in creating a sweeping, almost magical-realist aesthetic which, with the assistance of some tremendous technical work, swirled around the stage with an unlikely ease. Likewise, the acting was uniformly impressive – a fact which only heightened one's sense of frustration at a theatrical opportunity missed.

If *The Hunting Season* disappointed, the production of the Georgian folk story *The Pigs of Bakula*, directed by David Jishkariani, was, in sad truth, an embarrassment to the festival. The satire of the life of a rich nobleman was performed, as part of the festival's Georgian showcase, by the regional company the Theatre of Masks. So amateurish was the performance that its misguided inclusion in the programme should serve as a warning to festival directors to avoid inviting shows on the basis simply of local renown or regional inclusiveness.

The Pigs of Bakula did, at least, have the excuse of a palpable lack of professionalism. There was no such defence for Giorgi Apkhazava's dreadful production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Garish, unsubtle, destroying Beckett's orientation on the music hall with an erratic musical score (which was dominated by wildly inappropriate pop music), it ultimately twisted the religious references in the play into a heavy-handed Christian conclusion.

I was, however, able to depart Tbilisi with a more positive impression of Georgian theatre thanks to David Doiashvili's production of *Macbeth* at the Vaso Abashidze State Music and Drama Theatre. Although not part of the festival programme, it was a deserved revival of a show which had been on the 2010 programme and had received the coveted Duruji Prize for theatre in Georgia that year. Highly stylized, dark, and brooding, with a young Lady Macbeth and a despicable King Duncan, whose lust for power and sex evokes Claudius in *Hamlet*, it is (although unevenly acted) a fascinatingly original take on the drama. Ironically, despite the best efforts of the Georgian government, the real villain of the festival was not Robert Sturua but a very distinctive recasting of Shakespeare's normally avuncular Duncan.

References

All webpages as accessed 5 January 2012.

1. <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/28/concern-in-bahrain-and-georgia>.
2. <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/06/robert-sturua-dismissal-georgia>.
3. <www.rferl.org/content/the_fall_of_robert_sturua/24305681.html>.
4. <www.aict-iatc.org/aict-5.html>.
5. <www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/19/georgia-clampdown-theatre-tbilisi>.

Juliusz Tyszka

Theatre and Memory in Utrecht

Report on the seventeenth Conference of Performance Studies International in Utrecht, 25–29 May 2011.

THE SEVENTEENTH conference of Performance Studies international (PSi), held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, gathered several hundreds of Performance Studies researchers from all over the world. Thanks to the efforts of several hundred people from Theatre Studies of Utrecht Universiteit, Festival a/d Werf, and their partner institutions – the Faculty of Theatre at the Utrecht School of the Arts, the Utrecht Centre for Visual Arts, and the Utrecht City Theatre, to name only three of the most important – led by the co-ordinator, Maaike Bleeker from Theatre Studies, the conference went smoothly, being perfectly organized and handled.

Each of the yearly PSi conferences has its own theme. After 'Interregnum' (Copenhagen, 2008), 'Misperformance, Misfiring, Misfitting, or Misreading' (Zagreb, 2009), and 'Performing Publics' (Toronto, 2010), in 2011 we were focusing our attention on the set of problems marked by the title 'Technology, Memory, Experience'. This referred to Giulio Camillo's 'Memory Theatre', which, as the authors of the introductory text in the conference folder told us, was 'a sixteenth-century invention that was supposed to provide the visitor with access to all existing knowledge, as well as provide the possibility to orate about this "as if he were Cicero himself"'.

The PSi organizers' intention was to look at the performance (especially performing arts) 'as providing a perspective on and as embodiment of the relation' between the three concepts named in the title. Camillo's theatre is replaced nowadays by the electronic devices able to save and store the whole of human knowledge and give us instant access to any of its parts and aspects. But scientific knowledge is not the most significant and desired among electronically stored information. The fact that 'Google has replaced Omniscience in its overkill of information' is the consequence of *lifelogging* and *lifecaching* – fervently expanding practices that reflect 'the desire to remember and share every single detail of one's life', named by Huysen 'mnemonic fever'. One of its results is 'an increasing concern with cultural heritage in expanding archives and by expanding museum-like

fashioning of self through photographs, videos, blogs, Facebook and YouTube'. The past prevails over shrinking 'now', but its existence (stored, preserved, and always ready to be shared) is also disturbed by the 'fear that all will eventually disappear'.

In this context the organizers wanted to stress the importance of 'performing memory', reminding us that 'performing arts have a long history as a memory machine' and that the 'medium of performance is a technology of remembrance as well as a way of inscribing memories into individual and collective memory. . . . Performance stages and deconstructs the relationship between humankind and technology . . . and invites reflections upon the impact that technological developments have on our way of remembering, experiencing, thinking, and imagining.'

Having read such an interesting and promising introduction, a participant in Utrecht had to face the harsh reality, overshadowed by the traditional congress nightmare: the imperative of 'proper choice' and the fear of 'missing something important'. Everyone among the participants had to make his/her own choice out of 350 papers delivered at several dozen panels. What is more, the Festival a/d Werf and some other artistic institutions and initiatives gave us the opportunity to participate in a great number of performative events. The organizers honestly warned us: 'You will have to choose', and gave us not very practical but fair advice: 'The way to experience PSi 17 is to step inside and immerse yourself.'

As a newcomer to PSi, who has however been involved in performance studies research for almost twenty years, I 'immersed myself' into the conference's reality hoping to find there many interesting inspirations and creative stimuluses. My participation in several panels and some other events gave me some strong impressions and enabled me to draw a few general conclusions. I present some of them from the perspective of a researcher–PSi newcomer from Central Eastern Europe, active not only in the field of performance and theatre studies but also in cultural studies.

My first impression: the domination of the anglophone world in the domain of performance studies. The majority among the participants of PSi 17 were researchers from the USA, UK, and Australia. Even if one had come across an Asian or East European name while reading the conference folder, one soon realized (in a great many cases) that its bearer was working in a British or American university. Asia, Latin America, and Africa were represented very poorly, while the participants from continental Europe were, say, 'numerous enough', but not in excess, with quite a number of participants from former Yugoslavia and (obviously) from the Netherlands.

In the world of PSi the quarrels on the absence of the French language, typical for general

assemblies of the International Federation of Theatre Research, are rather difficult to imagine. During my whole time among the participants of the Utrecht conference I heard French only once, and that at the break between the panels.

My second impression (which goes with what I have read in the books of performance studies researchers): everything can be a performance, or at least the object of performance studies research. While 'immersing myself' and making my own choice I came across, among others:

1. The analysis of mathematical rules, understood as performances and also as performance scenarios, based on the link made 'through two concepts: *gesture*, a "disciplined mobility of the body" and *diagram*, the trace or projection of and embodied thought' (Brian Rotman, USA).

2. The discussion of 'how . . . outmoded theatre technologies or old costumes represent forgotten movement repertoires, or reveal collaborative practices' and how 'these trace-objects' produce pleasure or torment, based on archival research in, among others, the Laban archives (Rachel Fensham, UK).

3. The analysis of live and media political performances which followed the catastrophe of the airplane with the Polish presidential couple and lots of politicians and high-ranking army officers on board (Smolensk, 10 April 2010), referring to the romantic model of 'theatre of feast of the dead', based on the ideological pattern of Mickiewicz's drama *Forefathers' Eve* (Dariusz Kosiński, Poland).

4. The analysis of how personal and cultural memory works in the domain of theatre and performance, based on the example of the forty-year-long run of the performance of Queneau's *Exercices de style* by Zagreb Theatre &TD – the author, Lada Čale Feldman from Croatia, suggesting that we direct our attention to the 'curious correspondence between the logic of repetition' and 'the long-term attraction' of &TD's performance for the audience.

5. The deduction leading to the conclusion that 'choreography is a philosophical practice and philosophy a choreographical one' as 'philosophy and choreography are different styles of engagement in writing practice' (Alva Noë, USA).

6. The analysis of underground culture in Belgrade from the mid-1990s, oppressed by the regime of Slobodan Milošević, hidden in the network of private apartments and no-places like underground car parks, full of subversive irony and performative manifestations submerged in everyday life (Silvija Jestrović, UK).

7. The analysis of cultural performative messages which were 'emanating' from the architectural and scenographic designs of the British, Italian,

and Dutch pavilions at World EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, directed to the local public, coming in masses mainly from distant Chinese rural areas (Susan Bennett, Canada).

This PSi newcomer's conclusion: if we take into account literally everything as the object of performance studies research, we have to come to terms with the fact that we enter, sometimes quite awkwardly, the fields of research of many other disciplines: theatre studies, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, city studies, cultural anthropology, philosophy, etc. Even if such an interdisciplinary approach is absolutely normal in current academic practice, the danger is that we have to know at least the basic procedures used by researchers from this great variety of fields, otherwise we fall into dilettantism – unless we are geniuses experiencing regularly moments of 'Eureka'-like inspiration, which I do not believe to be possible in our postmodern times. Therefore, I believe that the majority of PSi 17 papers could be easily delivered at the conferences of the above mentioned disciplines, since their authors proved expert in philosophy, cultural studies, theatre studies, etc. and were just trying to find their own path in performance studies.

As a participant in the IFTR/FIRT annual congress in Munich in 2010, I happened to attend many interesting panels, including the one named 'Performance as Research', and I am sure that the large number of papers delivered there could with no problem have been part of the Utrecht event. But the particular relations between performance studies and theatre studies is another kettle of fish and needs special, detailed analysis.

Several years ago when I read for the first time the first handbook on performance studies by Richard Schechner, and soon after *Perform or Else* by Jon McKenzie, the whole emerging discipline seemed to me very complicated, difficult to grasp but understandable, far reaching and absolutely promising. Now, after having experienced 'PSi in action', expanded to a gigantic scale, individualized and therefore comminuted and developing with great speed in so many directions, I feel puzzled. But that is what performance studies and current life are like.

By the way, PSi 17 staged the welcome return (after too long a break) of Richard Schechner to the world of PSi. As one of the 'founding fathers' of performance studies, he gave a bravado performance, full of the brilliant sarcastic irony so typical of him, as a front man at the event called 'Publish in TDR – Have Your Cake and Eat It Too'.

The most significant moment of PSi 17 was for me the clash between Jon McKenzie (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA) and Rosi Braidotti (Utrech Universiteit, Netherlands) at the Prelude Panel on 25 May. The American researcher presented many of his projects aiming at involving performance studies in the real world. In his research, pedagogy, and expertise he has recently tried to answer the question: how can performance studies improve the operational abilities of business and technical organizations? McKenzie explained that he had come to the conclusion that it was better to change the corporations from inside than to demonstrate against them on the streets.

The answer by Braidotti was firm and passionate: in describing the development of twentieth-century science and philosophy, she criticized the idea of 'scientific expertise', stressing the need of university teachers to return to their main mission: to teach critical thinking and to focus again on fundamental research, which is gradually escaping from universities in such basic domains as biogenetics, informatics, and even philosophy.

As an old university teacher from Poland who remembers very well the time of communist martial law in the 1980s, I was very much tempted by this 'European approach' to my mission, although I am perfectly aware that my new, very much up-to-date Minister of Higher Education will be delighted if I follow the path marked out by McKenzie.