Thursday October 11, 2018
Round Table: Theatre Practitioners (actors, directors, translators, writers…)

The participants are introduced by Christine Kiehl, vice president of RADAC. Christina Chatzivasileiou comes from the School of Drama, Faculty of Fine Arts, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her field of study is mostly *In-Yer-Face* theatre, she is also a stage director and recently staged *The Reunification of The Two Koreas* by Joël Pommerat; Jérôme Hankins is a renowned stage director and translator. Catherine Hargreaves is a teacher at ENSATT in Lyon, stage director, writer and translator; she directs the company Les 7 Soeurs. Isabelle Starkier is an actress, stage director and professor of drama studies at the University d'Evry. Arnaud Anckaert is co-creator of *Le Théâtre du Prisme,* actor and stage director.

With the guidance of Christine Kiehl, the stage directors gave their thoughts about the main issues in drama studies: the choice of a play to stage, the original language of the play, the problems of translation (such as the transposition of rhythm from one language to the other, the place of academic translation on stage, the question of invention in translation), their relationship with authors and how they direct.

Christina Chatzivasileiou starts the debate with very interesting notions about the choice of a play for a stage-director. For her, the language in which the play is written does not matter at first as it seems to her that the play chooses her rather than she choosing the play.

In a similar way, Arnaud Anckaert speaks of the "intuitive choice" of a play. His own feelings have a role to play in his choices. For instance, he felt a form of kinship with the characters of the play *Disco Pigs* by Enda Walsh when he staged it with his partner Capucine Lange. Likewise, with the play *Orphans*, he felt abandoned as his company was facing a period of crisis. For him the choice of a play is not

rational but instinctive and immediate, in spite of trivial factors such as finances. As for Catherine Hargreaves she does not choose plays of a specific type, such as *In-Yer-face* – but rather plays in which she finds something that echoes with her own experience as in the play *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* which tackles identity disorders and complex relations to reality. This theme echoed with her personal life as her sister had Down's syndrome. All the authors of the round table acknowledge the important role of their own artistic sensibility in their choices of play, even though they do not seek this kinship with the characters or the themes. They choose a play first for its text.

Christina Chatzivasileiou also introduces the discussion around another main issue for the stage-director: the translation of a play. She immediately distinguishes the academic translation of a play and the staged translation. For her the main difficulty of translation resides in the rhythm of the source language and its transcription into the target language; in her own case the rhythm of English is hardly compatible with the rhythm of modern Greek. While the grammar of English allows short and striking sentences, the grammar of Greek prefers long flowing sentences. This difficulty is even more pronounced when staging *In-Yer-Face* plays such as works by Sarah Kane or Martin McDonagh. Jérôme Hankins continues the discussion on this topic with the example of the translation of Edward Bond's plays. These plays made him question the academic rules of translation and go for a more inventive form of translation, a translation that enhances the ideas of the text. He addresses Christina Chatzivasileiou: "I feel that these English authors have really helped us invent a new form of French. And perhaps in Greece, what you're doing, is perhaps creating a new Greek language, that's what translation should be, you know, inventing language." For Jérôme Hankins, the stage allows the translator great freedom to be creative.

Violent language is another issue in the translation of *In-Yer-Face* plays. Christina Chatzivasileiou gives the example of the repetition of words such as "fuck" in Sarah Kane's plays. The repetitive effect of a short word in English is not the same as the periphrasis used in Greek.

Arnaud Anckaert admits that he removed some of the occurrences of the word in the plays he staged. The violence of the play is not necessarily conveyed by the repetition of violent words. There are other means to stage this violence. Catherine Hargreaves links this topic to her work with the actors. The rhythm of the play is also displayed through the body of the actor. Thus they also have their say in the translation of the text.

The works of Sarah Kane are referred to throughout the discussion. Christina Chatzivasileiou reminds the audience of Kane's words: "To be a stage-director is to be in a state of crisis." The notion of crisis is related to the responsibility the stage-director has towards the play, the characters and the author's work. Jérôme Hankins explains this notion of crisis by taking up the concept of the "Third Crisis" developed by Edward Bond, which corresponds to the present time.

All the participants describe directing for the stage work as a collaboration with the actors and each of them has a different method. For Christina Chatzivasileiou, improvisations form the basis of her work with the actors, while the text is rehearsed only at the end of the rehearsals. The improvisations aim at a better understanding of the play. On the other hand, Isabelle Starkier does not do improvisations with the actors; the rehearsals are more a dialogue between her, the actors and when possible the author of the play. While Arnaud Anckaert's method is much vaguer. The understanding of the play is already an extensive work, and is the responsibility of the stage-director to the author's work. He takes the example of the play *Every Brilliant Thing,* on which playwright Duncan Macmillan worked for ten years. Jérôme Hankins acknowledges the work of the actors in rehearsals so that the stage-director has to leave them a space of freedom in their interpretation of the text. Catherine Hargreaves concluded the discussion about stage-directing with the idea that there are as many ways of directing a play as stage-directors, but that every time the focus should be on the audience.

At the end of the round table, the questions of the members of the audience led the discussion back to the topic of translation and direct-

ing. Christina Chatzivasileiou spoke about the role of actors in the translation and the author: "A Good Author is a Dead Author". Isabelle Starker concluded the discussion with the remark that in translation the spirit of the text is more important than the letter.

The round table of the authors tackled numerous topics that are still subject to debate in theatre studies. Christine Kiehl noted that it would be interesting for stage-directors to discuss their perspectives on the question of translation with the translators invited to the other round table.

(Transcript and summary: Séverine BADIN, Master's student, University Grenoble Alps)