originalità di ogni segno.

E i piccoli parlano con i loro occhi e i loro silenzi.

Gli occhi che accompagnano i silenzi dei bambini a volte ci aprono porte che si aprono su mondi nascosti. Porte che troppo

spesso faticiamo a vedere. E perdiamo mille occasioni di stupirci.

Silenzi, occhi curiosi e stupiti.

Io quegli occhi nei nidi li ho visti tante volte.

Sono gli occhi di Teresa di un Nido di Ferrara che a 13 mesi vide tutto lo spettacolo in piedi, appoggiandosi all'educatrice.

Teresa, bionda, pochi capelli, occhi enormi, agganciò il mio sguardo dall'inizio alla fine. Mi guardava dritto negli occhi e sembrava chiedermi che cosa volevo da lei, perché ero lì.

In silenzio.

Nella loro "piccolezza" i bambini del nido ti regalano la loro imponente presenza e ti fanno immergere in un fiume di emozioni.

Come quelle vissute da Riccardo detto "il baciatore".

Riccardo, poco più di due anni.

Quell'anno eravamo appena arrivati al Testoni Ragazzi e programmavamo tre titoli per i Nidi, tutte nostre produzioni. Io lavoravo in tutti e tre gli spettacoli.

Altezza sotto il metro, Riccardo era un grande spettatore. Stava seduto sul tappeto al centro della prima fila con occhi attenti e sguardo serissimo, quasi accigliato.

A metà dello spettacolo, d'improvviso, si voltò verso un compagno e senza chiedere nulla, lo prese, lo tirò verso di sé e lo baciò. Poi si voltò di nuovo verso la scena e non si mosse più fino alla fine.

Due settimane dopo, altro spettacolo. Riccardo era sempre al centro della prima fila.

A metà spettacolo il grande baciatore si è ripetuto. È cambiato il compagno, ma tutto il resto è stato uguale: abbraccio, bacio alla Rhett Butler, in "Via col vento", e così via.

Non mi ricordo se i baciati erano maschi o femmine. Per Riccardo non era importante. Già questo è un segnale. Chi era vicino a lui a metà spettacolo, veniva avvolto dalle sue grandi emozioni.

Al terzo appuntamento l'ho aspettato al varco, attendendo con impazienza di arrivare a metà spettacolo. E lui non mi ha deluso.

Abbraccio, bacio e ritorno in posizione.

Ho pensato che il bacio fosse il modo di dare spazio alla sua profonda emozione. Forse è vero o forse no.

Mi devo accontentare dell'immagine del baciatore.

I bambini piccoli hanno reazioni imprevedibili e soprattutto sono imprevedibili.

A rendere i bambini piccoli così imprevedibili è anche la nostra difficoltà a stabilire con loro un contatto verbale. Un bambino del nido sta vivendo in quella particolare fase dell'uomo in cui si assumono miliardi di informazioni e i sistemi per processarle. Quella fase in cui inizia a strutturarsi il linguaggio. In cui se ne individua la necessità. Credo che non ci sia nulla di più affascinante che osservare lo sviluppo dell'uso del linguaggio in un essere umano. Il bambino, fino ai tre anni, è in piena esplorazione. Sta ancora cercando di comprendere come utilizzare quel dono affascinante che è la parola. Ma sta anche cercando di comprendere il mondo che lo circonda, di stabilire cosa sia giusto e cosa no, cosa sia bello e cosa no, cosa sia vero e cosa no...

Forse non capiscono o forse sì.

Come, cosa e quanto "comprenda" un bambino piccolo dei messaggi adulti è un altro fantastico mistero.

Io ho un figlio che si chiama Bruno.

A venti mesi venne a teatro col Nido.

Quello per me fu uno spettacolo strabico, perché un occhio andava su tutti i bambini, ma uno era sempre su di lui, che stava tra le gambe di Lucia, la sua dada.

Era Marzo e lo spettacolo raccontava "Il viaggio di una nuvola".

Ovviamente a casa Bruno non ha parlato dello spettacolo visto, né noi gli abbiamo chiesto niente. Forse non gli era piaciuto, forse non aveva "capito".

Tre mesi dopo, girando in macchina per la Toscana, sotto un temporale come "Dio comanda", Bruno ha incominciato a raccontare tutta la storia di Nuvole. Tutta dall'inizio alla fine. Chissà perché aveva deciso che era arrivato il momento e perché per tre mesi aveva tenuto tutto dentro.

La prima infanzia è un luogo lontano e il teatro può essere uno dei tanti modi per cercare di raggiungerlo, perché è un linguaggio "umano".

Nel teatro dovrebbe avvenire quello che dovrebbe sempre avvenire nell'ambito del mondo delle relazioni umane. Ovvero che si cresca insieme, che si continui ad imparare. Vale in un rapporto educativo, vale in un rapporto teatrale.

Ecco io forse credo che un teatrante per ragazzi dovrebbe interpretare il suo ruolo, il suo "mestiere", come un'occasione continua per incontrare i bambini e contaminarsi.

Ogni giornata passata davanti ai bambini del Nido, è stata una giornata di grandi contaminazioni, di ritorni, di nuove emozioni, di nuove conoscenze.

Fare teatro per i bambini piccoli è un'esperienza, a mio avviso, bellissima per gli adulti che la fanno. Questi 20 anni di contatti, mi fanno dire che i bambini del Nido gradiscano una relazione teatrale, ma non posso affermarlo. Posso invece affermare che per gli adulti, l'ho visto su di me e su quanti hanno potuto farla, sia un'esperienza assolutamente unica, perché ti impone di metterti a disposizione, di essere continuamente pronto a modificarti per allacciare i contatti più alti.

Ti impone di raccontare, continuando ad ascoltare.

Io e te nello spazio, io racconto questa storia e vorrei essere ascoltato proprio da te. Tu racconti forte con i tuoi silenzi e le tue pause.

La pausa, sonora o motoria è stravolgente per un adulto che si rapporta con il bambino del nido.

Io che tendo normalmente a parlare molto, con loro parlo ancora di più, perché non sono riuscito a vincere la paura dei loro silenzi o delle pause che nascono da un vocabolario in costruzione.

Sono pause, lunghe pause che impongono un confronto diverso con il tempo che dovrebbe essere altro da quello che è nel nostro mondo adulto: un avversario. Un tempo compagno con cui vivere e non contro cui lottare.

Un compagno che evidenzia importanti forme essenziali, piccole poesie che costruiscono un'esperienza.

Non possiamo valutarle secondo parametri estetici adulti.

I silenzi di un bambino fanno parte di un'altra cultura e la loro ricchezza è nella loro semplicità di essere solo silenzi.

"Eppure io credo che se ci fosse un po' più di silenzio, se tutti facessimo un po' di silenzio, forse qualcosa potremmo capire".

(Federico Fellini, La voce della Luna)

Ma i bambini sono davvero un buon pubblico? -

Un'ultima riflessione

Peter Brook, il famoso regista inglese, nel libro "La porta aperta" dice:

"Un pubblico di bambini è il migliore dei critici: i bambini non hanno preconcetti, si interessano immediatamente o altrettanto istantaneamente si annoiano, e o seguono gli attori, o diventano insofferenti".

Ma i bambini sono davvero un buon pubblico?

E soprattutto lo sono i piccoli, quei bambini che hanno 3-4 anni?

O quelli ancora più piccoli, quelli che ne hanno 2 o 3?

O quelli ancora molto più piccoli, quelli che hanno iniziato a camminare ieri o forse un po' di giorni fa?

Molti possono pensare che "stiano lì" perché non sanno scegliere.

Che non stiano fruendo lo spettacolo e che una storia o l'altra non faccia differenza.

Ma non è proprio così ed è questo che vorrei provare a raccontarvi.

Io non sono un pedagogo, non sono un educatore, sono solo un uomo molto fortunato, che ha la fortuna di vivere "incontri ravvicinati" con dei piccoli alieni e ha potuto raccogliere immagini molto, molto particolari.

Ho la fortuna di fare un lavoro che mi permette di essere al mattino davanti ad un bambino di 2 anni e lavorare al pomeriggio con un ragazzo di 18 anni. Per poi incontrare il mattino dopo un adolescente di 13 anni o un bambino di 4, 7 o 10 anni. Tra il più piccolo e il più grande non ci sono solo "anni". È chiaro a tutti che la distanza è enorme.

Ogni età è come un grande pianeta con caratteristiche morfologiche specifiche e uniche.

Di tutti questi pianeti quello dei bambini fino ai 36 mesi, è il più misterioso e forse quello che racchiude l'origine.

Quello in cui si conserva l'emozione "dell'appena avvenuto", "dell'attimo rivoluzionario", del momento critico, quello in cui avviene qualcosa di irripetibile, una svolta, un cambio radicale. Nella scorsa primavera ho fatto spettacolo in un asilo nido vicino a Pordenone. Le educatrici hanno scelto di portare tutti i bambini, anche quelli che chiamiamo "lattanti" o "piccoli", quei bambini che sono entrati nel nido in autunno prima di compiere un anno.

Quindi allo spettacolo partecipavano circa 40 bambini.

Mentre raccontavo la mia storia, vedevo davanti a me, al centro del pubblico, un bambino piccolo che, come capita spesso, guardava lo spettacolo stando in piedi, in equilibrio precario.

Nel corso del racconto, dalla posizione iniziale dietro agli altri, piano, piano con il suo equilibrio instabile, si è avvicinato sempre di più, senza mai arrivare ad invadere lo spazio in cui io agivo.

Alla fine dello spettacolo è venuto verso di me, appoggiandosi dove poteva e facendo l'ultimo tratto da solo. Poi mi ha fatto una carezza col dorso della mano. Mentre lo faceva, l'educatrice mi ha detto: " Lui cammina da ieri". Non camminava da un po', da pochi giorni, lui camminava "da ieri".

Ho provato un'emozione intensa e la percezione di assistere a qualcosa di eccezionale.

Un " eccezionale" che si è ripetuto spesso nel corso della ricerca de "Il Nido e il Teatro", un progetto nel corso del quale si sono intrecciati la produzione di spettacoli per i bambini, i laboratori di formazione sui linguaggi teatrali rivolti alle educatrici e i laboratori teatrali con i bambini.

Io i bambini del Nido li ho visti a teatro per la prima volta una mattina del 1986. Nel nostro teatro si replicava uno spettacolo per la scuola dell'infanzia (3-5 anni). Prima dello spettacolo mi ero fermato a guardare i bambini. Mi piaceva guardarli accomodati sulle poltrone. Ma non mi aspettavo che potessero essere così piccoli. Tanto piccoli da dover stare "in due" sulla stessa poltrona pieghevole per evitare di trasformarsi in panini. Così piccoli che non potevo non guardarli. Così per tutto il tempo ho guardato loro e non lo spettacolo. Alla fine mi sono fermato a parlare con le loro educatrici e così è iniziato il viaggio de "Il nido e il teatro" una ricerca per ideare uno spettacolo appositamente progettato per i bambini del Nido, i bambini da 0 a 36 mesi per capire, prima di tutto, se questo fosse possibile, se avesse significato e quale. Se lo avesse per i bambini "pubblico" e per gli adulti "educatori" e "attori".

Questi venti anni di lavoro mi fanno dire che portare uno spettacolo davanti ai bambini del nido abbia sicuramente senso, perlomeno per gli adulti che lo fanno e che i bambini piccoli del Nido trovano piacere nell'essere pubblico, perché essere pubblico non è un atteggiamento passivo.

Vivere l'arte, non vuol dire solo agire, ma anche fruire.

Nel fruire, occhi e orecchie sono in azione e soprattutto è in moto la nostra capacità di elaborare e processare le informazioni visive e acustiche.

Questo vale anche per i bambini più piccoli ed è una falsa leggenda quella che loro possano essere coinvolti solo facendoli "agire".

Se l'agire è una pratica sicuramente utile, altrettanto lo è il fruire.

Agire e fruire sono complementari come lo sono il comunicare e l'ascoltare. Il teatro non può fare a meno di buoni ascoltatori. Il piacere di essere pubblico è anche del bambino più piccolo, quello sotto i 24 mesi.

Normalmente agli spettacoli per i bambini del Nido vengono portati i bambini più grandi, quelli che hanno già compiuto 24 mesi. Sono le educatrici a valutare se portare anche i più piccoli.

Anni fa, ho vissuto a Genova due giorni in un nido. Una bellissima esperienza, organizzata dal comune di Genova, che ha fatto emergere un elemento particolarmente curioso.

Ho presentato lo "spettacolo" il secondo giorno e durante il primo ho guardato, ascoltato, giocato. Ho cercato disperatamente di far dormire i bambini che continuavano a chiedermi storie e a sgridarmi perché non riuscivo a raccontarle come sapevano.

Ci siamo ascoltati, sentiti. Era la prima volta, così, che mi sarei presentato, con lo spettacolo, a bambini che mi conoscevano. Il dubbio, nato dopo il primo giorno, era se sarebbe stato possibile separare il gioco dal momento teatrale (per loro credo fosse la prima volta che partecipavano ad uno spettacolo) e se per loro non sarebbe stato naturale interagire con le stesse modalità del giorno prima.

Invece per 45 minuti quei bambini non si sono alzati fino alla fine dello spettacolo e non mi hanno chiamato per nome, rispettando una convenzione. Solo alla fine allora mi sono tornati in braccio e hanno ripronunciato il mio nome, che avevano messo da parte.

Mi chiedo ancora perché abbiano aspettato la fine dello spettacolo per ricominciare il gioco diretto.

Mi verrebbe da pensare che esista un bisogno profondo di essere pubblico. Un bisogno di vivere il teatro che nasce non si sa da dove.

Come tutti i pubblici, quello dei nidi è composto da individui diversi, ognuno dei quali con un proprio gusto e una propria sensibilità.

Individui che gradiscono o non gradiscono.

Quello dei bambini sotto i tre anni è un pubblico che forse ha meno convenzioni di altri, perché difficilmente applaude, o ride quando deve, ma che è capace di stupirti con i suoi silenzi, le risate improvvise e inaspettate e i tanti baci regalati. Inoltre posso affermare che non esiste un modo di fare teatro per i bambini

del Nido, perché loro possono gradire proposte spettacolari di diverso genere. Spettacoli di danza e di teatro delle ombre. Narrazioni surreali e passionali. Racconti con poche o tante parole. Storie buffe e romantiche. Con immagini astratte o giocattoli.

Fare teatro per i bambini del Nido può significare per un attore ricercare, utopicamente, il suono, il gesto, il segno fondamentale.

Non perché più comprensibile, ma solo perché più comunicativo.

Non serve nascondersi dietro inutili sovrastrutture culturali.

In questa situazione bisogna cercare il piacere di sentire la visceralità di un pubblico che c'è o non c'è, che accetta o rifiuta con manifestazioni forti. Che ha un particolare ritmo di respirazione, che ha paura o non ce l'ha, che piange per un suono troppo forte o che sale sul biciclino quando si annoia.

Che ti impone di aspettarlo, di dargli tempo, di non aggredirlo, di farti conoscere, di misurare tutto e poi lasciarti andare.

Che ti chiede di essere profondamente rispettato. Perché lui è.

Lavorando con i bambini del Nido, ho iniziato ad osservare con attenzione cosa possa significare per un attore stare davanti ad un pubblico.

Ad un pubblico infantile, in particolare.

Una traccia di risposta, tra le mille risposte possibili, alla domanda ansiosa cosa significhi far teatro - ragazzi.

Ho sentito una volta Valeria Moriconi (una grande attrice del teatro italiano del '900) parlare di cosa dovrebbe cercare un attore: un punto d'equilibrio.

Un equilibrio paradossale, quello che vede la coincidenza alta tra un totale lasciarsi andare e un perfetto controllo della situazione.

Essere lucidamente fuori e appassionatamente dentro.

I bambini piccoli riescono a farti sentire, in breve tempo, quanto sia importante cercare quell'equilibrio.

Cercare di essere credibili, ma di non perdere la direzione e viceversa di non perdere la direzione ed essere credibili (il credibile è un insieme di idee e di sensibilità).

Cercare, non vuole dire trovare, ma è cercare.

Vale per un attore, vale per un educatore.

Entrambi devono incamminarsi su percorsi di liberazione per non perdere la voglia di cantarsi addosso.

"Vi confesso che non riesco a concepire un educatore che lavori senza speranza... Dobbiamo avere la capacità storica di andare avanti e di creare un nuovo canto..." (Paulo Freire)

DOES THEATRE FOR CHILDREN EXIST? *

Roberto Frabetti

Actor, playwright, director
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi
Bologna **(ITALY)**

translated by Letizia Olivieri

Does Theatre For Children Exist? - An Unlikely Model

Does theatre for children exist?

Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't.

But asking this question again today, while I start writing this article, is not an academic exercise.

I have been asked this question many times.

I have also been asked other questions, and they were all similar to this one.

Questions like "But is theatre for children real theatre?" or "Why divide an audience of children into age groups, isn't theatre always theatre?" or "When a show is good, it should not be for a particular age group, can't it be good both for children and adults at the same time?".

Now then, though I always respect the others' different opinions, I like going in a "stubborn and contrary" direction (as suggested by the title of a very good collection dedicated to one of the greatest Italian poets of the twentieth century, Fabrizio De André).

Not only do I think that theatre for children exists, but I also think that it has got its own dimension, that it is an exciting subset (in its mathematical meaning) of that wonderful set represented by theatre.

I also believe that theatre for children is a set itself, formed by many subsets, each of them different from the other.

Specificity is separation, but not necessarily contrast. Different units co-exist and create a great big unit. These are the basis of set theory.

But.

If we don't see the subsets, the particles; if we don't see that

* This article has been written for "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" edited by Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

each of them has its own particular balance; if we don't observe the fragility of that balance, sometimes so similar to a cobweb, then we refuse to see the wonders of creation.

Back to the first question, not only do I think that theatre for children does exist, but I also think that every age group has its own specific features.

The teenagers, the children from 8 to 10, those who are 6 or 7, the kindergarten children and the young, the very young, those who are 2 or 3 or even 0 or 1 year old, those who are often called "babies", using a word that I do not like, because it does not represent their complexity.

If I had ever believed that theatre for children did not exist, then I would not have been working with them for more than twenty years.

And I have been doing it without frustration, intensely living a kind of theatre that many will never consider as real theatre.

In fact, I have always been doing it stubbornly, because we always move in a contrary direction.

Now I am not supposed to demonstrate this to myself.

Because it is a pleasure for me to stand in front of that uncatchable audience of children, and to challenge myself time after time, for if at the end I feel surprised and astonished, it is because they have trusted you once again, and I can say "I made it". And they have listened with their sensitive ears, they have listened to me and my stories, that come from an imagery that the children themselves keep on nourish.

So I will wait before telling you my story about how good it is to "do theatre" for the very young and how lucky I have been to live it, because first I would like to tell you the reason why I think that theatre for children exists. Or, better said, the reason why I think there are many theatres for children, different for every age group, and different for each and every social and cultural context.

I will try to make it as clear as possible, and to find an apparently plausible explanation. A possible model.

A proto-scientific explanation.

I have been working in the field of theatre for children for thirty years, and I have always heard many actors justifying themselves and saying that no, there is no theatre for children, and no, there is no difference, theatre is theatre and if a show is good, everybody is going to like it.

And this is maybe true. Rather, it is certainly true. A good show for children may sometimes reach the adults' hearts.

But.

But it cannot be the other way round, that is, that a show for children is good for children only when it reaches the adults' hearts.

In my opinion, a show for children can be very good for the particular age group it addresses, and at the same time leave adults completely indifferent.

Why?

Because it is all a matter of time and space.

Time and space are imperfect reference units.

A time unit is contiguous to other fragments of time.

The same can be said for space, its measurement being relative and conventional.

In their frenzy, men try to measure everything, but sometimes they forget that each measurement is strictly relative and possible.

Let us imagine that there are several time spheres and several spatial dimensions, and that, along with the physical models of space and time, there are also personal dimensions, perceived space/time fragments.

If we are able to conceive this, then we can assume that each and every one of us has a different perception of space and time.

It is almost obvious.

Taking one step further, we can also assume, however, that the different space / time perceptions can get nearer when there are similar conditions, driven by culture or age.

Let us add an element.

The basis of artistic creation, whatever the kind of art, is the 'art' of knowing how to master the foundations of composition.

The golden number of the ancient Greeks and Phidia's art immediately make us reflect upon how the work of art, created more or less consciously, always responds to a particular and well-devised "composition".

And composition rests upon the relationship among the elements of space, those of time and the possible relationship between space and time.

This being said, and going back to the assumption that space and time are the basic elements of composition, we can also state that the children have their own vision of space and time,

which is not an adult vision.

The adults who want to relate to children through art have to face the children's space and time, and they have to make them share and co-exist with their own adult space/time.

The particularity of a work of art made by an adult for the children derives from this concept.

A work of art created by someone who tries to sail in other times and spaces.

A bit adventurous, a bit reckless.

It is not a matter of looking for our own inner children.

As a matter of fact, it has nothing to do with this.

It is instead a matter of crossing territories not known anymore, knowing that we are something else.

Aware that we are an elephant or a bear walking in a forget-me-not meadow.

In search for an impossible delicacy that may become possible thanks to the physically unlikely ability of a forget-me-not to hug a bear, or of the children to welcome the adults, their stories unexpectedly opening and breathing new spaces and other fragments of time.

Doing theatre for children is to go towards the simplicity of time and space units.

It is to go towards the complexity of composition and its need to be simple in order to be effective.

A "simple complexity" is an oxymoron.

A figure of speech that tells the alchemy of contrast which does not divide, but identifies.

The alchemy of the possible meeting of opposites, of their co-existence and mutual exaltation.

After all, the meeting of a child and an adult could also be represented by an oxymoron.

After all, the fact of having tried to combine crèche and theatre is also an oxymoron.

Theatre and crèche - The reasons of an experience

"Theatre and crèche" is a project that has involved and continues to involve the crèches of Bologna.

It is a piece of research developed by La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi of Bologna, in collaboration with the Municipality of Bologna - Department for Education - 0-6 years Services, in order to investigate the opportunities theatre can offer, to give

children, even the youngest, and adults a chance to meet. The relationship with the children who attend our crèches is one of the many adventures that Italian theatre for young people has lived in its short history.

A history that, in its best moments, has been characterised by a strong need for a contact with children, teenagers, with the 'other-than-oneself'.

Where the search for amazement, and the search for being amazed have guided apparently unlikely projects, like the ones for children from 0 to 3 years.

A history made of a thousand bell towers, long distances, differences, but also sudden convergences and/or parallel paths.

One of these is the one that, from the mid-80s, has led some Italian companies to undertake a piece of research on theatre for early childhood and to produce shows specially devised for children attending crèches.

Although only few companies are involved, it is important to underline the fact that in France and Northern Europe there has not been any movement of this kind with the same dimensions or quality of proposals.

If today more and more companies of theatre for young people in several European countries have started to produce shows for children under 3, it is thanks to those few Italian companies that have tried to open this fascinating track of research: from *Tam* in Padua to *Giallo Mare Minimal Teatro* in Empoli, from *Stilema* in Turin to *Drammatico Vegetale* in Ravenna, from *Baracca* in Monza to *Kismet* in Bari, from *Teatro Mangiafuoco* in Milan to *Il Melarancio* di Bernezzo, from *Teatro dell'Angolo* in Turin to us, *La Baracca-Testoni Ragazzi* in Bologna.

In their diversity, the shows produced are a 'small fortune'.

A collection of thoughts, artistic intuitions and pedagogical visions passionately dedicated to early childhood.

If Italy has been one of the vanguard countries in the domain of research on theatre for the very young, this has been possible thanks both to the companies of theatre for young people and to the Italian educational institutions for the early years.

We can certainly find many imperfections in our Country, but it is just as certain that it is difficult to find a public network of services for the early years similar to ours, both in terms of quality and quantity.

Except some countries in Northern Europe, where maternity legislation offers more favourable conditions and children enter the educational system after 2 years of age, we have to acknowledge the fact that in most European countries the institutions for children under 3 have the features of social services, not of educational ones, in which mainly paediatricians work, and not educators.

Moreover, in Italy the pedagogic research on children from 0 to 6 years has been largely developed, both in universities and through fieldwork, the latter involving mainly pedagogues from local authorities. Besides, particular attention was paid to the structural, prescriptive and legislative aspects.

Finally, in this framework, "arts" played a major role. "Arts" at the plural form, and not simply "art".

In the educational area, particular attention is also being paid to plastic and pictorial arts, in Europe and beyond its borders.

I think it interesting that, in Italy, research in fields like music, dance and theatre was often taken into great consideration.

Starting from the Reggio Emilia model, the Italian experience has touched and influenced the sensibility of many European professionals, and I have been able to verify it myself during all these years of exchange with operators from other countries.

At the same time, among its many artistic and communicative focuses, Italian theatre for young people has always been concerned in producing shows for kindergarten children, often resulting in high standard research quality.

Among its merits, Italian theatre for young people has certainly the one of always having taken into great consideration children and youngsters, both as subjects and as audience.

This led many companies to produce shows with a particular focus on the special features of each age group, always avoiding simplifications.

Moreover, either because of what we have just said, or because of our neverending ego, in Italy we were able to create a very rich contemporary dramaturgy made of new and original productions, using the classical repertoire only marginally.

This made it possible for some shows by Italian authors to be performed, for example, in Germany by German theatre companies, in particular for the very young.

Thanks to the liveliness of Italian theatre for young people, we

were given the opportunity to go on tour around Europe several times, which allowed us to gain credibility abroad.

In this way, the Italian theatre proposals for the very young were not viewed and dismissed as unrealistic, but observed first with curiosity and then with amazement.

From this starting point, the research carried out in Italy by theatre companies and educational institutions fostered, from the late '90s on, a new European production in the field of theatre for the very young.

New companies from other countries became in a short time new engines for the research process. The experience of Théâtre de la Guimbarde in Charleroi, for example, is particularly important, for since it began to produce shows for the very young in the year 2000, it has become one of the main reference points in Europe in the field, creating a new interest and occasions for new productions.

Today, theatre for the very young, though remaining a niche phenomenon, is finding its own *raison d'être* in many European countries.

This is the reason why, in 2005, with the support of the European Commission and the Culture 2000 Programme, *Small Size* was founded, the European Network for the diffusion of Performative Arts for Early Years.

You cannot build a house from the roof - Traces of a theatre project

You cannot build a house from the roof, children need theatre.

It is a sentence we wanted to write on a wall at the entrance of our theatre, the Testoni Ragazzi in Bologna, a theatre in which the productions are exclusively for children and young people.

We "stole" the second part of the sentence from the *Kinder und Jugend Zentrum* in Frankfurt, whereas the first part is ours.

We do not know if it is effective, but we wanted to make clear what for us is obvious. That is, that the contact with art should begin as soon as possible, to make sure the "house/human being" is built on strong foundations.

Maybe it is the reason why we started, in 1986, the "Theatre and Crèche" piece of research. It is a very particular piece of research and describing some of its aspects is a way to describe also an idea of relationship between children and artistic languages.

In Italy, the crèches are called "nido". The "nidi" are those

educational institutions for children from 0 to 3 years. The term "crèche" - reminding of the manger and the nativity scene - that the French give to these institutions and the similar German word "Krippe", in Europe is much more used than our "nido" to refer to these institutions. But I think the Italian term "nido" (*Nest*) is really beautiful, maybe for its lay connotations, or maybe because it carries the concept of care and "weaning", it also reminds of the place from which to fly off, from which to begin an autonomous path that, for a kid, means to begin to relate with the others, with a collective culture through social relations. In Italy the nido is a place of culture for children from 0 to 3 years of age.

For adult people, "the inhabitants of the nidi" are usually faraway.

When we think about a "little" baby, we rarely manage to "see" a baby of this age, if we do not live together with them our everyday life. Let's try. It is more likely that the little baby we see has a newborn child's face and a four years old one's language.

The thirty-six months between zero and three years are characterised by continuous changes.

Every time I meet nursery children, I get so astonished. This astonishment makes me feel the strong desire to be in contact with them.

To be in contact with a little baby means, for an actor, to find a balance between talking and listening, trying to privilege the latter. We should look for the pleasure to listen inside of us, listen with all our senses and communicate this pleasure to the children.

Listening is complex.

It means paying attention to what is not said, to the hidden, the evoked...

It is the attention to the originality of every sign.

And babies talk with their eyes and silences.

Sometimes the children's silent eyes open doors to hidden worlds. Most of the times we are not able to see them, and we lose a good chance to get astonished.

Silences, curious and amazed eyes.

I saw those eyes in nursery children so many times.

They are the eyes of Teresa, who, at 13 months, watched the whole show standing, leaning against the leg of her teacher, in a crèche in Ferrara.

Teresa and I made immediately eye contact, and with her few, fair hair and her big eyes, she seemed to ask me: *what do you want from me? Why are you here?*

Silently.

With their "tininess", nursery children offer you their stately presence and make you drown in a river of emotions. Emotions just like the ones Riccardo felt. We used to call him "the kisser".

At that time, we had just begun working at "Testoni Ragazzi", and we were preparing and producing three performances for nursery children. I was going to perform in all of them.

Riccardo did not reach one metre of height, and he listened very carefully. He sat on the carpet in the middle of the first row of children, with attentive and serious eyes, almost glaring at me.

During the performance, he suddenly turned to one of his mates and, without saying a word, he hugged him, pulled him closer and kissed him. Then, he turned his eyes back to the scene and did not make a move until the end of the show.

Two weeks later, we performed again in the same nursery, and Riccardo was again sitting in the first row of children.

In the middle of the show, "the kisser" performed once again. He changed his target but all the rest was just the same: hug and "Rhett-Butler-style" kiss, like in "Gone with the wind".

I do not remember whether the kissed were boys or girls. It did not matter to him: whoever was sitting beside him, was sooner or later bound to share his emotions.

The third time I went there, I impatiently waited for him to perform his kiss again, and he did not deceive my expectations: hug, kiss and back to his position. I thought that the kiss was his manner to express his deep emotion. Maybe it is true and maybe it is not. I'll have to be satisfied with the image of the kisser.

Children react unpredictably, and, above all, they are *uncatchable*, and this happens mostly because we cannot use verbal communication with them. This is the phase in which children absorb billions of pieces of information and the systems to process them. They begin to understand what language is, and to understand that it is necessary. I think there is nothing more interesting in a human being than the development of language use. From zero to three years of age, children explore the amazing gift of language, trying to understand how to use it. At the same time, they are trying to understand the surrounding

world, to distinguish between right or wrong, to tell what is good and what is bad, true or false.

Maybe they do not understand, or maybe they do.

How, what and how much a baby can "understand" is another amazing mystery.

My son's name is Bruno.

He was twenty months old when he experienced a theatrical performance at his crèche. I felt cross-eyed that day, because an eye would look at all the children, but the other was always looking at him, who sat in his teacher's lap. It was March and the performance dealt with the "Journey of a cloud".

Once home, Bruno did not say a word about the performance, but, on the other hand, we did not ask him any question. Maybe he had not liked it, maybe he had not "understood".

Three months later, during a car trip in Tuscany, under the pouring rain, Bruno began to tell us the whole story of the cloud.

Who knows why he had decided it was time to do it and why he had kept all inside of him for three months.

Early childhood is a faraway place and theatre can be one of the many ways to try and reach it, because it is a "human" language.

In theatre often happens what should happen in human relationships. That is to say, grow up together and keep on learning. Individuals who meet and influence each other, sharing experiences, memories, projects, with no defence of power or privilege.

It should be so for an educational relationship, as well as for a theatrical one.

Perhaps an actor playing for children should consider his role, his "job" as a continual chance to meet children and influence himself.

Every single day I spent with nursery children was characterised by great influences and returns, by new emotions and discoveries.

In my opinion, theatre for nursery children is a beautiful experience for the adults involved. These twenty years of "contacts" make me think that nursery children like a theatrical relationship; I am not sure, however. On the contrary, I am sure that it is a unique experience for adults, because you must be at the children's disposal, you must be ready to continually and promptly change shape in order to establish deeper contacts.

You must be able to talk and listen, all at the same time.

Me and you. You and me. Here. Now.

I'm going to tell you a story and I'd be pleased if you listened to me.

You are a very good storyteller, with your silences and your pauses.

Nursery children's pauses take our breath away.

I always tend to be overtalkative, especially when I am surrounded by children, because I am not able to overcome my fear of their silences and of the pauses deriving from a vocabulary that has to be completed. They are long pauses, pauses that make you consider time from a different point of view. In our everyday life, time is our enemy; in this particular case, instead, it is a companion. A companion able to highlight the importance of such moments, like short poems that build an experience. We cannot judge them according to adult aesthetic parameters.

The children's silences belong to another culture and their richness derives from the fact of being just silences: it is a kind of "simple" poetry.

"Yet I believe that if there was a little bit of silence, if all of us kept silent for a little while, perhaps we would understand something"

(Federico Fellini, *The moon's voice*)

Are children a good audience? - A last reflection

Peter Brook, the famous English director, in his book "The open door", writes:

"An audience of children is the best critic: children do not have any bias, they can become bored as suddenly as they become involved; they either follow the actors, or they become intolerant".

Are children a good audience?

And what about the young ones, those who are three or four years old?

Or the even younger ones, those who are two or three?

And finally, what about the youngest ones, those who started walking yesterday or a few days ago?

Many may think that they are there because they do not choose, so they do not listen.

They are not enjoying the show and they cannot understand the difference between a story and another.

But it is not exactly like this and I would like to try and tell you

why.

I am not a pedagogue, and I am not a teacher, I am just a very lucky man, who has the luck to experience "close encounters" with little aliens and who can collect very interesting images.

I say I am lucky because my job allows me to meet a two-year-old kid in the morning and work with an eighteen-year-old boy in the afternoon. Then, the morning after, I meet a thirteen-year-old teenager or a four-, seven-, ten-year-old kid. There are not only "years" between the youngest and the oldest. It is clear to everyone that they are very far apart.

Every age is like a big planet with specific and unique morphological features.

Of all these planets, the one of the children from 0 to 36 months is the most mysterious and perhaps it is the one where the origin can be found.

It is the one planet where the "it-has-just-happened" feeling is kept, the "revolutionary", critical moment, in which something unique takes place, a turning point, a radical change.

Last spring I performed a show in a crèche in the North of Italy. The teachers decided to take all the children, even the babies, those who entered the school in autumn, before their first birthday. There were approximately 40 children. While telling my story, I could see in front of me, in the middle of my audience, a young boy who, as often happens, was watching the show standing on his feet, hardly keeping his balance.

During the tale, very slowly, he began to move forwards, getting closer and closer to where I was, though never invading my space. At the end of the show, he came to me, finding support where he could and walking the last bit without help. Then he stroked me gently with the back of his hand. While he was doing this, the teacher told me: "He began to walk yesterday". Not "some time ago", not "a few days ago", he had begun "yesterday".

I experienced a very strong feeling and I felt I was witnessing something extraordinary.

An "extraordinary" that I felt over and over again during the "Theatre and Crèche" research, a project during which the production of shows for the early years, the workshops for teachers about theatrical languages and theatrical workshops for children intertwined.

It was one morning in 1986 when I saw nursery children at the theatre for the first time. In our theatre there was a performance

of a show for kindergarten children (3-5 years). Before the show, I stopped to observe the children. I liked watching them sitting comfortably on the seats, but I didn't expect that they could be so small. So small that they were sitting "in pairs" on the same folding seat to avoid being transformed into sandwiches. So small I couldn't help watching them. And I watched them instead of the show, at which end I went to speak to their teachers and that's how the "Theatre and crèche" journey began. A research aimed at devising a show for crèche children, those from 0 to 36 months of age, in order to understand, mainly, if it was possible, if it made any sense and what it would be. If it made sense for the children-audience and for the adults-teachers-actors.

These 20 years of work make me say that presenting a show to nursery children does make sense, at least for the adults that perform it and the small nursery children that enjoy being an audience, because being an audience is not a passive attitude.

To live art does not simply mean to act, but to enjoy: our eyes and ears and, most importantly, our ability to work out and process visual and acoustic information are in action.

This happens to the youngest children too, and it is a false legend the one that claims that they are involved only if they "act".

If acting is a very useful activity, enjoying is just as useful.

Acting and enjoying are complementary like communicating and listening. Theatre cannot do without good listeners.

The enjoyment of being an audience can be found in the smallest children, those up to 24 months of age.

Normally, the children who take part to a theatrical performance are the older ones, those who are at least 24 months. Educators decide whether to bring the younger ones or not.

Years ago, I spent two days in a crèche in Genoa. It was a beautiful experience, organised by the town Municipality, during which a very curious aspect emerged.

I was going to perform on the second day, while during the first I just watched, listened to and played with the children. I tried, in vane, to make them sleep, while they kept on asking me to tell them stories and then laughing at me because I was not able to tell them correctly. We felt and listened to each others.

It was the first time I performed in front of children who already knew me. I was worried because I kept asking myself if I would be able to keep play-time and performance-time separated. I

thought that it would be natural for them to interact with me in the same way as the day before.

Instead, they did not stand up, they "respected a convention" for 45 minutes and eventually came back to me, repeating my name, which they had forgotten for a while. I still ask myself why they waited until the end of the performance to start playing with me again.

Perhaps the answer is, because they feel this urgent need of being an audience.

A need of living theatre that comes from an unknown place.

As happens in all audiences, in crèches audiences there are different individuals, each of them with a particular taste and sensibility. They either enjoy what is shown to them or they do not.

An audience of children under 3 years of age is a kind of audience that has, perhaps, less conventions, because they hardly clap their hands or laugh when they are supposed to, but they are able to surprise you with their silences, sudden laughs and many, many kisses. I can also say that there is not just one way to play theatre for children, because they can enjoy different kinds of theatre. Dance shows or shadow theatre, surreal and emotional stories, tales with few or many words, funny or romantic stories, with abstract images or toys.

Theatre for nursery children may mean, for an actor, to ideally find fundamental sounds, gestures, signs. Not just because they may be easily comprehended, but because they are more communicative. We should not need to hide behind useless cultural walls.

In this kind of situation, we should instead need to enjoy the spontaneity of an audience that is there and it is not, that accepts and refuses what is shown to them through strong reactions. An audience with a particular breathing rhythm, that is frightened or it is not, that cries because of high-pitched sound or that runs to the trike when it is bored.

The very young child forces you to wait for it, to give it time to understand who you are; then, gently, you can begin to measure everything and feel at ease.

It asks you total respect. Because it is.

Working with nursery children, I started to try and understand the meaning of standing on front of an audience.

In particular, of an audience of children.

A possible answer, among the thousand possible answers, to the question "what does theatre for children mean?"

I once heard Valeria Moriconi (one of the greatest actresses of the 20th century in Italy) talking about what an actor should look for: a balance point.

That paradoxical balance that implies the concurrence of a "feeling-at-ease" sensation and the control of the situation.

Being consciously outside and enthusiastically inside.

Small children can make you understand, in a very short time, how important it is to look for that balance.

Trying to be trustworthy without losing your direction and vice versa, trying not to lose your direction and still be trustworthy (trustworthiness is a mix of ideas and sensibility).

To search does not mean to find, it simply means to search.

It is true for an actor, and it is true for an educator.

Both have to undertake paths of liberation in order not to stop feeling like singing onto themselves.

"I confess that I cannot conceive the idea of an educator working without hope... We must have the historical ability to carry on and create a new song..." (Paulo Freire)

ERSTE ERTRÄGE

Zu ästhetischen Eigenarten des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten

Gerd Taube

Direktor von Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Frankfurt am Main
(DEUTSCHLAND)

Einleitung

Anhand des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten lassen sich Grundlagen des Theaters und der theatralen Kommunikation diskutieren¹. Die Rezeptionssituation ist nicht von den Konventionen des bürgerlichen Theaters geprägt, weil seine Zuschauer (noch) nicht auf diese Konventionen konditioniert wurden. Aber auch Grundlagen des Kindertheaters allgemein können anhand des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten reflektiert und definiert werden. Ein solcher Glaubenssatz, den wir stets und nicht mehr hinterfragt im Munde führen lautet: Das Kindertheater hat ein besonderes Verhältnis zu seinem Publikum. Er dient dazu, das Kindertheater vom *gewöhnlichen* Theater abzugrenzen. Dabei gibt es eine ganze Reihe von Aufführungen des professionellen Kindertheaters in Deutschland, bei denen dieser Satz nicht gilt. Also wäre zu analysieren, was denn das Besondere an dem Verhältnis des Kindertheaters zu seinem Publikum ist.

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten gibt es ebenso wenig, wie sich jede andere Theaterform auf einen ästhetischen Kanon reduzieren lässt.² Seine Ausprägungen sind so unterschiedlich und vielfältig wie die Ausprägungen anderer Theaterformen auch. Aus der einfachen Beobachtung singulärer Aufführungen lassen

¹ Eigentlich wäre im Zusammenhang mit dem Theater für die Allerkleinsten auch das Konzept der Performativität zu diskutieren und auf diese Theaterform anzuwenden. Da jedoch der theoretische Diskurs über Performativität in der Theaterwissenschaft und der Kulturwissenschaft bisher von der Szene des Kinder- und Jugendtheaters nicht nur nicht wahrgenommen, sondern auch als der eigenen Auffassung von Theater fremd aufgefasst wird, verzichte ich in diesem Beitrag auf die Thematisierung dieses Diskurses, soll hier doch der Stand der Diskussion zum Theater für die Allerkleinsten Gegenstand sein.

² Diese Feststellung ist eines der Ergebnisse des Kolloquiums Theater von Anfang an, das das Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum als Bestandteil des internationalen Gastspielschwerpunkts beim 8. Deutschen Kinder- und Jugendtheater-Treffen im Mai 2005 in Berlin veranstaltet hat.

sich zwar noch keine belastbaren Aussagen zu ästhetischen Grundsätzen einer Theaterform *Theater für Allerkleinsten* ableiten, doch sind unterschiedliche Phänomene in unterschiedlichen Aufführungen zu beschreiben.

Daher können die Überlegungen zu einer ästhetischen Spezifik dieses Theaters zunächst nur über bestimmte Aspekte und Kategorien systematisiert werden. Dieser Versuch sollte nicht als eine Kanonisierung dieser Aspekte und Kategorien begriffen werden. Es geht darum, die ersten Erkenntnisse in dem Diskussionsprozess um das Theater für die Allerkleinsten, der in Deutschland seit einigen Jahren geführt wird,³ zu systematisieren, damit darauf aufbauend die einzelnen Aspekte und Kategorien weiter diskutiert werden können.

Der Diskussionsprozess in Deutschland ist an einem Punkt angelangt, an dem eine solche Zwischenbilanz notwendig wird, damit die praktische Auseinandersetzung und die theoretische Reflexion eine neue Qualität erreichen können. Anders formuliert: Es darf nicht mehr in erster Linie um die Legitimation des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten gehen, es existiert bereits. Nun muss die Diskussion von der beschreibend-reflektierenden Stufe auf die analytisch-systematische Ebene geführt werden.

Aspekte und Kategorien

Anders als bei vielen Diskussionen über Theater (auch über Kinder- und Jugendtheater) kann es in der Diskussion über das Theater für die Allerkleinsten keine Trennung der Diskurse über die gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen und die ästhetischen Gesichtspunkte geben, denn sie bedingen einander. Im Folgenden müssen sie, aus methodischen Gründen, getrennt dargestellt werden, da sie ansonsten nicht analysierbar und in ihrer jeweiligen Spezifik darstellbar wären.

Gesellschaftliche Voraussetzungen

Das Kindheitsbild der Gesellschaft

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten ist stärker als andere Formen des Kinder- und Jugendtheaters davon abhängig, welche Haltung die Gesellschaft gegenüber Kindern hat, in diesem speziellen

3 Daher sind in diesen Beitrag sowohl die Ergebnisse des Symposiums First Steps (2205 in Hamm, als auch Aspekte der Diskussionen während des 8. Deutschen Kinder- und Jugendtheater-Treffens (2005 in Berlin) und früherer Diskussionen, beispielsweise die des 1999 in der Berliner SCHAUBUDE veranstalteten Symposiums Unter dem Tisch, eingeflossen.

Fall, gegenüber sehr kleinen Kindern. Während das gewöhnliche Kindertheater, also das Theater für Kinder ab fünf oder sechs Jahren, nicht mehr wirklich gesellschaftlich in Frage gestellt wird und damit auch das Recht dieser Kinder auf Theaterkunst, wird das Recht auf Kunst der ganz kleinen Kinder, also von null bis drei oder vier Jahren, generell in Frage gestellt. Interessanterweise gibt es selbst in den Reihen der engagiertesten Kindertheatermacher starke ablehnende Meinungen zum Theater für die Allerkleinsten. Da spielen in der Regel ästhetische Überzeugungen eine Rolle, die als nicht mehr hinterfragbar begriffen werden. Schon allein diese Tatsache macht es notwendig, einige Fragen zu dem diesen Meinungen zugrunde liegenden Kindheitsbild zu stellen. Als was werden kleine Kinder begriffen? Offenbar ist die Beantwortung dieser grundlegenden Frage ein Schlüssel zu der Haltung zum Theater für die Allerkleinsten. Werden die kleinen Kinder als *human beings* oder als *human becomings* begriffen? Zwischen diesen beiden Polen lassen sich die Auffassungen dazu verorten. Werden sie als defizitäre Wesen, als gute, weil noch unverdorbene Menschen, als Menschen auf einer bestimmten Entwicklungsstufe oder als Menschen mit speziellen Kompetenzen begriffen? Was wird von kleinen Kindern erwartet? Begreift man sie als *human becomings*, was oder wie sollen sie dann werden?

Es gibt im Moment in Deutschland eine Diskussion, in der Kinderkrippe und Kindergarten als Bildungsorte aufgefasst werden, wobei in den meisten Bildungs- und Erziehungsplänen für die Altersgruppe 0 bis 10 Jahre, die seit den achtziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts existieren, die Bildungsfunktion dieser Einrichtungen bereits festgeschrieben ist. In der Praxis sind diese Konzepte jedoch nicht oder nur ansatzweise umgesetzt worden und die Betreuungsfunktion spielt weiterhin die entscheidende Rolle. So stellt sich die Frage danach, welchen Status und welche Funktionen Kinderkrippe und Kindergarten haben, denn in allen Ländern, aus denen wir überzeugende Beispiele für ein Theater für die Allerkleinsten gesehen haben, ist der Status der Einrichtungen der frühkindlichen Bildung und Erziehung im gesamten Bildungssystem ein anderer als in Deutschland. In Norwegen, Italien oder Frankreich sind diese Einrichtungen Bestandteil des Bildungssystems und nicht demselben vorgelagert, wie dies in Deutschland in praxi der Fall ist. Während die Bildungskarriere eines Menschen in Deutschland mit der Einschulung beginnt, beginnen

die Kinder in den genannten Ländern ihren Bildungsweg bereits mit dem Besuch der Kinderkrippe bzw. des Kindergartens. Ich bin überzeugt davon, dass diese Tatsache eine ganz wichtige Voraussetzung für das Entstehen einer Theaterkunst für die Allerkleinsten darstellt.

Daher ist die Diskussion über das Theater für die Allerkleinsten in diesen Ländern auch vor allem eine ästhetische Diskussion. Folglich muss sich diese Theaterform ästhetisch legitimieren, also über die Qualität der künstlerischen Arbeit, während die Legitimation von Kunst und speziell Theaterkunst für Kinder in Deutschland sehr stark über den Bildungsdiskurs und damit über einen politischen Diskurs erfolgt.

Die Auffassung von der Kunst

Der gesellschaftliche Legitimierungsdiskurs von Kunst wird in Deutschland zwischen den Polen Kunst als kulturell-ästhetische Bildung versus Autonomie der Kunst geführt. Der Behauptung von der Zweckhaftigkeit der Kunst, in diesem Falle, der Bildungsfunktion von Kunst, steht die Behauptung gegenüber, dass die Kunst nichts anderes zu sein habe als Kunst. Diese pointierte Beschreibung des Legitimierungsdiskurses wäre in der Praxis sicherlich zu differenzieren, aber auch schon die Tendenz in die eine oder die andere Richtung erscheint mir problematisch, denn selbstverständlich bildet das Theater gerade dadurch, dass es Kunst ist, Bildung und Kunst stehen in einem dialektischen Verhältnis zueinander. Und dies scheint mir der produktivere Ansatz zu sein, wenn wir über den Zusammenhang von Bildung und Kunst reden wollen.

Abhängig von der Antwort auf die Frage nach dem gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Kindheitsbild wird auch die Frage nach dem Recht von Kindern auf Kunst beantwortet. In dem Zusammenhang wird gerade von jenen Theatermachern, die bereits über Erfahrungen mit dem Theater für kleine Kinder (ab 3 Jahren) verfügen, beispielsweise Puppenspieler, vehement die These vertreten, dass man Theater für Kinder unter drei Jahren nicht machen kann, dass Theater für Kinder unter drei nicht funktioniere. Dieser dogmatischen Auffassung liegen Erfahrungen aus Aufführungen zugrunde, in denen Kinder unter drei anwesend waren, obwohl diese Aufführungen für ältere Kinder konzipiert worden sind. Die Einschätzungen der Theatermacher basieren auf einer Auffassung vom Theater,

die sich in den Grundlagen auf das Modell des bürgerlichen Repräsentationstheaters bezieht. Und insofern sehen sich die Vertreter dieser Meinung sogar zu Recht bestätigt, denn diese Art von Theater funktioniert für Kinder unter drei Jahren tatsächlich nicht. Auch daher ist die Analyse der Spezifik des Theaters für die Aller kleinsten dringend notwendig, denn es muss seine Existenz noch immer legitimieren. Wir müssen also in unseren zukünftigen Diskursen zur Analyse und tiefer gehenden Reflexion dieser Theaterform den Strang der Legitimierung immer mitführen, er darf nur nicht dominant werden, denn der eigentliche Diskurs, aus dem auch die Entwicklung dieser Theaterform entspringen kann, ist der ästhetische.

Ästhetische Aspekte

Die im Folgenden zusammengetragenen grundlegenden Aspekte sind im Moment noch unterschiedlich gewichtet. Beispielsweise ist der erste von mir zu nennende Aspekt, die Kommunikation, so komplex, dass er sicherlich in zukünftigen Diskussionen noch weiter zu differenzieren wäre.

Kommunikation

So wie jede theatrale Kommunikation basiert auch die Kommunikation im Theater für die Aller kleinsten auf der gemeinsamen Anwesenheit von Spielern und Zuschauern in einem Raum und ihrer direkten oder indirekten Interaktion. Die theatrale Kommunikation im Theater für die Aller kleinsten ist jedoch besonders fragil. In dem ständigen Ausbalancieren dieser Kommunikation zeigt sich sehr viel eher, wann und wodurch sie funktioniert und wann und wodurch nicht. Wenn in einer Stadttheateraufführung von Schillers *Räubern* die Kommunikation zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum nicht funktioniert, dann äußert sich das in der Regel nicht direkt in der Vorstellung. Die Rezeptionshaltung des Publikums im gewöhnlichen Theater ist derart konditioniert, dass sich die fehlende Balance der Kommunikation nicht entäußert und man sie damit auch kaum äußerlich wahrnehmen kann.⁴

4

Als Ausnahmen wären hier sicherlich Inszenierungen zu nennen, die den Zuschauer derart aktivieren wollen, dass er eben die Konventionen bricht, auf die er durch das bürgerliche Theater konditioniert wurde. Diese Aktivierung erfolgt durch gezielte Tabubrüche und ein bewusstes Durchbrechen von Bühnenkonventionen, die den Zuschauer provozieren sollen.

- Wahrnehmung

Kommunikation basiert auf wechselseitiger Wahrnehmung. Für unsere Betrachtung ist die Wechselseitigkeit der Wahrnehmung entscheidend, denn damit wird beschrieben, dass sich die Akteure und die Zuschauer in ein Verhältnis zueinander begeben. Und dass es in diesem Verhältnis zunächst keine Dominanzen gibt. Der Blickkontakt, den viele Akteure des Theaters für die Aller kleinsten als wesentliche Voraussetzung für das Gelingen einer Aufführung beschrieben haben, ist eine Methode dieser wechselseitigen Wahrnehmung. Wahrnehmung heißt im Theater für die Aller kleinsten nicht nur Hören und Sehen, sondern Wahrnehmen mit allen Sinnen. Besondere Bedeutung kommt beispielsweise dem Taktilen zu, dem Berühren, Tasten, Streicheln. Die Berührungen, die die Zuschauer in *Sous la table*⁵ spüren, sind letztlich als wechselseitige Wahrnehmung zu beschreiben, die selbstverständlich auch kommunikative Aspekte haben, denn in der Art und Weise der Berührung – heftig, kräftig, sanft, zögernd – wird gleichzeitig auch Information übertragen, und die Reaktion auf diese Berührung – Abwehr, Erschrecken, Zurückweichen, Anschmiegen – transportiert ebenfalls Information. Als ein weiteres Beispiel für die besondere Wahrnehmung mit dem gesamten Körper wäre die Inszenierung *Uccellini*⁶ zu nennen. Die Spielerin steht in dieser Aufführung relativ lange Zeit an ihrer Leinwand zeichnend mit dem Rücken zum Publikum. Doch sie beschreibt, dass sie das Publikum ununterbrochen wahrnimmt. Sie hört es, und sie spürt es in ihrem Rücken. Sie muss als Spielerin mit dem ganzen Körper wahrnehmen.

Das Taktil ist insofern von besonderem Interesse, als es das im konventionellen Theater nur als Ausnahme gibt, ansonsten gehört die räumliche Trennung und die körperliche Distanz von Schauspielern und Publikum zu den Konventionen des bürgerlichen Theaters. Mit der Beschreibung der Wahrnehmung im Theater für die Aller kleinsten als körperliche Wahrnehmung beschreiben wir gleichzeitig eine Erweiterung der konventionellen, auf Sehen und Hören, vielleicht noch Riechen beschränkten Wahrnehmung im gewöhnlichen Theater. Hier berührt es sich mit avancierten zeitgenössischen Theaterformen wie z.B. die Performance. Auch diese erweitert die Wahrnehmungsmöglichkeiten, jedoch mit

⁵ *Sous la table*, Compagnie ACTA, Val d'Oise (Frankreich), Konzeption und Regie: Agnès Desfosses, Spiel: Anne Cammas und Thierry Gary.

⁶ *Uccellini*, Association Skappa!, Marseille (Frankreich), Inszenierung: Paolo Cardona, Isabelle Hervouët Spiel: Isabelle Hervouët.

der Motivation, die Konvention zu brechen, um das Bekannte wieder neu wahrnehmen zu können. Diese Motivation spielt im Theater für die Allerkleinsten keine Rolle, denn die Kinder verfügen (noch) nicht über solcherart konventionelle Konditionierung. Der Bezug des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten zur Performance ist also zunächst nur als eine Ähnlichkeit der Mittel zu beschreiben. Die Wirkungskonzepte, die hinter dem Einsatz solcher Mittel stehen, sind jedoch grundverschieden.

In dem Zusammenhang kommt der Materialität und der Körperlichkeit der künstlerischen Ausdrucksmittel eine entscheidende Bedeutung zu. Wenn die Tänzerin und der Musiker in *Bussen*⁷ über das Holz des roten Busses streichen, stellt sich bei mir als Zuschauer das Gefühl der Berührung von Sperrholz ein, was auf meine Erfahrungen mit Berührungen dieses Materials zurückgeht. Oder wenn der Spieler in *Erde, Stock und Stein*⁸ in der Erde wühlt, dann habe ich das Gefühl von Dreck unter den Fingernägeln. Selbst das Licht hat seine eigene Materialität, das macht beispielsweise die Absurdität und Poesie der Szene in *Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht*⁹ aus, in der die Spielerin den *Mond*, sprich den Lichtkreis, den ein Scheinwerfer wirft, kitzelt und der *Mond* darauf reagiert. Auch die Materialität der Dinge und die Körperlichkeit der Spieler auf der Bühne erfordert damit die Körperlichkeit der Wahrnehmung.

- Beteiligung

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten muss immer eine *gemeinsame* künstlerische Erfahrung von Spielern und Kindern sein. Dieser Satz kann als ästhetischer Imperativ für das Theater für die Allerkleinsten gelten. Wenn die Beobachtung der unterschiedlichen Aufführungen dieser Theaterform immer wieder mehr Unterschiede als Gemeinsamkeiten gebracht haben, so lässt sich doch eine grundlegende Voraussetzung für das Gelingen des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten formulieren, und zwar die Notwendigkeit einer gemeinsamen künstlerischen Erfahrung, die Spieler und Kinder machen. Womit vor allem die Haltung des Spielers zu seinem Publikum ins Blickfeld gerät.

Einige Theatermacher, die für die Allerkleinsten arbeiten,

⁷ Bussen, Whispering Space, Oslo (Norwegen), Inszenierung: Bibbi Winberg, Tanz: Hilde Rustad, Musik: Joakim Strand.

⁸ Erde, Stock und Stein, HELIOS Theater Hamm (Deutschland), Inszenierung: Laurent Dupont, Spiel: Michael Lurse, Musik Roman D. Metzner.

⁹ Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht, Theater o.N., Regie: Andrea: Kilian, Spiel, Bild, Klang: Melanie Florschütz, Michael Döhnert.

verfügen beispielsweise über Straßentheatererfahrung, d.h. über Erfahrungen im direkten Kontakt mit einem vorher unbekannten und oft auch nur zufällig sich zusammenfindenden Publikum. Daraus scheint sich eine Fähigkeit herzuleiten, über die der Spieler im Theater für die Allerkleinsten verfügen muss, nämlich die Fähigkeit, auf kleinste Stimmungsschwankungen im Publikum einzugehen und die Balance der Kommunikation wieder herzustellen. Der Spieler muss also auch über eine besondere Sensibilität für sein Publikum verfügen.

Von dieser prinzipiellen Überlegung ausgehend stellt sich eine Reihe von Fragen, die heute noch nicht umfassend zu beantworten sind. Wie kommen Spieler und Zuschauer gemeinsam und miteinander ins Spiel? Setzt das einen gemeinsamen Raum voraus, in dem Spieler und Zuschauer miteinander direkt (auch körperlich) interagieren? Kann sich dieses gemeinsame Spiel auch in der räumlichen Konfrontation und Trennung zwischen Spielern und Zuschauern ereignen? Gibt es also besondere Anforderungen an die Szenographie im Theater für die Allerkleinsten?

Man könnte sagen, das Theater kehrt an seine Ursprünge zurück, beispielsweise zum Ritual, aus dem bereits in der Antike Theaterformen entstanden sind, auf die sich das abendländische Theater immer wieder bezogen hat. Zu beobachten ist das in der tendenziellen Aufhebung der Trennung zwischen Spieler und Zuschauer im Theater für die Allerkleinsten, die auch als eine Parallele zu vorzivilisatorischen Theaterformen zu beschreiben wäre, bei denen es eine strikte Trennung zwischen Akteuren und Zuschauern nicht gegeben hat bzw. ein ständiger Wechsel der Rollen zwischen Akteuren und Zuschauern erfolgte. Insofern wären Antworten auf die eben gestellten Fragen auch in Auseinandersetzung mit dem Phänomen des Rituals zu gewinnen.

- Spieler

Auffällig ist, dass man im Theater für die Allerkleinsten nicht von Darstellern spricht. Die Rede der Künstler vom Spieler verweist auf einen grundlegenden Vorgang im Theater, auch und besonders im Theater für die Allerkleinsten: das Spiel. In den Aufführungen wird in der Regel kein spezieller Anlass für das Auftreten des Spielers konstruiert wie etwa in der Exposition des Dramas. Der Spieler ist da. Er ist im Bühnen- bzw. Spielraum präsent. Und er soll laut Aussagen der Künstler des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten

selbst, ernsthaft, wahrhaftig, ehrlich und präsent sein.

Es lassen sich nach meiner Auffassung zwei Möglichkeiten beschreiben. Zum einen: Der Spieler verkörpert keine Figur, stellt keine Figur dar, spielt keine Rolle. Er ist er selbst. Und zum anderen: Der Spieler schafft eine Figur. Diese Figur ist jedoch keine dramatische Figur. Solche Figuren haben oftmals clowneske Züge, ohne dem gängigen Klischee des Clowns zu entsprechen.

In der Aufführung öffnet sich der Zuschauer der Präsenz eines anderen. Er nimmt ihn wahr, wie er selbst wahrgenommen wird, und seine Imagination verschafft ihm Zugang zu den Aktionen des Spielers. Eine Identifikation des Zuschauers mit dem Spieler bzw. der Gestalt, der er begegnet, findet nicht statt und wird auch nicht angestrebt.

- Sprache und künstlerische Ausdrucksmittel

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten kennt, wie das Theater überhaupt, viele Sprachen¹⁰ und ist nicht auf die Verbalsprache reduziert. Meist ist die Verbalsprache auch nicht das in der Hierarchie der künstlerischen Mittel dominierende Mittel. Darin unterscheidet sich das Theater für die Allerkleinsten ein weiteres Mal vom text- und literaturzentrierten bürgerlichen Theater. Es ähnelt damit der Alltagskommunikation, von der gesagt wird, dass nur 15 % der Informationen verbal übermittelt werden, währenddem der größere Teil der Informationen durch unterschiedlichste Ausdrucksmittel der Körpersprache kommuniziert wird. In dieser Beobachtung spiegelt sich auch die Erfahrung, dass die grundlegende Beherrschung des schauspielerischen Handwerks noch keine hinreichende Voraussetzung für eine gelingende Aufführung im Theater für die Allerkleinsten ist.

Denn dort sind Bilder, Töne, Klänge, Bewegungen, Materialität, Körper zumeist gleichberechtigte Ausdrucksmittel, wobei oftmals andere Dominanzen, wie beispielsweise der körperlichen Bewegung, des Tanzes oder musikalischer Formen, zu beobachten sind. Die Hierarchie der künstlerischen Ausdrucksmittel ist damit auch im Theater für die Allerkleinsten nicht aufgehoben. Und der Träger der künstlerischen Ausdrucksformen ist der Spieler. Dabei ist das Theater für die Allerkleinsten eine minimalistische Kunst, eine Kunst der Konzentration der Mittel, jedoch nicht eine Kunst der Vereinfachung.

10

Adäquat den hundert Sprachen der Kinder, von denen Malaguzzi spricht.

- Regeln und Grenzen

Jedes Spiel braucht Regeln! Diese Spielregeln müssen im Theater für die Allerkleinsten flexibel sein. Es gibt Haltepunkte und Wendepunkte in der Aufführung, in der die Spielregeln neu verhandelt oder von den Spielern neu gesetzt werden können. Als Beispiel wäre hier die Aufführung *Sous la table* anzuführen. Hier gibt es wechselnde Regeln zum Aufenthaltsort und Verhalten der Zuschauer. Zu Beginn müssen die Zuschauer auf roten Kissen auf dem Boden Platz nehmen, den überdimensionalen Tisch als Spielraum für die Aufführung bereits im Blick. Danach müssen sie an eben diesem Tisch Platz nehmen. Später müssen sie unter den Tisch, dürfen aber nicht in die Mitte des Raumes unter dem Tisch, die den Akteuren vorbehalten bleibt. Die wiederum dürfen sich, soweit es der Platz erlaubt, frei zwischen und um die Zuschauer herum bewegen.

Im Zusammenhang mit den Regeln sind auch die Grenzen entscheidend. Da wäre zwischen den Grenzen zu unterscheiden, die außerhalb der Ästhetik der Aufführung (Rahmenbedingungen), und jenen, die durch die Ästhetik gesetzt werden. Beide Arten von Grenzen werden von außen bestimmt, von den Spielern, sie können von den Kindern nicht beeinflusst werden. Sie unterscheiden sich aber in der Art und Weise, in der sie dem Zuschauer kommuniziert werden.

Die Gesamtsituation ist gesetzt und kann von den Kindern nicht verhandelt oder verändert werden. Daher sind für die Macher des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten die folgenden Fragen von besonderer Bedeutung. Wie werden die Kinder im Theater empfangen? Wie werden die Eltern, als Begleiter der Kinder, als Zuschauer und als die Kinder Geleitende¹¹ mit den äußeren Regeln vertraut gemacht?¹² Wenn die Voraussetzungen für ein gelingendes gemeinsames künstlerisches Erlebnis von Spielern, Kindern und Eltern die Einhaltung von bestimmten Regeln ist, müssen diese Regeln kommuniziert werden, denn sie unterscheiden sich von den Konventionen des Theaters, die den Eltern vielleicht geläufig sind.

Eine deutliche Begrenzung der Spielfläche ist in den meisten Inszenierungen des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten die Regel.

¹¹ Ich gebrauche den Begriff im Sinne von Den-Kindern-das-Geleit-geben, ihnen Hilfe und Unterstützung bei der Rezeption sein.

¹² Bewährte Methoden sind hier, nicht anders als im Kindertheater insgesamt, die Ansage vor der Vorstellung, das Verteilen von Handzetteln oder das persönliche Gespräch vor der Vorstellung.

Dennoch ist der herkömmliche Theaterraum mit seiner Trennung von Bühne und Zuschauerraum für diese Theaterform eher ungeeignet. Fragt sich also, wie die Begrenzung erfahrbar und wahrnehmbar gemacht werden kann, damit sie auch akzeptiert wird und welche Bedingungen ein Raum für das Theater für die Allerkleinsten zu bieten hätte? Wie konzentriert der Raum das Publikum und die Spieler aufeinander oder wie vereinzelt er sie? Welche Bedeutung haben Nähe und Distanz zwischen Zuschauern und Spielern?

Der Spieler gibt mit der Art und Weise, wie er sich zum Publikum in Beziehung setzt, den Kindern erste Hinweise darauf, welche Grenzen er im gemeinsamen Erlebnis der Aufführung respektiert sehen will. Dabei scheint die wichtigste Frage zu sein, wie die Ästhetik die der Aufführung inhärenten Grenzen kommunizieren kann? Das ist zugleich eine Forschungsaufgabe für die Künstler. Nur sie können für die von ihnen gewählte Kommunikationsform und -ebene auch die Regeln und Grenzen definieren. Sie schützen damit ihre Kommunikationsform und sie nehmen das Kind als Zuschauer ernst.

Dabei wäre die Frage nach den Ausdrucksmitteln zu stellen, mit denen Distanz und Grenzen behauptet werden, wie beispielsweise eine poetische Sprache, die sich von der Alltagssprache grundsätzlich unterscheidet, oder bildnerische Abstraktionen. Wie behauptet die Ästhetik der Aufführung den Raum, der den Spielern gehört, und den Raum, der den Kindern gehört, und den Raum, der beiden gemeinsam gehört? Das können eine deutlich abgegrenzte Spielfläche, ein durch Musik erzeugter Klangraum oder die Präsenz des Spielers in einem bestimmten Aktionsradius sein. All diese künstlerischen Mittel setzen psychologische Barrieren, die von den Kindern in der Regel respektiert werden.

Die Eltern sind die ausschlaggebende Instanz, die über die Akzeptanz der Regeln und Grenzen entscheidet. Die Mutter, die entscheidet, dass ihr Kind mit seinem Weinen, seiner Unruhe, seinen Bewegungen im Bühnenraum das gemeinsame Erlebnis stört, spürt diese Grenzen und akzeptiert sie. Der Vater, der während der Aufführung den Bühnenraum betritt, um ein Foto von seiner Tochter als Zuschauerin zu machen, hat die Regeln falsch oder gar nicht verstanden, er missachtet sie. In ihrem Verhalten und ihren Reaktionen sind die Eltern Vorbilder für das Verhalten der Kinder in der Aufführung.

In dem Zusammenhang taucht auch immer wieder die Frage auf, ab wann ein Kind die Aufführung stört? Diese Frage geht wieder von den Konventionen bürgerlichen Theaters aus, das den andächtigen, schweigsamen Zuschauer voraussetzt. Die Frage wäre aber doch anders zu stellen: Wo ist die Grenze der Beteiligung der Zuschauer, damit die Kommunikation in der Balance gehalten wird?

- Zuschauer

Viele der hier beschriebenen Aspekte könnten in einer anderen Systematik auch den Überlegungen zur Spezifik des Publikums im Theater für die Aller kleinsten zugeordnet werden. Interessant ist aber, dass der hier gewählte Fokus über die Ästhetik die Rolle und die Spezifik des Zuschauers jeweils an der Stelle thematisiert und problematisiert, an der sie auffällig wird.

Geschichte

Auffällig ist bei den meisten Inszenierungen des Theaters für die Aller kleinsten, dass sie sich mit den Kategorien herkömmlicher Dramaturgie zwar beschreiben lassen (Spannung, überraschende Wendung, Konflikt etc.), dass diese Kategorien dann aber nicht in ihrer ursprünglichen dramaturgischen Bedeutung Verwendung finden bzw. nicht ihrer ursprünglichen Bedeutung folgend eingesetzt werden.

So findet die Kategorie des Konflikts eher in ihrer allgemeinen Bedeutung Anwendung. Ein dramatischer Konflikt als die Interessenskollision zweier Figuren bzw. Figurengruppen existiert nicht oder kaum. Das muss auch nicht verwundern, setzte doch diese Kategorie Figuren und Handlung voraus, die es im Theater für die Aller kleinsten nur bedingt gibt, und wenn es sie gibt, so werden sie nicht durchgängig durch die Aufführung geführt. Daraus leitet sich meine Frage ab: Gibt es keine Figuren, weil es keine Geschichte gibt, oder keine Geschichte, weil es keine Figuren gibt? Wie viel Geschichte braucht das Theater für die Aller kleinsten? Wie viel Geschichte brauchen die kleinen Zuschauer?

Die Kategorie der *Geschichte* wäre in Anlehnung an die literaturwissenschaftliche Begriffsbestimmung als das rein chronologisch geordnete Nacheinander von Ereignissen und Vorgängen zu definieren, während die *Fabel* bereits kausale oder andere sinnstiftende Verknüpfungen enthält. Es müsste

also hier genauer von der *Fabel*¹³ die Rede sein.¹⁴ Im Gegensatz dazu ist die *Handlung* subjektgebunden und die absichtsvolle Überführung einer Situation in eine andere. Grob gesagt liegt in einem dramatischen Text *Handlung* (im dramaturgischen Sinne) vor, sobald eine Ausgangssituation verändert wird und am Ende dieses Vorgangs eine geänderte Situation vorliegt. Das heißt aber auch, dass das Handeln der Spieler in der Inszenierung nicht mit diesem Begriff der (dramatischen) *Handlung* identisch ist. In einzelnen Episoden des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten kann man sowohl Aspekte einer *Fabel* (hier ist die Rede von *Geschichte*) als auch von *Handlung* entdecken. Durch diesen Definitionsversuch wird aber erneut deutlich, dass die herkömmlichen dramaturgischen Kategorien, die in Bezug auf ein literarisches Theater entstanden sind, nur bedingt auf die hier betrachtete Theaterform anzuwenden sind.

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten ist kein Illusionstheater. Die künstlichen Welten, die geschaffen werden, sind als Kunsträume sichtbar. Das Erzeugen und das Machen dieser speziellen Welt werden nicht verschleiert, sondern gezeigt. Die Welten werden behauptet und diese Behauptung von den Zuschauern akzeptiert. Sie bilden gleichsam die Grundlage und die Folie für die Imaginationsleistung des Zuschauers. Wenn sie illusionistisch angelegt wären, bliebe auch kein Platz für diese Imagination bzw. Fantasie der Zuschauer.

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten ist aber nicht ohne Geschichten und damit auch nicht ohne die zumindest partielle Erzeugung von Illusion. Die Geschichten oder Episoden werden jedoch nicht linear erzählt. Und sie basieren, mehr noch als in den Theaterformen, die eher konventionellen Dramaturgien folgen, auf der Imaginationsleistung des Zuschauers.

Insofern sind die theatralen Zeichen, die wir im Theater für die Allerkleinsten finden, nicht auf die Konstituierung einer speziellen Bedeutung angelegt. Die Erde, mit der in *Erde, Stock und Stein* gespielt wird, ist Erde und stellt nichts anderes dar als Erde. Die

13 „Fabel heißt die Gesamtheit der miteinander verbundenen Ereignisse, von denen in einem Werk berichtet wird“. (Lotman, Jurij: Die Struktur literarischer Texte, München 1972, S. 330)

14 Dabei müssen wir uns darüber im Klaren sein, dass die Kategorien von Geschichte, Fabel und auch Handlung Kategorien wissenschaftlicher Analyse sind und sich in ihrer Bedeutung von dem Alltagsgebrauch derselben Begriffe unterscheiden. Eine solche Differenzierung in Bezug auf das Theater für die Allerkleinsten ist jedoch in dieser ersten theoretischen Annäherung an das Phänomen noch nicht sehr hilfreich. Es wird daher im Folgenden weiterhin von der Geschichte die Rede sein.

Kugel in *Al di là*¹⁵ ist eine Kugel und stellt nichts anderes dar als eine Kugel. Die Dinge bedeuten nichts anderes als das, was sie sind. Die Ausdrucksformen des Theaters für die Allerkleinsten stehen jeweils für sich in ihrer Materialität und ihren speziellen Seinsweisen und nicht für etwas anderes. Es kann aber etwas anderes aus ihnen gemacht werden, aus der Erde wird ein Sandkuchen gebacken und das Licht des Scheinwerfers in *Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht* wird im Spiel zum Mond. In beiden Fällen werden die Materialien als Ausdrucksformen genutzt, mit denen etwas dargestellt wird.

Dennoch konfrontiert jeder Zuschauer, das Kind wie der Erwachsene, seine Wahrnehmung der Dinge mit seinen Erfahrungen. Jeder sieht so eine andere Geschichte. Sicherlich gibt es dabei auch Übereinstimmungen, wenn in einzelnen Episoden die Mittel so eindeutig eingesetzt sind, dass sie nicht andersinterpretierbar sind. Am Beispiel der Aufführung *Gribouillie*¹⁶ ließe sich das verdeutlichen. Wir erleben die clowneske Figur, die sich auf einer Reise zu befinden scheint, sie kommt mit ihrem Wägelchen von irgendwo her und sie geht, nachdem sie uns begrüßt, für uns gezeichnet, uns Punkte auf die Nase geklebt und sich von uns verabschiedet hat, wieder irgendwo hin. Was wir gemeinsam in der Aufführung erlebt haben, ist erst möglich geworden dadurch, dass sich unsere Wege hier gekreuzt haben und dass wir gemeinsam verweilt haben. Woher die Figur kommt, wohin sie geht, wer sie ist, die Geschichte dieser Figur, wird sich jeder selbst ausdenken müssen. So entstehen durch Imagination auch aus den abstraktesten Ausdrucksformen im Kopf des Zuschauers Bedeutungen und vielleicht auch Geschichten.

Aus den Händen des Spielers in *Erde, Stock und Stein*, der in der Erde wühlt, werden unversehens Figuren. Und so unversehens, wie die Figuren entstanden, verschwinden sie auch wieder, und mit ihnen endet auch die Episode. Ich habe urzeitliche Dinosaurier gesehen, die die Erde entdecken und zerstören und neu ordnen. Diese Bedeutung habe ich als Zuschauer zugewiesen, der über entsprechende Erfahrung verfügt. Jemand anders wird anderes gesehen haben. Die Arbeitsthese des Spielers und des Regisseurs bei der Erarbeitung dieser Szene war, wie ich nach der Aufführung erfahren habe, die Darstellung von Ameisen.

15 *Al di là*, TAM Teatromusica, Padova (Italien), Inszenierung: Laurent Dupont; Spiel: Flavia Bussolotto, Marco Tizianel.

16 *Gribouillie*, Compagnie Lili Désastre, Marcé (Frankreich), Spiel: Francesca Sorгато.

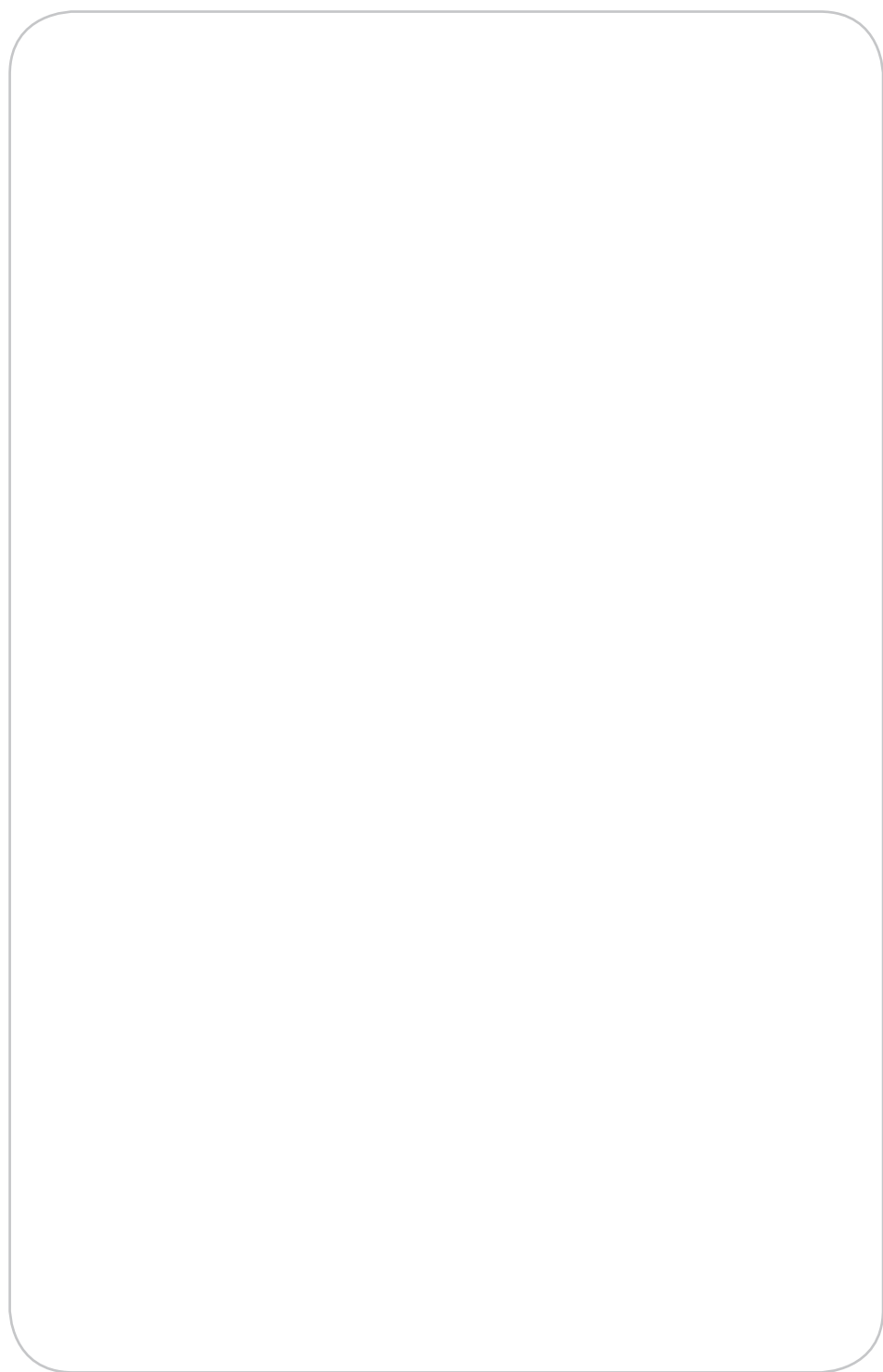
Vielleicht wird eine Geschichte dann notwendig, wenn, auf welche Art und Weise auch immer, Figuren auf der Bühne etabliert werden, und seien sie nur episodischer Natur. Will jemand eine Geschichte oder eine Episode erzählen, dann braucht er dafür Figuren. In der Aufführung *Al di là* wird mit der An- und Abwesenheit der Spieler und der Dinge gespielt. Aus ihrem Dasein und Wegsein kann der Zuschauer eine Geschichte imaginieren. Zusammenfassend lässt sich schlussfolgernd, dass das Theater für die Allerkleinsten eine eigene Dramaturgie hat, wobei Dramaturgie als die Gesamtheit der Strukturen der Aufführung begriffen wird.

Zeit

Das Theater für die Allerkleinsten hat auch einen eigenen Umgang mit der Zeit. Es hat einen eigenen Rhythmus, der dem Rhythmus des Publikums entspricht. Den Rhythmus der Spieler und ihres Publikums verbindet das Atmen. Ein gemeinsamer Atem, der vor allem von den Spielern aufgegriffen werden muss, um mit den Kindern in Einklang zu kommen, gibt ihnen das Gefühl von Geborgenheit. Der gemeinsame Atem ist das Band zwischen Spieler und Publikum, der die Spannung der Spieler und der Zuschauer aufrechterhält. Spannung wäre eine weitere dramaturgische Kategorie, die sich im Theater für die Allerkleinsten anders realisiert als im konventionellen dramatischen Theater.

Zum Theater für die Allerkleinsten gehört neben der einem speziellen Rhythmus folgenden Aktion auch die Stille – sowohl die akustische als auch die zeitliche Stille. Das repetitive Moment, die Wiederholung von Vorgängen oder von verbalen Repliken, findet sich ebenfalls häufig im Theater für die Allerkleinsten.

Das Theater findet in jeder Aufführung neu und anders statt. Keine Aufführung gleicht der anderen. Das trifft auf jede Form des Theaters zu. Ist im „gewöhnlichen“ Theater eine Dominanz der Bühne über den Zuschauerraum denkbar (und auch in der Praxis anzutreffen), so darf es sie im Theater für die Allerkleinsten nicht geben. Weder Spieler noch Zuschauer dürfen mit der Haltung in die Aufführung gehen, dass sie wüssten, wie die Kommunikation zwischen beiden funktioniert. Es ist immer ein gemeinsames Wagnis, das den produktiven Zweifel zur Voraussetzung hat.



FIRST STEPS

Aesthetic peculiarities of the "theatre for the youngest"

Gerd Taube

Children's and Young People's Theatre
Centre in the Federal Republic of Germany
Berlin (**GERMANY**)

translated by Gunnar Schroeder

Introduction

Based on the „theatre for the youngest“ substructures of the theatre acting and dramatic communication may be discussed.¹ The reception of the situation isn't affected by civic theatre conventions, because the young spectators aren't yet exercised in those conventions. But even the children's theatre substructures at large may be reflected and defined. Such a constantly used and never challenged doctrine says: Children's theatre has got a special connection to its audience. It provides a cause to confine the children's theatre from the 'ordinary' theatre, although there are many professional children's theatre companies in Germany where this cause doesn't apply. Therefore it's necessary to analyse what makes the connection between children's theatre and audience so special.

Neither there is the eternal children's theatre nor could any other kind of theatre be reduced to an aesthetic canon.² The characteristics are as different and multifaceted as the characteristics of other kinds of theatre. Even though it's impossible to deflect statements about aesthetic principles for "theatre for the youngest" only by watching several performances, there are however different phenomena in different performances to be seen. On that account, the consideration about an aesthetic

1 Intrinsically the concept of practicability – in conjunction with the "theatre for the youngest" – should be discussed and applied to this kind of theatre. But theoretical discourse about practicability in dramatics and cultural studies hasn't been noticed previously but perceived as foreign by the scene of children's and youth theatre related to their opinion about theatre. Therefore I renounce to broach the issue of this discourse in my essay, which has got the purpose to pick out the actual discussion about the "theatre for the youngest" as a central subject.

2 The determination is one result of the congress 'Theater von Anfang an' ('Theatre from the Beginning') which has been arranged by the Children's and Young people's Theatre Centre as a component of the International Guest Performance Main Focus at the 8th German Children- and Youth Theatre Meeting in May 2005 at Berlin.

specific of this kind of theatre may firstly be arranged via specific facets and categories. This effort should not be misunderstood as a canonisation of those facets and categories. The point is to arrange the first perceptions in this process of discussion which takes place in Germany since few years³, so the facets and categories can be discussed further.

The discussion process in Germany has reached a point where such an interim result is getting necessary to bring the practical examination and the theoretic reflection to a new quality. It may no longer broach the issue of a legitimating of "theatre for the youngest" – it already exists. The discussion has got to change from the pure description and reflection to an analytic-systematic level.

Aspects and categories

Different from many other discussions about (children's and youth) theatre, it should not be distinguished between the discourse about social condition and aesthetic aspects because they are dependent on each other. Below, they will be displayed separately. They wouldn't be analysable and presentable in their own specifics.

Corporate conditions

Society's childhood image

More than other forms of children's and youth theatre the „theatre for the youngest“ depends on the society's attitude towards children – in this case towards very small children. Meanwhile, the ordinary children's theatre (for children aged 5 or 6 years+) has become socially accepted. Coming along is an acceptance of the children's right to enjoy theatre art. The right of art for the smallest children (from 0 to 3 or 4 years) is generally challenged. Even in the ranks of the committed children's theatre makers strong rejections concerning "theatre for the youngest" are not rare – mostly as a result of aesthetic convictions. Inherently, this fact necessitates to ask some questions about the childhood image which forms the basic of such convictions.

What does a small child figure? The answer to this essential question

3 Therefore, this essay examines both the results of the symposium 'First Steps' (2005 at Hamm) and the discussion aspects during the 8th German Children- and Youth Theatre Meeting in May 2005 at Berlin and of earlier discussions (for example: Symposium 'Unter dem Tisch' ('Under The Table'), SCHAUBURG, Berlin).

is a key to the attitude towards „theatre for the youngest“. Are they 'human beings' or 'human becomings'? The perceptions are lying between these two poles. Are they regarded as premature beings, as good because ingenuous humans? As human beings on a certain level of development? Or as human beings with a special expertise? What do we expect of small children? When are they taken as 'human becomings' – what or how shall they become?

In Germany there's a discussion in progress at the moment in which nursery and kindergarten deemed to be places where education takes place. Whereupon in the most educational plannings for children of the age from 0 to 10 years that exist since the 80ies of the 20th century, the educational function of these institutions is codified. But in practice those concepts haven't been or have hardly been realised, and to take care of the children is still more important. The question about status and function of nurseries and kindergartens comes up, because in every country that has convincing examples for „theatre for the youngest“, the status of infantile educational institutions in the whole educational system is different from ours. In Norway, Italy or France those institutions are part of the educational system – in Germany it's preliminary. Whereas in Germany the education career starts with the school enrolment, the children of the named countries are already starting their education in the nursery or kindergarten. I am firmly assured this fact is a very important assumption to create a dramatic art for the youngest.

Therefore, the discussion about “theatre for the youngest” in these countries is mostly of an aesthetic matter. Consequently this form of theatre has got to legitimate itself in respect of aesthetic by the quality of the artistic work. In Germany the legitimization of art – especially dramatic art for children – takes place via the educational (and thus also a political) discourse in Germany.

The perception of art

In Germany, the corporate discourse about the legitimization of art is held within the poles 'art is a cultural-aesthetic education' versus the autonomy of art. The assertion of the functional aspect of art (in this case its educational function) confronts the assertion that art has to be art – and nothing else. Even though this pointed description had to be distinguished in practice, the tendency towards either direction seems problematic to me;

certainly, dramatic art educates just because it's art. Education and art are connected in a dialectical relationship. This seems to me to be the more productive approach if we intend to talk about the coherence between education and art.

The answer to the question of the children's right of art is depending on the kind of the corporate accepted image about childhood. In this coherence even those theatre makers who are endowed with experiences about theatre for small children (up from 3 years) – such as puppeteers – confirm the opinion that theatre for children under 3 can't work. This dogmatic opinion is reasoned by experiences with performances for older children where children under 3 have been attending. The estimation of these theatre makers are based upon an opinion about theatre which applies to the model of the civic representation theatre. In this respect their opinion seems to be confirmed, as this kind of theatre in fact doesn't work for children under 3. Last but not least the dissection of the "theatre for the youngest" is imperative because it still has to legitimate its existence. We have to deal with the subject 'legitimation' during the dissection and the wider reflection of this form of theatre, but it may not dominate, as the underlying discourse of the progression of this kind of theatre is still the aesthetic discourse.

Aesthetic aspects

At present the following basic aspects are weighed to different degrees. For example, the first aspect to be mentioned – the communication – has to be further distinguished in later discussions due to its complexity.

Communication

Like any dramatic communication, the communication in a play for the youngest is based upon the common presence of players and spectators and their direct or indirect interaction. However, the dramatic communication in play for the youngest is especially fragile. By constantly balancing this communication it is obvious much earlier when and how it works – and when and how it doesn't. If the communication between stage and auditorium in the course of an urban theatre performance of Schiller's *Räuber* does not work, it usually doesn't appear directly during the performance. At the ordinary theatre, the reception of the audience is in such a way conditioned, so that the missing

balance of communication hasn't got an immediate effect and will barely be noticeable neither.⁴

▪ Perception

Communication is based upon reciprocal perception. For our examination, the reciprocity of perception is crucial – the players and spectators betake themselves in a special relationship. Firstly, no part is dominant in this relationship. The eye contact – to many players of “theatre for the youngest” a basic requirement for the performances' success – is one approach of the reciprocal perception. Perception is not reduced to hearing and seeing. It means perceiving with all senses. The touching, fumbling, fondling, – for example in the production *Sous la table*⁵ – has got a special importance. As a matter of course, the physical contact has got communicative aspects because the kind of contact – forcible, rank, hesitant – coevally transmits information. And the reaction to those physical contacts – defense, affright, retreat, snuggling – also carries information.

As a further example of the specific perception with the whole body the production *Uccellini*⁶ has to be mentioned. In that play the actress stands quite a long time with her back towards the audience, drawing onto a canvas. But she describes that she is continuously perceiving the audience. She hears it and she feels it in her back. As an actress she has to perceive with the whole body.

The tactile aspect is insofar a matter of particular interest as it is considered as an exception for the conventional theatre where usually the spacial separation and physical distance between players and audience prevails. With the description of the perception in “theatre for the youngest” as a physical matter, we coevally describe an expansion of the restricted conventional perception (seeing, hearing, and possibly smelling) at the ordinary theatre. At this point it gets in touch with advanced contemporary forms of theatre, for instance the performance which widens the possibilities of perception, but with the motivation to break

4 Exceptions could be those productions which intend to activate the spectator to break his conventions he was conditioned on by the civic theatre. This mobilisation is effected by pointed taboo breaks and a deliberately breaking of conventions with the intention to provoke the spectator.

5 *Sous la table*, Compagnie ACTA, Val d'Oise (France), Concept and Direction: Agnès Desfosses, Players: Anne Cammas und Thierry Gary.

6 *Uccellini*, Association Skappa!, Marseille (France), Production: Paolo Cardona, Isabelle Hervouët, Players: Isabelle Hervouët.

conventions to re-perceive what is thought to be familiar. At the "theatre for the youngest" this motivation is irrelevant because the children don't dispose of such conventional conditioning. The reference to performance is based on an analogy of means, but the impact concepts behind the use of those means are entirely different.

In this context materiality and physicalness of the artistic means of expressions are decisive. The dancer and the musician who palm across the wood of the red bus in *Bussen*⁷ let me feel like touching the wood with my own hands – the reason for it is my remembrance of the contact with ply wood.

Another example may be the player who is digging in the soil *Earth, Stick and Stone*⁸ where I felt a sense of dirt under my own fingernails. Even the light has got its own materiality. That makes up the absurdity and poetry in the scene of the production *Hase Mond Hase Nacht*⁹: The actress tickles the moon (the pool of light from the reflector) and the moon responds to it. Even the materiality of things and the players' physicalness on stage demands the physicalness of perception.

- Participation

The "theatre for the youngest" always needs to be a common artistic experience for the players and the children. This sentence may be the aesthetic imperative for the „theatre for the youngest“. Even if the observation of different performances brought more differences than similarities there is a basic assumption for successful working within „theatre for the youngest“: The necessity of a common experience of player and children. Particularly the player's attitude towards the audience comes to the fore.

Some theatre makers who are working for the youngest children have got experience in roadshows for example, and consequently a certain routine with the direct contact to a previously unknown audience that often comes together by accident. From this fact one could derive an ability which is a must within the „theatre for the youngest“: The ability to react on the slightest fluctuations of the spectators' mood and to re-build the communication balance. There from, the player has got to be skilled in terms of a

7 Bussen, Whispering Space, Oslo (Norway), Production: Bibbi Winberg, Dance: Hilde Rustad, Music: Joakim Strand.

8 Erde, Stock und Stein, HELIOS Theater Hamm (Germany), Production: Laurent Dupont, Player: Michael Lurse, Music: Roman D. Metzner.

9 Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht, Theater o.N., Direction: Andrea Kilian, Player, Scenery, Sound: Melanie Florschütz, Michael Döhnert.

specific sensibility for his audience.

Starting from this basic assumption there are many open questions that cannot be answered properly until today. How do players and spectators come to an interaction? Does it require a collective space where players and spectators interact (also physically)? Can this "playing together" also take place by the spacial confrontation and separation of the players and the spectators? Are there special needs concerning the scenography in the „theatre for the youngest“?

Roughly speaking theatre returns to its origin, for instance to the 'ritual' from which yet in the ancient world some kinds of theatre originated. The occidental theatre has always been relating to those kinds of theatre. An example is the tendency to abandon the dissociation between player and spectator in the "theatre for the youngest" – a parallel to pre-civilizing kinds of theatre with their permanent changes of the roles between players and spectators. Insofar answers could be found by examining the phenomenon 'ritual'.

▪ Player

It's noticeable that in the "theatre for the youngest" the actor is named as a 'player'. This indicates a basic activity especially for the „theatre for the youngest“: the play. In the performances usually no special motive is designed for the player's entry like in the exposition of the drama, e.g. the player is just there. He is present on the stage or in the performance space. And he should be serious, real, honest and present according to artists who are doing „theatre for the youngest“.

From my point of view there are two possibilities. The first: The player doesn't personify any figure – he's just himself. The other: The player creates a figure but not of a dramatic kind. Such figures often have clownish traits but don't conform to the popular stereotype of a clown.

During the performance the spectator opens up himself to a presence of another being. He perceives this other being like he is being perceived himself. And his imagination allows him an access to the player's activities. The spectator does not identify with the player or the figure he meets. And that is indeed not the aim.

▪ Language and artistic means of expression

The "theatre for the youngest" (like any theatre) is endowed with

many languages¹⁰ and it is not reduced to the language of words. In the hierarchy of artistic means the verbal language is in most cases not the dominating one: this is a further difference compared to the text and literature dominated civic theatre. It is similar to everyday communication where only 15% of information is transmitted verbally. The biggest part of information is said to be transmitted by different forms of non verbal communication. This experience shows that the fact that the basic mastery of "dramatic trade" alone can't be a guarantee for a felicitous performance in the „theatre for the youngest“.

Pictures, tones, sounds, movements, materiality and the body are emancipated means of expression in the „theatre for the youngest“. But often other means are dominant, like e.g. physical movement, dancing or musical forms. The hierarchy of the artistic means of expression is, even in the „theatre for the youngest“, not repealed. The medium of those forms of expression is the player. Thereby the "theatre for the youngest" is an art of minimalist kind, an art of the concentration of means but not an art of simplification.

▪ Rules and limits

Every game needs rules! These rules of the game have to be flexible in the "theatre for the youngest". There are stops and turns within the performance where those rules might be negotiated or set new completely by the players. An example could be the production *Sous la table* with changing rules related to location and behaviour of the spectators. At the beginning the spectators are taking a seat on red pillows on the floor. They already have in view the oversized table which serves as the space for the performance. Later they have to sit down at this table to finally scrambling underneath of it. But the centre of the space remains reserved to the players who may be moving freely among and around the spectators.

In conjunction with the rules the limits are decisive as well. We have to distinguish between the limits which are apart from the performance's aesthetic and those which are set by the aesthetic. Both kinds of limits are defined externally by the players. They can't be manipulated by the children; but they are different in the way in which they will be communicated to the spectators.

10

Adequate to the 100 children's languages (mentioned by Malaguzzi)

The overall situation is set and can't be negotiated or be changed by the children. Therefore for the makers of "theatre for the youngest" the following questions might be of particular importance: How are the children received in the theatre? How are their parents who are both, spectators and those who accompany the children¹¹, familiarised with the rules?¹² If the observing of certain rules is the assumption for a successful collective artistic experience for players, children and parents, it's necessary to communicate those rules because they are different from the conventions of the theatre which may be familiar to the parents.

In most production for the youngest children the rink (as the area for the performance) is clearly limited. However, the conventional theatre room with its separation of the stage and the audience room seems to be improper for this kind of theatre. So how can the limitation get perceivable and consequently accepted? Which conditions in respect of the room are necessary for an efficient „theatre for the youngest“? How does the room correlate the audience to the players? What is the importance between closeness and distance between players and audience?

The player provides first indications to the children about the limits which should be respected by the way he relates to the audience. Thereby, the most important question seems to be: How can the aesthetic communicate the limits which are inherent in the performance? This is at the same time a research assignment for the artists. Only they are able to define the rules and limits for their own chosen form and level of communication. So they are saving their own form of communication and respecting the child as a spectator.

Thereby, the question about the means of expression which are claiming distance and limits should be posed, like for example a poetic language which is totally different from everyday language or a pictorial abstraction. How does the performance's aesthetic claim the area for the players, the area for the children and the common area? This could be a clearly limited rink, a sound area (created by music) or the player's presence in a certain cruising radius. All those artistic means are setting psychological barriers

11 I am using the item in terms of 'leading the children' as to help and support them in their reception

12 An approved method is, like in the theatre for children in general, the announcement before the performance, providing flyers or the personal conversation before the performance.

which usually will be respected by the children.

The parents are the crucial instance that decides about the acceptance of those rules and limits. The mother who decides that her weeping, agitated child with its movements in the performance area is disturbing the collective theatre experience, feels it and is respecting these limits. The father who enters the stage area during the performance to take a photo of his child as a spectator misunderstands or does not understand at all the rules – he is ignoring them. The parents' behaviour is as an example for the children's behaviour during the performance.

Time and time again the question appears: When is a child disturbing the performance? This question acts on the assumption of the conventions of the civic theatre which requires the devotional and quiet spectator. But the question should be another: Where is the limit of the audience's attendance to keep the communication balanced?

▪ Spectators

In a different systematic, much of the described aspects may be assigned to the thoughts about the spectator's specific of the „theatre for the youngest“.

But it is interesting that the chosen focus on the aesthetic is bringing up discussions about the role and the specific of the spectator, each in a situation where it is demonstrative.

The Story

It's noticeable that the most productions of the “theatre for the youngest” can be described by means of the categories of the conventional dramaturgy (suspense, surprising turn, conflict...). But they won't be used in their primal dramaturgical meaning.

The category of conflict is rather used in its general meaning. A dramatic conflict as a collision of two figures' interest (or groups of figures) hardly exists or doesn't exist at all. This fact is not astonishing because this category assumes figures and action that only exist contingently in the „theatre for the youngest“. The question may be: Are there no figures because there is no story? Or is there no story because there are no figures? How many stories does the “theatre for the youngest” need? How many stories do the little spectators need?

The “theatre for the youngest” is no theatre of illusions. The created artificial worlds are visible as art spaces. The creation

of this special world are not veiled, they are rather shown. The players suggest a world and this suggestion is accepted by the spectators. Coevally, these special worlds form the basic and the foil for the spectator's imagination and fantasy. However, the "theatre for the youngest" doesn't miss the stories and neither the creation of illusions. But the stories are not told straight-line. They are based, more than in other kinds of theatre following rather conventional dramaturgies, upon the spectator's imagination. Insofar the dramatic signs in the "theatre for the youngest" don't intend to constitute a special meaning. The soil in *Erde, Stock und Stein* is just soil and doesn't represent anything else than soil. The bowl in *Al di La*¹³ is a bowl and doesn't mean anything else. The objects don't stand for anything else than as what they really are. But it's possible make something else out of them. The soil is becoming a sand cake, the reflector light in *Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht* is becoming the moon. In both cases the material was used as means of expression to figure something.

Anyhow, every spectator (the child and the adult) faces his or her perception of things and objects with its experiences. Everyone sees a different story. Certainly, there is an accordance if a means is used so clearly that it is not possible to interpret it otherwise. That can be shown explicitly in the production *Gribouillie*¹⁴. We see the clownish figure on a journey, coming from elsewhere with his small cart, saying hello. And after drawing for us, cleaving some points on our noses and saying goodbye he is leaving to somewhere. What we all experienced has been possible only because our ways had crossed and we had stayed together for some time. From where the figure comes, to where it leaves, who it could possibly be – everyone has to invent his own story about it.

The hands of the player in *Erde, Stock und Stein* who are digging in the soil are suddenly turning into two figures. And the suddenly they have appeared, the suddenly they are leaving and at the same time this episode is ending. I have seen primeval dinosaurs who discovered, destroyed and rearranged the earth. I assigned that meaning as a spectator with the corresponding experience. Somebody else might have seen something else. The player's and director's assumption of this scene was – as I heard after the

13 *Al di la*, TAM Teatromusica, Padova (Italy), Direction: Laurent Dupont, Players: Flavia Bussolotto, Marco Tizianel.

14 *Fribouillie*, Compagnie Lili Désastre, Marcé (Frankreich), Spiel: Francesca Sorgato.

performance - the description of ants.

Maybe a story will be necessary at the point when – in which way ever - figures are (episodically) established on stage. Someone who likes to tell a story is in need of figures. The production *Al di La* plays with the absence and presence of players and things. From its presence and absence the spectator may imagine a story. We can conclude that the "theatre for the youngest" has got an own dramaturgy (In this case dramaturgy means the entirety of the performance structures.

Time

The "theatre for the youngest" has got its own handling with time and its own rhythm corresponding to the audience's rhythm. The rhythm of the players and the spectators is connected by the breath. A collective breath, especially to be taken up by the players to harmonise with the children, gives them a sense of security. Breath is keeping the suspense between player and audience. Suspense might be a further dramaturgical category which is realised in a different way in the „theatre for the youngest" than in the conventional theatre.

Besides the action following a special rhythm even the silence belongs to the "theatre for the youngest" – both the acoustic and the temporal silence. The repetitive moment, the repetition of scenes or of verbal answers is often to be found in the „*theatre for the youngest*".

Theatre takes place in a new way and differently with every performance. No performance is like the other. That is true for every kind of theatre. While it is imaginable that the stage dominates the audience room in the ordinary theatre (also seen in practice), this may not happen in the "*theatre for the youngest*". Neither the player nor the spectator may visit the performance with the attitude that they know how the communication between these both sides works. It will always be a common risk with the assumption of productive doubt.

Small size, the net... a short presentation

Small size, the net is a three-year project (2006-2009) for the development of the European Network for the diffusion of performing arts for early childhood (0-6 years, with particular attention given to the 0-3 age-group).

The Network "Small size" was founded in 2005 with the support of the European Commission and the Culture 2000 programme. It was established by four professional theatre and educational arts organisations, La Baracca (Italy), Théâtre de la Guimbarde (Belgium), Acción Educativa (Spain) and GOML – (Slovenia). Later in the same year, three additional partners were invited to become co-organisers to support the development of Small size: Helios Theater (Germany), Polka Theatre (UK) and Teatrul Ion Creangă (Romania). Further funding from the European Commission and Culture 2000 programme was subsequently awarded in July 2006 for the three-year project, to allow an extension of the network across Europe and beyond.

Small size provides a structure through which to meet, share expertise and exchange knowledge; to develop collaborative projects and disseminate information and research. Through its networking, it aims to promote an awareness of the significance of performing arts for early childhood with objectives that include increasing children's creative potential along with the comparison of different European cultural traditions. In addition, it aims to give value to projects and events that support the development of training and educational programmes for early years educators and artists, and for producers and artists creating productions for the early childhood audiences, through widening opportunities for research and collaboration.

The principal inspiration of Small size rests in the children themselves, and our value of them. Through the network we trust the beneficiaries will be these children, alongside artists, teachers, early years educators, carers and service managers, parents and grandparents... in effect, everybody involved in performing arts, education and care of young children.

SMALL SIZE ACTIVITIES

The Small size project organises and promotes several activities which can be grouped into three areas: **production, training and diffusion-exchange**.

Productions and artistic research play a lead role. During the project, the partners have realised many productions, co-productions and artistic performances for children 0-6 years, and supported the production of new pieces of theatre for children 0-4 years by other European companies through a "Small size seeding fund". In addition, a piece of shared Artistic Research was commissioned and undertaken last year. This workshop-based research has been led by three directors from three of the partner companies (Helios Theater-Hamm, Germany, La Baracca-Bologna, Italy and La Guimbarde-Charleroi, Belgium). The various training activities differ in content and structure – workshops, research groups, internships – addressing artists, teachers and children. These activities are fundamental, especially when thinking about an improvement in expertise and a wider advocacy of the arts as a basic right for the very youngest children

Amongst these activities are the "Small size workshops" addressing young artists and playwrights, or nursery nurses and teachers from several European and non-European countries - workshops designed and intended to offer them the opportunity to share a common artistic experience

Diffusion-exchange activities are of key importance to an expanding network, and this because of their capacity to nurture relationships, provide opportunity for sharing and, in doing so, help create an active memory. These activities include publications, multimedia documentation, research and exchange amongst the partners, alongside events such as festivals and showcases. The experiences and knowledge developed over these almost-three years of the Small size project are gathered into three books, one of which is in your hands now.

Information

For any information about Small size and its activities contact:

Antonella Dalla Rosa

tel. 0039 051 4153713

info@smallsize.org

www.smallsize.org

Small size, the net is a project by:

Acción Educativa

Luis Vélez de Guevara 8

28012 Madrid, Spain

tel. 0034 9142 95029

fax 0034 9142 95031

aeduca@accioneducativa-mrp.org

www.accioneducativa-mrp.org

Polka Theatre

240 The Broadway, Wimbledon,

SW19 1SB London United Kingdom

tel. 0044 020 8543 4888

fax 0044 020 8545 8366

jobelloli@belloli.fsnet.co.uk

www.polkatheatre.com

GOML - Gledališče za otroke in mlade Ljubljana

Zaloška cesta 61,

1100 Ljubljana, Slovenia

tel. 00386 (0)1 5484543

00386 (0)1 5484540

fax 00386 (0)1 5484550

info@goml.si

www.goml.si

Teatrul Ion Creangă

Blvd Gh Magheru 27, et.1 Sector 1,

Bucharest, Romania

tel. 004021 317 1169

fax 004021 317 85 92

contact@teatrulioncreanga.ro

www.teatrulioncreanga.ro

Helios Theater

PR & Organisation Willy-Brandt-Platz 3

59065 Hamm, Germany

tel. 0049 (0) 2381 926837

fax 0049 (0) 2381 926838

post@helios-theater.de

www.helios-theater.de

Théâtre de La Guimbarde

Boulevard Jacques Bertrand, 1/3

6000 Charleroi, Belgium

tel. 0032 71634970

fax 0032 1634971

laguimbarde@charleroi-culture.be

www.laguimbarde.be

La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi

via Matteotti, 16

40129 Bologna, Italy

tel. 0039 0514153713

0039 051 4153723

fax 0039 051 4153777

antonella@testoniragazzi.it

www.testoniragazzi.it

