

EUROKAZ

1987 – 2006

*All the unhappiness of men
comes from one thing: not being
able to remain at rest in a room.
(Pascal)*

Eurokaz celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. This festive occasion might be an appropriate time to view results, unfold directions and start towards an evaluation. What were the motivations that created Eurokaz in 1987¹ under the subtitle “Festival of New European Theatre”: what did it want, what did it achieve, what worked, what was its relationship to Croatian theatre and what orders did it overturn? These are some of the questions that I will try to address as the founder and author of the programming concept behind Eurokaz.

NEW THEATRE, BEGINNINGS

Eurokaz was created as a support and platform for a small area of twentieth century theatre history that had, in the now distant eighties, stirred up Europe and initiated a number of bold impulses that had arrived from the fields of technology and science, visual arts, new media, dance and movement – also rejecting a prevailing logo-centric order of the time.

The theatre signalled by the Eurokaz festival claimed to draw attention to the different attempts being made by serious art groups and directors towards liberating theatre from the ideology of text, political and utopian thought and indeed from any teleological blows of such kind; from all the prerogatives that had marked the student theatre of the sixties and which had settled into institutions during the seventies. By the end of the eighties these breakthroughs had collected under the somewhat unfortunate and dull name of *new theatre* and had, in time, evolved their own varying stylistic differences.

What should this *new theatre* be like?

New theatre is, in a certain sense, a reflex of the philosophy of postmodernism, the *quickest delayed response* that the theatre, as an inert medium trapped by its mimetic function, can produce in relation to the history of ideas.

But maybe it is indeed only the *modernist* game of hide-and-seek that still believes in the evolution of Barthes's *responsible forms*: the humanistic drive towards understanding the hidden structures of the world, which theatre reduces, in a relaxed manner, to a whisper of scenic signs.

After the time of the *Young Peoples' Theatre Days*² and the *Young Peoples' Theatre Days of Dubrovnik*³, we didn't have significant contact with the international theatre scene. Foreign touring performances were rare and of questionable quality. In the broader perspective, *BITEF* (*Belgrade International Theatre Festival*) was stuck in the aesthetics of the seventies and there was no strong drive towards

research that could be found there either. The theatre situation in Croatia was in a state of *excessive predictability*, in other words – catastrophic: the nineteenth century as an intellectual horizon, directing methods relying on realism, psychology and illustration.

While in Slovenia, the *Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK)* movement had produced an essential theatrical dynamism, in Croatia, a theatrically responsible independent scene belonged to the past.

The first Eurokaz engaged in a conversation with both the situation we were thrown into after a decade long information gap (since the last *Young Peoples' Theatre Days* in Zagreb in 1977), and the politics of the systematic destruction of intelligent artistic potential executed at the Academy of Dramatic Arts.

As for the international programme, the first Eurokaz was primarily a *warehouse* of information: it distributed different fields of research and innovation that were thriving in Europe at the time. Zagreb saw performances from the future stars of new theatre. Names that went onto cut through the European theatrical landscape over the following twenty years showed some of their first, important productions at Eurokaz.

So, in line with these somewhat unconsciously modernist ambitions to find diverse impetus to change the history of theatre (and not just fill it in), to find artists who belong to *art*, and not just to *art history* (as Borges would say), the first editions of Eurokaz recognized the beginnings of the *Flemish wave* phenomenon whose representatives would go on to make a significant mark on contemporary theatre by the end of the century.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jan Fabre, and Jan Lauwers performed in Zagreb with their first *uncertain successes*, setting formal parameters that became recognizable in the works of numerous covetous epigones that have continued to manifest themselves in great quantities to this day. *Mechanisms for production of meaning, structures, real-time on stage, epidemic of geometry, an aesthetical purity, a*

cold self-referential style, formalism and disinfection, as regards the production process, *a transnationalism* (a metalinguistic comprehensibility), only a few years after the initial bewildered critical reviews of the first Eurokaz, all these elements came to dominate the European theatre market as the fastest selling commodities, but which also led to a wide-spread uniformity of the European theatre and dance landscape in the mid-nineties.

Those first editions of Eurokaz pointed to the relevant contexts of innovative theatre, such as non-figurative fluxes of energy (*La fura dels baus*), urban ambientality (*Ilotopie, Royal de luxe*), non-economical dramaturgy (Jesurun, Stanev, Brezovec, Lauwers), theatre of manifesto (*Soc. Raffaello Sanzio, NSK, Etant Donnes, Derevo*), or the iconoclastic theatre that was elaborated in later years. There were also Hinderik, G. B. Corsetti, and *Station House Opera*, who “drew extreme poetic consequences from the very means of realization”, as Artaud would say, playing with construction materials (bricks, glass) or constructing a world of amazing props and stage sets which developed the particular poetics of a *theatre of objects*, so distant from the usual theatrical categories of meaning.

Artists who showed that theatre was capable of the timely recognition of the experiences of its age were received by our stagnant culture as a shock. Suddenly, something was happening: a festival that had no connection with the theatrical establishment, and through the strength of its organizational, aesthetic and technological means, appeared more serious and so different from the *soft* parameters of the *IFSK (International Festival of Student Drama Groups)*⁴ and the *Young People's Theatre Days*, that it instantly ruptured the practice of Croatian theatre as a kind of Dorian Gray freak.⁵

After the first Eurokaz, which took its *informative function* as its central focus, programmes of subsequent years were interested in the *identification* and *contextualization* of contemporary theatre phenomena; leaning towards parallelism, connecting works of different artistic levels and subtexts, and trying to give it all an open theoretical and critical dignity.⁶

One of the characteristics of *new theatre* is a *pluralism of aesthetics*, many of which still come from modernist positions, relying on the totalitarian, the manifest character of ideas, and often working contrary to the postmodern indifference produced by a pluralist mass, where existing differences are of equal value (Boris Groys). Although today we no longer speak so much of the *New* as of the *Other*, theatre astounds us with the fact that within it, the historical eschatological force has still not reached its end. From the appearance of Robert Wilson in Europe in the seventies till today, there is no lack of a *delighted blasphemy* by artists who, playing *va banque*, hit our perceptual habits and revolutionize the language of theatre with a number of informal procedures. Eurokaz has learned to enjoy recognizing such impulses, so the *uncompromised and authentic* selections (and not the fearful repetition of other festivals' programmes and yielding to market relationships of cultural capital) were the main characteristic of its programme concept.⁷

AMERICA, HI-TECH

Already in 1988, Eurokaz abandoned the notion of "hits" and "famous names" and intensified its programme concept with examples of radical representatives of technological theatre from the West Coast of the United States. This daring selection with all its elements of risk included artists relatively unfamiliar in Europe (*Soon 3*, *Survival Research Laboratories*, *Nightletter Theater*, Joe Goode, Liz Lerman, Nancy Karp, Rachel Rosenthal), who realised the ultimate consequences of one of more important premises of new theatre. Their *hi-tech* radicalism removes the actor from the stage and replaces him with machines and robots, while the text becomes completely obsolete due to an impact of images and emphasized visualization. What we see is the geometrical expansion of meaning in condensed points in time (*Nightletter Theater*), the highest technologies

and simple toponymical models (the formula of Gesamtkunstwerk of *Soon 3*), the incoherence of dramaturgical wholes, ferocious juxtapositioning of signs, an abandonment of playfulness (in the choreographies of Nancy Karp on the trail of Bauhaus stimulation), the contextualization of body writing, the most associative bridging over of spaces of complete banality (*Joe Goode Performance Group*) and the urban rituals of technologized violence (*Survival Research Laboratories*).

On the other hand, at that time, certain structural moves in these productions may have seemed foreign to us, or even a simplification of certain European models. However, we had to acknowledge the complete *consciousness* in the choice of means of expression: a radical, almost *grammatical* encircling of the space of speech, an insistence on the *materiality* of the execution (there is nothing but what you can see).

It was one of the most controversial, but at the same time most valuable, editions of Eurokaz; the meaning of which can be interpreted only today. We can find the determining characteristics of that theatre language - fiercely attacked then as too *simplified* and *carefree American* - a decade later in European directors and choreographers who advocate not only the cold language of technology, but the simple models which express a *distrust of the whole higher sphere* (R. Musil).

BACK TO THE BEGINNINGS

After the American season, supported by a video programme of works from *The Kitchen* in New York, 1989 had an exceptionally abundant programme that dealt with *new dramaturgy*, *theatre of manifesto*, contemporary opera and Russian theatre.

The third Eurokaz provoked the theatre's *ontological nest* previously denied in the Festival's beginnings: the text & the actor. What we see are different dramatic texts intercrossing and co-existing, a play of bizarre combinations that

multiplies the meanings of the sentences' references. Incompatible theatre genres, historical styles, directing and acting methods, all fuse in one production.

Performances by John Jesurun, *Need Company*, Ivan Stanev and Branko Brezovec, by destroying discursive planes, each explored ways of dislocating the story in such a way that it radiates, paradoxically, from the basic dimension of meaning (how can one reach the moral of the story without telling the story?). *New dramaturgy* expanded its definition a few years later in the concept of *post-mainstream* that shows the ways in which isolated culturological models collaborate in the construction of a new theatre language.

Taking partial part in these procedures, the groups *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio*, *Derevo*, *Red pilot*, *Etant Donnés* stand apart with their specific attitude toward art itself, distancing themselves from customary theater praxis. These are relatively hermetic artistic communities (we might call them *theatre of manifesto*) whose members accept their carefully elaborated credo with a certain dose of fanaticism and intolerance, and which one must necessarily know in order to fully understand the meaning of the performance which is only a part, and not always the most important part, of their activity.

Royal de Luxe continued the line of performances of a new ambience that had been introduced as a theme in 1988 by *Iltopie*. These two companies supported by *Plasticiens Volants* invited in 1996 proved in the years to come the vitality of the French theatre which transformed an exhausted formula of the carefree street theatre into technologically and dramaturgically highly sophisticated events for open spaces.

Russian theatre was also well presented in 1989, and in its less typical forms. Artists' collectives *Popmehanika* (a Russian parallel to *Neue Slowenische Kunst*) with their charismatic leader Sergej Kurjohin, *Derevo*, the director Viktjuk (and Klimenko in 1991), all presented one of the most interesting periods of Russian theatre that was otherwise having a hard time getting back on its feet. Western cultural management had still not rushed in and one was free to speak about whatever

one wanted, albeit obediently. The fall of the Berlin wall had offered the stability of cultural industry and the market, so Russian artists put their future up for sale. Today, Russia's theatre survives on artificially created trendy names, showing off its Slavic mysticism when needed. This is to say, it is too immersed in all forms of adaptability.

At the end of the eighties, postmodern eclectic theatre gave the impression of optimism. It seemed that there were no obstacles and that theatre could match the speed of film, compete with the mass entertainment industry and its production of images, successfully appropriate high technology, and put the dull *Laokoonian* limits of the theatre medium into a secondary position. Theatre groups sprang up like mushrooms after rain, as did many new festivals of ever newer *new theatre*.

VERTICAL MULTICULTURALISM

These were the best and most productive years of the production-distribution network *IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting)* which was, and still is today, one of the most powerful organisations of its kind in Europe. *IETM* was envisioned as providing logistical support for *new theatre* in the early eighties, coinciding with the appearance of artists and groups who were produced outside of the institutions and required specific production conditions. Eurokaz was the host of one of the key plenary meetings of *IETM* in 1990, the first that was held in one of the so-called East European countries since the organisation's foundation ten years earlier⁸. In Zagreb, Western Europe confronted for the first time an organised presentation of, until then, the unknown theatrical and cultural strategies of a socialist country on the verge of breakdown.

That year's programme of *Eurokaz* (due to the *IETM* Plenary, the festival's date was moved from June to March) brought together representatives of the

new generation of Yugoslavian (as they were still called then) directors and their productions, which would go on to have a cult reputation.

The productions of Dragan Živadinov, Branko Brezovec, Vito Taufer, Haris Pašović (joined by Eurokaz's co-production of Bulgarian Ivan Stanev), testified to the exceptional creative potential of a group of artists educated in the institutions of a rigid theatre system, but who, thanks to a free flow of information and cultural mobility (that allowed interesting aesthetic, cultural, and multilingual leaps) produced strong concepts and erudition of the highest order comparable to any relevant European "generation" project.

These directors did not belong to the so-called *independent scene* that the *new theatre* productions of Europe were familiar with; instead they directed astoundingly radical productions in big repertory and national theatres, some of which had programming policies that were open towards research and innovation. Here was an infrastructure that a majority of West European directors with an inclination toward experimentation could at that time only dream about. However, that wasn't the only thing that confused our western colleagues who arrived here with very reserved expectations and strong stereotypes, certain that they would be bored with poor, old fashioned *East European* theatre, smelling of the reiteration of Kantor and Grotowski. What created the most misunderstandings was the so very *determined* theatrical discourse and directorial sway, both quite unknown in the West, and rather peculiar to its taste infused as it was by Flemish orderliness. These directors jumped with superiority and grand gestures through different, sometimes incompatible dramatic levels within one performance, referring to the *ritual* solemnity of Yugoslavian cultural and social memory. This created a contaminated style that stood out against the formalism and hygiene of theatrical languages that burdened the West European market. Traditional forms communicated on an equal level with contemporary directing methods, the theatre of image with ancient ritual, Bosnian Sevdah with Robert Wilson, emptied, recycled historical styles with technological schizophrenia.

Theatrical Europe responded in the same confused way to these scenes of authenticity as the European politics responded to the changes in Eastern Europe – it filed away these authentic theatrical energies as fast as it could (while buying some along the way), and then, a few years later, it awarded those who stooped to overripe dramaturgical models and imitations of mostly dance languages which had helped Brussels and Amsterdam to win over their new markets.

In this way the new Slovenian theatre, first recognized and forcefully presented in the Eurokaz programme, became a theatrical fact in Europe, but only through its second generation of directors and choreographers whose breakthrough happened due to these aforementioned circumstances: blend into Europe in the safest possible way, a Europe where everyone dances to the same score.

Today, *IETM* is far too large, a spoilt institution that hides its ideological intentions by appearing to give benign lectures which, surprise, surprise, undermine the big *psychotic* theatre systems like the ones in Russia, so they can be replaced by scenes of the *pathology of normality*, a chronically low-level schizophrenia.

If there is anything left from the meeting in Zagreb, then it is definitely Zagreb's contribution to the surge of multiculturalism in the following years. The programme in Zagreb offered the concept of *vertical multiculturalism* that was to help in the clarification of the multicultural fog that had been hovering over West Europe since the time of Peter Brook.

In opposition to *horizontal multiculturalism*, and by that I mean cultural and social activity focused on minorities or the decorative use of traditional forms of mostly non-European cultures (Brook, Barba, Mnouchkine), a *musaka* that, with a little Indian make-up, magnificent Japanese costumes, or screams of a few black actors, tries to convince us that it is engaged with the rest of the world, while in fact its manner of piling up sensations is intrinsically Western. Contrary to this, to name it properly, *colonial* approach, artists of *vertical multiculturalism*, working at the intersections of different cultures and penetrating through the *simultaneity* of

different cultural identities by using a kind of *schizo-analytical* approach, build a unique, innovative artistic form. That kind of actor manages to keep together a multitude of different archaic combinations and procedures within his mental habitus. At the same time his *physis* emanates the *gesture* of modern theatre responsible for giving vertiginous dimensions to the inner ritual element and the ritual sense of time. The same can be said about the aforementioned directing procedures.

From its beginnings, Eurokaz was aware of its pioneering intention to promote such a different and (at least in Europe) unwelcome cultural and theatrical concept. From 1991, a year that coincided with the beginning of the war in former Yugoslavia, it has tried to approach similar ideas, artists and institutions from the non-European cultural circle.

WAR PERIOD: THEATRE OF ENERGY, POST MAINSTREAM

The programme of the fifth Eurokaz (1991), in the year when the war in ex-Yugoslavia started, can be viewed as an intersection between two periods and as such, it more or less checked the most significant postmodernist theatre achievements whilst opening passages towards new themes and issues.

The second appearance of *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio* at the festival, was in its iconoclastic context strengthened by the pioneers of *noble dilettantism*, *Bak-Truppen*, disturbing profoundly our theatre critics who could have again referred to Eurokaz as a festival of *amateurs*.

The majority of performances shown were gathered around the problem of *theatre energy*, from its non-figurative expenditure (Saburo Teshigawara, *Athamor Danza*, *Arena Teatro*, *Théâtre du Point Aveugle*), to the pleasure of its lack (Klimenko, Syberberg).

The director Klimenko, a student of Efros and Vasiliev, following the singular spiritualism of the Russian school radicalizes this exhausted theatrical concept in a sequence of scenes that disassociated from their psycho-social energy talk a *theatre of slow death*. The same we can say about Syberberg's performance with Edith Clever "Ein Traum, was sonst?" ("A Dream, What Else?"), the only show which did not take place although Syberberg and Edith Clever did arrive in Zagreb. Namely, the third day of the festival the war in Slovenia started and their truck with the set had been used as a barricade somewhere on the way to Zagreb. Nevertheless, all other performances took place in a dark atmosphere with combats taking place only a few kilometers from Zagreb. The artists fought their way through blocked roads being the only foreigners who did not want to flee but to enter the country. The problem was how to ship them back home after the festival had finished. The members of *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio* were kept for days in a Slovenian hotel; others, as Zagreb airport was closed, were finally transferred by ships to Italy.

After Slovenia, the war moved to Croatia, then to Bosnia. For the following four years Eurokaz was held in dramatic circumstances on the verge of the impossible. Some invited artists did not dare to come, some were forbidden to come by their governments, some came in order to support the festival. Eurokaz did not lose a single season and in this context was stubbornly developing the concept of *post-mainstream* moving away from European self-complacency and political incompetence.

The Eurokaz programme of the wartime and post-war period abandoned Europe as the unquestionable arbiter of contemporary theatre and opened up towards other cultures where it found impressive traces of *Novum*.

Theatres from Latin America, Asia, and Africa appeared in this context at Eurokaz; the mature authenticity of their performances testified that the *new theatre mainstream* was slowly losing its breath. *Post-mainstream* productions dealt with the reinterpretation of tradition, atypical dramaturgical procedures of

sequencing (for example, combining theatre of the image with ritual theatre or high technology with traditional forms) which was impossible within the concept of postmodern theatre. The relation to the body is not neurotic and narcissistically auto-referential as it is in European theatre and dance, but touches on the collective emotional experience or addresses metaphysical questions. These productions dare to use the elements of spectacle that abolish the typically European concept of individuality and the European notion of experimentation which receded into an intimate and perfectly controlled sphere. The groups *Athamor Danza* from Columbia, *Integro Grupo de Arte* from Peru, *Diquis Tiquis* from Costa Rica, *Gekidan Kaitaisha* and *Op. Eklekt* from Japan, *Daksha Sheth* from India were the highlights of Eurokaz and Zagreb's audiences accepted them with great pleasure. These were their early works – what later happened to some of these companies is another example of unfortunate and awkward attempts to affiliate their performances with the taste of the Western market. Audience highlights were also Asian traditional forms invited in 1998 - *Nô*, *Kathakali* and *Kodo* - which had never been seen before in Croatia and which astounded with their *classical modernity*.

In subsequent festival editions, Eurokaz expanded its *post-mainstream* programme by invitations to African dance companies (*Raiz di Polon*, *Alajotas*) and directors (William Kentridge). The best of African choreographers, although many of them had followed training in Europe, refused to imitate the *style* of the Western contemporary dance and managed to develop authentic dance languages which cannot be classified by stereotypes such as “a fusion of tradition and modernity” which is today such a common discourse concerning African contemporary dance. On the contrary, African dance traditions, as a part of daily life, are constantly within a status of modernity (that is, in the status of spontaneity) because they have always reacted in a non-figurative way outside of the dialectical alternation of forms, that is, outside the tradition as well so that all such fusions of “modern and traditional” hide an unnecessary logocentric trap.

Unlike the productions of the European *new theatre mainstream*, especially dance productions that are *silent* in the same globally understandable language and do not create perceptual problems, the reception of *post-mainstream* artists requires a diligent approach, a measured reception, sometimes even an ethnological concentration on certain scenic references. But this is far too much for the European management that apprehensively expends its time.

These issues were discussed at *post-mainstream* round tables in two consecutive years by bringing together international artists and producers who, dissatisfied with the dictate of aesthetics linked to theatre centers (where economic power had produced a cultural imperialism) such as Brussels, Amsterdam, Frankfurt (it was precisely the River Main that gave the name to *post-Main-stream*), and who wished to establish a different system of values and open perceptions of different cultures and theatre languages.

Some ten years later, however, we could have witnessed how terms such as the “periphery” and “other” suddenly came into fashion at the moment when arts markets were pushed by the logic of survival to look for new impulses to refresh their uniform and artistically jaded theatre and dance scene.

EUROKAZ AND GEOGRAPHY

Since the festival’s beginnings several programme sections have been dedicated to those countries and regions where we found at a specific time a significant outburst of creative energies that manifested themselves with an almost geographical coherence. After Belgium, Holland, USA, our focus of interest moved to Russia in 1989; in 1991 a special section was dedicated to German theatre, to its less known segment that stood out from the image that had dominated theatrical Europe at that time (the one we used to get from browsing through “Theater Heute”). We presented authors who escaped the rigid aesthetic system

of German theatre, the “grand loners” (one of whom was also Harald Weiss who participated in the first Eurokaz), the authors who never had played in Croatia but who have an incredibly important place in the *silent history* of European theatre: H.J. Syberberg, globally relevant as the author of the anthological film “Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland”; Achim Freyer, whose beginnings are parallel to Wilson’s and linked to an emphasized visuality and an out-of-joint perspective; and Michael K. Grüber, whose productions combine the happenings of the sixties with the geometrical precision of the eighties. *Freyer Ensemble* will come twice in the later festival editions while Grüber was represented that year by video recordings of his productions.

During the war years we discovered interesting art initiatives in Denmark and showed them in a thematic selection in 1994 (*Hotel Pro Forma, Teatret Canabile 2, von Heiduck*). On several occasions we presented the new generation of French directors, some of who became regular guests of Eurokaz (François-Michel Pesenti, Stanislas Nordey, François Tanguy), and in these last recent years we have presented the young Italian scene.

The companies *Fanny & Alexander*, *Motus* and *Clandestino*, all coming from the same region Emilia Romagna, in the immediate geographical proximity of *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio* from which as if they have taken over the mission of uncompromising destruction of a mythologem order, have developed a highly personal multi-media theatre language into which they translate classical texts and material. All three groups work on the edges of proud *nostalgia* of spent styles and manage to translate nearly every mythological matrix into a stylistic witticism. It is a generation that has, after decades of dominance of *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio* and G. B. Corsetti (guests of previous editions of Eurokaz), placed Italian theatre into a dominant position of European interest.

While we have continuously invited Slovenian theatre during early Eurokaz editions recognizing there an appearance of a relevant generation of directors like Dragan Živadinov and Vito Taufer who produced their master-pieces in the pre-

war and war period, the second generation presented at Eurokaz (Marko Peljhan, Emil Hrvatin, Matjaž Berger) was offering pretentious concepts as a disguise for less practical talent, to be followed by faceless epigons who are afraid of any authentic artistic ideas. At this point Eurokaz abandoned Slovenia for a longer time returning only in the past two years with a lonely example of the performance group *Via Negativa*, which dares to employ intriguing performative strategies.

In our “post-mainstream” researches across the edges of European perception, in 2003 another geographical area came into focus. In China, the country in which arts and culture, despite enormous economic changes, are still associated with state ideology or with traditional forms, and lately even burdened with seductive offers into a European mainstream, we came across excellent, highly engaged innovative theatre, performance and dance. It is rare, its working conditions are hard, but it survives by the strength of its convictions and ideas. The performance *Report on Giving Birth* by Beijing *Living Dance Studio*, I dare say, is the first example of *realistic* procedure, a heroic gorge of engagement in *social-realistic idealism* of Chinese artistic norm and as any anomaly and provocation, does not have the support of its cultural space. The shows by *Living Dance Studio*, so focused on Chinese reality, are produced abroad, and that is where we can see them (there the intensity of a direct hit fades away); only rarely do they perform in China.

CROATIAN THEATRE

The Croatian selection has wandered to all corners and searched in all directions – we have approached Croatian theatre (to use an *erotic* terminology to grasp something devoid of all eroticism) from above, from underneath, from the front and behind, openly or reserved, roughly and gently, all in the search of a minimum of uncalculating Croatian stage *prosedé*. Sometimes there is a feeling of

something stirring, a few inspired theatrical decisions, an appearance of a boldly announced Croatian selection, but already two years later, the erection recedes to a maximum of one or two juicier *carrots*.

In this sense the Croatian selection of Eurokaz tried to investigate into all possible directions: independent companies, innovation in national and repertory theatres, marginal areas of performance art, Croatian theatre dissidents, amateur theatre (*SKAH*), the newest alternative theatre (*FAKI*). Some *carrots* Eurokaz has followed from one production to the next (Branko Brezovec, Bobo Jelčić/Nataša Rajković, Damir Bartol, and partially *Montažstroj*). In 1998 the main Eurokaz's theme was dedicated to the Croatian theatre with nine performances created in different productions structures, from independent companies to national theatres.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The celebration of the tenth anniversary of Eurokaz in 1996 was the culmination of one programming era. The works shown were as diverse as they could be, pointing to the multitude of aesthetic concepts we had presented so far, but also there were those which looked forward to what became the Eurokaz preoccupations in the years to come.

Eurokaz arranged, with pleasure and respect, the presence of Robert Wilson and Jan Fabre at the celebrations. The work of these two artists was pivotal to the epoch of *new theatre* and its reliance on the image. But that year's selection also included the groups *Goat Island* and *Gekidan Kaitaisha* who work in opposition to visual concepts and who, with their decisive iconoclastic approach, pronounced the programme for the following years. Wilson, Stelarc and Živadinov introduce the genre of performance lecture, followed in 2002 by the Lebanese

artist Walid Ra'ad who, on the tracks of Borges, invents a new brutal reality as if the present one in which he participates is not cruel enough.

Plasticiens Volants moved Eurokaz, after a long time, into the streets again; a rare appearance of the Hungarian dance with *Artus* and Philippe Decouflé's spectacular *Decodex*, all that made the anniversary a feast for the audience which enthusiastically received various proposals of theatre enjoyment.

BODY ART

But, before the iconoclastic series, after a few relatively peaceful years, almost disturbed by its own lack of disturbance, in 1997 Eurokaz caused a scandal of impressive size, making it seem as if the festival would cease to exist.

The eleventh Eurokaz presented a theatrical version of *body art*, bringing to Zagreb *lunatics, pornstars, faggots, sadomasochistic freaks*, just to list a few names our press used. Cult artists who determine the significance of most of today's performance art books scandalized and enraged our public (*disturbed by the fact that it was disturbed* as Bosco would say) with their radical use of the body as artistic material.

Ron Athey, Annie Sprinkle, Orlan, Franko B, Lawrence Steger, and Stelarc (a year prior), all testify to the phenomenon of a tortured and wounded body that persists in an age of technological magic and virtual reality (in contrast to the sixties when the body was used as *histeron-proteron* of the political pressure) as one of the last sanctuaries the individual can inscribe with power, a sole territory that has retained a literal connection with the Artaudian *hieroglyph of reality*. (Artaud wrote: "I, Antonin Artaud, I am my own son, my mother, my father, and I".)

The gestures the body uses to defend its artistic status are immediate and non-mediated: all that happens happens in front of us in a beyond-ritual *irritation*

of no recurrence, a kind of *direct ontology*. The body loses its (as usual in theatre) symbolically established and ritually interwoven function and becomes a simple, though quite unpleasant, *iconic* sign.

The impossibility of the application of usual semantic categories in the interpretation of these “productions” points to the complexity, undisclosed subversiveness and a challenge to established artistic reserves (is it even art, some will ask). The usual question from “decent” citizens, if the tax-payers’ money could be used for showing “lunatics” of this kind culminated in a kind of censorship committee which the City Council organized in order to pre-view and check on all the video tapes of productions Eurokaz intended to invite in the future.

RHYTHM OF INTERCHANGE

However, using Barrault’s tactics of *rhythm of interchange*, the following year Eurokaz decided to present the programme wrapped in the beautiful costumes of classic Asian theatre, thus upsetting the prepared censorship manouvre which found itself speechless in front of *Nô*, *Kodo* and *Kathakali*, causing it to – after refreshing its knowledge from oriental theatre textbooks – give up its planned malignance, leaving Eurokaz to continue on its *iconoclastic* trail.

ICONOCLASTS

Thematic sections of *iconoclasm* that deal with the *ideology of the image* and are particularly dear to the festival were announced as early as 1989 with the performance *Santa Sofia* of the group *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio*⁹. This performance (followed in Eurokaz by their other productions *Gilgamesh* in 1991 and *Masoch* in 1993) can be archived as the *manifesto* of iconoclasm where they explicate the

artistic paradox: can theatre, a mimetic art *par excellence*, liberate itself from its representative function, if it is inseparable from the phenomenological aspects of the world it wishes to surpass. It is not about creating an emptied space where a new beginning can be conceived, but about the existing image that holds the seed of destruction. It is about a *fracture* within its own medium and tradition through which pours the beginning of a new language. That new language does not recall the image, but a constant linguistic reference; it is, as Lacan would say, *a translation without an original*.

Soc. Raffaello Sanzio returns thus to Artaud's *lyricism* of classical texts (*Hamlet, Julius Caesar*) or to mythological condensations (*Gilgamesh, Genesis*) which they reveal in unexpected, astounding versions.

Examples of iconoclasm, still not readable as stylistic characteristics at the time (it will happen a decade later with the second generation of *iconoclasts*), were visible in the work of groups presented at Eurokaz like *Forced Entertainment, BAK-truppen, Goat Island*, directors like Stanev, Brezovec, Pesenti, Tanguy, artists who today have some fifteen years of experience to back them up.

Unlike mainstream artists who believe that by rejecting text and relying on the image, theatre will free itself from ideology (many come from the field of visual arts), *iconoclasts* believe that the image too can be ideological. They will attempt to research the space that precedes the image, that *schizo-analytical* space of the *production of production* that precedes codes (because image is also a code) and which is explicated by the anti-Oedipus theory of Deleuze and Guattari concerning *fluxes of desire*¹⁰.

For example, *Goat Island* explains that they do not start out working with a predetermined objective, but begin a process and believe in the extent of it. What we spectators see is a sequence of non-utilizable images that are built up in front of our senses, but simultaneously dissolve before we can grasp their meaning. The performance seems to question the borderline that defines the final shape, i.e. at which moment does the image become codified. Everything is very fragile and a

large number of possibilities, originating in simple relations between the body and space, are open. That procedure stimulates the imagination and requires the active involvement of the audience that must inscribe appropriate meanings on its own.

In a similar way *Forced Entertainment* investigates into an invisible space between the character and the performer while the performances of *BAK-truppen* seem to invoke Valéry's instruction about "the hidden power that enables the creation of all fables". The extreme playfulness of *BAK-truppen* produces *liveliness* but it doesn't come from a text; the text, if there must be some, is casually read or written in chalk or projected. One has the impression that anything could happen. The actors are only passing time on stage pointing to the time dimension as an empty subject of theatre.

Similar procedures are used in the treatment of text and dramatic characters in the productions of Pesenti (*Helter Skelter, Conversation Pieces: People are Great*), Brezovec (*King Hamlet, SoSo*), Tanguy (*The Goat's Song*), Stanev (*Woyzeck*). Starting out from a proposition that states the inconstancy of the dramatic character as a positive entity, iconoclastic theatre questions the phenomenological aspects of the character. This is not about the familiar and already pretty used up deconstructive methodologies which we know from the practices of modern theatre since Strindberg, but an attempt to use the system of differences and relations to discard the existence of elements *per se*; a character exists only in relation to other elements, other characters that are also not simply present or absent.

In Brezovec's *King Hamlet* we cannot find out who Hamlet really is and what he looks like: his words are dispersed through the dramaturgical functions of other characters. Hamlet refuses to be encoded into a precise entity, his phenomenological aspect becomes questionable. Derrida defines every element of the system by "traces of other elements of the system". That chain, that creation, is the text that was created in the transformation of another text. "There

are only differences and traces of traces everywhere” (*Positions*). This means that Hamlet does not exist as a dramatic character as such, with a certain number of features; he exists by virtue of being different from Laertes or Claudius, by means of the traces left in him by other characters, characters who in their own turn are also externalised elements of the whole system of Shakespeare’s plays.

Paradoxically, that type of theatre has an optimistic view of the individual as a being of unlimited possibilities. Following the words of Henry Michaux: “There is not one self. There are not ten selves. There is no self. ME is nothing but a position in equilibrium”, we could say that there is no ideological, limiting axis that can collect all the contradictory aspects of a person because the centre is empty (as testifies Peer Gynt in his soliloquy while peeling an onion). We are inhabited by many beings, different levels of spirituality that lead a parallel existence in a kind of schizo-analytical world whose complexity today may be expressed only by theatre.

François-Michel Pesenti (*Théâtre du point aveugle*) lets his actors dissipate energy on stage; shouting, weeping, going crazy, uttering their own or somebody else’s text, « acting », all under the illusion of doing something important, of participating in the creation of the drama. In the end, it will become clear that what they are doing leads nowhere. There are no characters, no characterisation, no story or conflict. It all comes down to simply being on stage. Again, we have the experience of the theatre in which the main issue is nothing but *passing time on stage*. The Actor is the only material of creation. The sound of his naked flesh becomes the form. Pesenti says of this process: “I do not want the actor to be magnanimous, to give what could be called the food of this art to the audience. Quite the contrary, I want his poetic gesture to break the consciousness of the other. I do not wish that the audience be seduced, but that it recoils, it withdraws, alone into that dark zone of itself it did not even know existed...”

Dealing with the problem of iconoclasm, we are actually dealing with the basic problem of the medium of theatre, one the aesthetic of mainstream readily

neglects. Serving itself freely from other artistic fields, the so-called *cross over* theatre chooses the quickest, most seductive solution by dealing with anything but theatre itself. To cause *implosive* disturbances within the tradition of the medium itself is difficult and this is exactly why the phenomenon of *iconoclastic theatre* – the one Eurokaz recognized, named and promoted – is one of our *least humble* contributions to theatre history of the late twentieth century.

In the aforementioned examples one is dealing with the individual breakthroughs of the artists who have for years been working on the not particularly pleasant fringes of agreed protocols, exposing the ideological pressures of iconic charges, and which Eurokaz has been following in the so-called *heroic stage* of the iconoclastic theatre.

Iconoclasm has recently been boiled down to a few stylistic features, which can be noticed in the work of the *second generation* of iconoclasts, companies such as *PME, Lucky Pierre, Showcase beat le mot, L&O, Gob Squad, Fanny & Alexander* who bring a disregard for the usual categories of *good theatre* and *professional acting* to an extreme. Acting is absent from most of their productions, performers are delivered to the pressures of very low intensity. Everything seems amateurish, awkward, sometimes rough, dilettante. Such an acting style I often call *noble dilettantism*¹¹. The performances can be described as *spending time, directing the void, intensity that doesn't say anything* (Heidegger), *passive theatricalization*.

They also play with abandoned styles and worn out signs, shabby set designs. Refusing to engage in a visual attractiveness, they neglect the laws of market consumption. In the performances of the group *L&O* we are stuck to the glue of the *optimism of the soul* produced in the theatre of the sixties, but always with a warning that the temperature difference is not on our side. What we witness is a cold deconstruction of past thrills.

Showcase beat le mot enjoys conceiving actions that border on the pointless: organizing a congress about Nothing with climate zones into which the audience is

invited to enter so as to join the performers in the well being of a sauna or to relax in an artificial landscape of palm trees.

The bridge becomes wider than the river, to paraphrase Shakespeare.

The performance “It’s easy to criticise ...” by the Canadian group *PME* seems at first glance to be an intellectual trick about the problems of criticism and translation, but this is a false direction, a trap. The diagnostics of their productions want to say how difficult it is today, after Heidegger’s experience of language, to talk and to say nothing (even when we speak nonsense there will be someone who will understand what we say) and to deal with the difficulty of setting up a functional whole whilst at the same time destroying all such associations.

Iconoclastic heroism of the first phase has been reformulated into a density of style that points to the changed, *disillusioned* understanding of the position of theatre. A new stylistic phenomenon has been created, however, today, the semantic field of the term *iconoclasm* seems perhaps too narrow, too rigid, almost technical, to encompass this new *structure of feeling* (R. Williams).

With now already a third generation, *noble dilettantism* has become a widespread and solid market commodity. Many artists today think they have grasped an ideal care-free recipe for making theatre: you do not have to know anything; it suffices to be present on stage and there will be always someone who will inscribe the meaning into it. Rarely will there be someone to warn us that on the construction site of language, the most painful aspect is the silence and the most lasting is the anxiety. *Iconoclastic theatre* fell into its own trap and it seems there is no willingness to reinvent itself. For those of us who saw in it maybe too much, it is a somewhat sad statement, but we move on.

EUROKAZ AND INSTITUTIONS

As much as Eurokaz has worked outside genre limitations, it has also worked outside of the limitations that would be imposed by the usual production circumstances of the artists we invite. Although the Croatian theatre establishment has always wanted to push us towards the margins, into the “alternative” as a safe option, Eurokaz has, from a solitary position, fought from its very beginnings that its programme would be observed in the context of relevant theatre regardless of whether it is produced in independent companies or in institutional theatres. Since the arrival of *new theatre* on European stages, the experimental approach has most often been associated with independent groups and small scale projects, however, depending on the theatre system in a particular country, *new theatre* has in some cases relatively quickly entered into big institutions and soon became the mainstream.

In the past several decades some repertory state theatres and national institutions in Europe (from Vilar and Planchon to Nordey and Martone) have transformed into open systems of theatrical production underlining the uncompromising language of the contemporary as their strongest aesthetical constant not hesitating to use the action Brecht would call “separating the audience”.

Théâtre Gerard Philippe from Paris that we invited in 2000 served as a worthy example. There the young director Stanislas Nordey, familiar to Zagreb's audience from the 9th Eurokaz, had opened doors for many independent companies, unconventional productions and co-productions accomplishing perhaps the largest number of performances in France. A theatre that was in operation throughout the year, numerous activities in collaboration with the everyday habits of the citizens of the Saint-Denis neighborhood, social diversions within formless state structures - these were only some of the moves Nordey used in his attempt to realize a truly public theatre. Although at the time Eurokaz

invited *Théâtre de Saint-Denis* it was not clear that this adventure would not have a happy end¹², his concept provided creative reorganization, flexibility and openness of an institutional theatre which we would have been happy to find in Croatia today.

However, in Croatia the attempts in that direction are continually struck in their beginnings, they are feared more than the phantom threat of local mentality and taste (which is to say – contrary to Brecht – that an audience is one and inseparable): attempts are shy, clumsy and compromising, and when a breakthrough does happen, it falls into an already fully neurotically affected space in which an audience (Split's¹³, for example) is finally “illuminated” with Barnumesque praise of a concoction of doubtful values shared by the so-called European new theatre mainstream. Croatian theatre institutions are bastions of conservatism and even when they proclaim to be public theatres, they are nothing more than party subsidiaries that use sophisticated means to eavesdrop on the mumbling of either the oligarchies of government (Zagreb, Rijeka) or the petit bourgeois mentality (Split, Osijek). If we add to that the unquestioning of the functioning of theatre operation that is treated outside the aesthetic domain, the nauseating answer remains: there is no way out. The Croatian National Theatre from Split under the controversial direction of Mani Gotovac at the time Eurokaz 2000 took place, had arrived at that diagnosis too quickly offering unconvincing premises¹⁴. Their production directed by Eurokaz's “house” director François-Michel Pesenti who had been Zagreb's guest three times by then, appeared as a repertoire excess of unclear direction. Its scandalously surly reception showed that the way to a strong and uncompromising programme concept is a thorny one, requiring courage and cleverness of a special kind.

A two-day symposium on the topic confronted different concepts and provoked discussion about the will to “vote for change” in this segment of cultural life.

As a continuation of this theme, in 2001, for its 15th anniversary, Eurokaz was symbolically opened and closed by two legendary theatre institutions from Berlin and Hamburg that had both at that time survived a controversial change of generations, a change that had properly shaken German theatre audiences.

One of them was *Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz*, which had shared an impressive frame of European history with directors such as Peter Stein, Luc Bondy and Klaus Michael Grüber, who had, however, quite selfishly rejected and undervalued their potential successors of a younger generation. This had led to the crisis of the nineties when there was no other option but to open the theatre to the first available standing at the door: two young avant-garde groups¹⁵ who moved all of their members onto one of the best equipped stages of Europe. Eurokaz invited the unquestionably better half of the newly created ensemble, the dancers gathered around the choreographer Sasha Waltz who managed to produce several excellent productions like *Körper* and *Nobody* which can be described as the best examples of *responsible choreography* on a global level, speaking about the present in a language of pensive playfulness.

Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, a theatre with a long history - tied to Zagreb's *Croatian National Theatre* with the shared architects Fellner & Helmer, had, with the arrival of Tom Stromberg as the director, welcomed a young, still not affirmed generation of German directors who took the stage together with the avant-garde of the eighties, musicians (Heiner Goebbels) and directors of the Flemish wave (like Eurokaz's acquaintance Jan Lauwers). The theatre's new ensemble opened the season with the now legendary *The show must go on!* by choreographer Jérôme Bel: actors, all leading drama actors of "Sprachtheater", simply stand on stage and execute with an unbeatable elegance the most banal actions comparable to revelations of Kafka's Josephine the Singer who is able to draw maximum artistic effect from something as simple as nut cracking. Iconoclasts have thus entered even the toughest fortresses of conservatism,

Eurokaz initiated another collaboration between national theatres and radical artistic concepts, when a joint project of the German “iconoclastic” company *Showcase Beat Le Mot* that our audience had already been acquainted with, and the *National Theatre Bitola* (Macedonia) which had also earlier performed in Eurokaz, was shown in 2003. The *cool pop* of *Showcase* artists faced the anarchical energy of the actors from the *National Theatre Bitola*, one of the best ensembles in this part of Europe. The result of that combination was an impressive repertory excess but which had an amazingly warm welcome and a long life of performances.

That year Eurokaz invited two other interesting projects made in repertory theatres. The actors of the *Croatian National Theatre* in Rijeka encountered a style of radical reductionism as introduced by the Slovenian director Tomi Janežič in his research into the long forgotten notion of catharsis.

Unspectacular and minimal in their gestural material were also the shows of the author-duo Bobo Jelčić and Nataša Rajković who with their *Uncertain Story* made a significant international breakthrough and were working that year within a foreign language for the first time. With the ensemble of *SchauspielHannover* they showed that their methods go beyond language barriers and can quickly establish an intimate interactive relationship with the audience.

Parallel to such international encounters we followed closely the repertory policy of *ZeKaeM* theatre in Zagreb under the direction of the playwright Sobodan Šnajder who invited Croatia's most innovative director Branko Brezovec to mount a trilogy of spectacular dimensions. His *Grand Master of All Villains* and *Kamov, Necography/Moulin Rogue* each employed more than 50 actors on stage (among them also all the theatre workers from firemen and stage hands to the theatre director himself), huge sets and violent music and choreography. While *Master of All Villains*, played in a Brechtian – Meyerhold gestural and constructivist manner, became a paradigm for the social and political reality of Croatia during the whole of the 20th century, *Kamov* employed the genre of musical theatre

consisting of songs belonging to popular Croatian culture from the past 50 years – a strategic decision taken, in an ironic way, from the Hollywood film *Moulin Rouge*. This performance undermined the myth of the damned Croatian poets (poets maudites) by means of a melodrama that removes but at the same time also amplifies the pathos from the theme. The third part of the trilogy *The Fifth Evangelium*, in a coproduction of ZeKaeM with Kampnagel in Hamburg, dealt equally radically and critically with the Croatian past and present, this time by turning the theme of concentration camps into an anarchic vision of the evil which by impressive scenic means attacked all senses of the audience placed on movable tribunes in a suffocating tunnel. This trilogy showed until now the most courageous attempt of Croatian institutional theatre to step out from its long sleep. However, as with all such efforts in this direction, Šnajder's programme policy had a short life and his contract, in the context of the local political intrigues, was not prolonged.

NEW CIRCUS, POPULAR FORMS

In 2003 Eurokaz boarded yet another theme which became unavoidable for anyone wanting to encompass the theatre in its wholeness. This theatre phenomena is classified by a certain pretentious critical topography as on the margins not daring to acknowledge that the so called *popular forms* can be innovative, that they are not at the very end of the chain of aesthetic provocation and restorations of aesthetic norms and that there exists an emphasis of change in every part of this chain.

Although circus is seriously discussed only in the system of emotional relations or degradations and its aesthetic defect results from the lack of interminability of the complex categories of sense and meaning, today, we can confirm the positive status of *new circus*, following Kott's definition, as *the theatre*

of pure iconic signals, giving it a significant place within respectable theatre topics and at the same time keeping its attractiveness and approachability

Eurokaz 2003 dedicated one of its sections to this phenomenon that had developed on the margins parallel with the appearance of *new theatre* of the eighties. Represented in Eurokaz programme by top Australian companies *Acrobat* and *Happy Side Show*, (in 2004 by the French *Cie 111*), we define it as a hybrid form which uses circus techniques not only to show the abilities of the performers in high risk situations by stringing up *circus acts*, but to equally include elements of a theatre dramaturgy in which performers are in dialogue with the director or choreographer, in which characters exist, as well as the story and touching points of different performative disciplines which bring about an authentic and attractive artistic experience.

BACK TO OLD ACQUAINTANCES

In the past three years we turned back on several occasions to old acquaintances who were still creatively on top form and not showing any signs of fatigue. *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio* with the Brussels episode of their cycle *Tragedia Endogonia* dismantles one of the basic issues of contemporary culture: a crisis of tragic consciousness, employed on an impressively grand stylistic and organisational format so different from the early works with which they started at Eurokaz.

La fura dels baus, after their first legendary shows at Eurokaz *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon* came to Zagreb again, this time with their most provocative performance *XXX*. In the meantime they had become versed in making large spectacles of all kinds, from opera, film and digital theatre to opening Olympic Games. To support Eurokaz' theme on "interactivity" in 2004 which included also Felix Ruckert with *Secret Service* and the performance group *Via Negativa*, *La Fura*

brought to us a show of decisive political and social demands which had by its violent sexuality upset media as well as the police officers in many of the places they had performed. It could be recoded and read as an excuse for an interactive pseudo-pornographic play in which the audience, by its own choice, followed by convenience the challenges of de Sade's radical world.

Another reminiscence of the past thrills: after early sensational works of the *Flemish wave*, the Belgium theatre has been absent from Eurokaz programme for a long time, for the reasons already elaborated in previous sections. The artists who had set up formal parameters for the majority of European theatre and dance in the previous twenty years, had been following artistically different paths. Jan Lauwers fell asleep stuck in the same style that followed the ever present Flemish/Dutch matrix of hysterical individuals coming together from time to time in a group choreography. Jan Fabre, as an unquestionable artistic authority was bathing in predictable stylistic features which mannerism reveals an irresponsible and by now, rather boring narcissism.

In the context of Flemish and Dutch theatre, it was more interesting to avoid the rules of the Flemish market's arrogance and with our programme in 2002 to try and look for a non-binding Difference which we found in the peace of the children's gaze (Josse de Pauw's *üBUNG*), in the soothing wisdom of the shadow of a palm tree (*Hans Hof Ensemble's Geluk*) or in the analytical slowness of conflicts born from the encounters between a man and a material (*De Daders*).

However, one artist from the first generation of the *Flemish wave* has successfully managed to last artistically over more than two decades surprising us ever anew by an ability to continually reinvent herself. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in her solo *Once* invited to Eurokaz in 2005 challenges her own choreographic praxis with a combination of nostalgia and engagement, establishing a new performative courage on a global scale. The social component which unfolds in dialogue with the music of Joan Baez appears for the first time in

her work making this piece susceptible to the context which Eurokaz tried to research into with its 2005 programme.

THEATRE CONSERVATISM

Eurokaz 2005 opened itself to performances that rely on the role of their immediate social surroundings, whether in a thematic or a constructive sense. This surrounding could also be described by the wider term of *neighbourhood*; in a daily life which denies utopian horizons and the pathos of breakthrough, replacing criticism with delay and translating social stimuli in a way that precedes merely working with unprivileged communities.

Eurokaz 2005 offered a different kind of social and performative energy, one which opens the limits of an insensitive theatrical professionalism and reduces our social essence to impressive scenes concerning the exchange of human material that can, again, after a long neurotic series, astonish as a psychotic catalyst of artistic creation and innovation.

The international guests who in this context collect a street energy (Bruno Beltrao, Abou Lagraa), disperse a transparent eavesdropping on community (Arne Sierens, Emma Dante, Fratelli Mancuso), or re-edit contemporary mythologies (DJ Spooky, Béla Pintér), were joined at the rear by two Croatian examples of “using” neighbourhood: Zahtila’s *Labin Art Express* and Čokrić’s *Šušur Bol* from the island of Brač.

In this way, in its nineteenth edition, Eurokaz focused on innovations in the space of *theatre conservatism*. It used similar methods and assumptions as in its previous years’ research on *new circus* based on the premise that innovations are possible also within those genres dominated by a certain invulnerability of their viewpoints. In the case of innovative, avant-garde theatre, parallel to the processes of the destruction of familiar viewpoints, the thinking structures and artistic

expressions that support and classify those viewpoints are also being destroyed. In the case of *theatre conservatism*, in particular however, the immovability of such assumptions, are, to say the least, intriguing.

We could define *theatre conservatism* by the stasis of a mythological matrix: non-tragic, and therefore, an endemic reductionism. On the horizontal plane, moral coverage (when needed, also a horizontal homogenization), and the family and teleological hierarchy on the vertical planes. So if in the social sense we are allowed to use the term *conservative revolution*, Eurokaz tried to research if something like this is also possible in the field of theatre.

We come to the year 2006 and the 20th Eurokaz. Having put ourselves neatly into a book, or, as Nikola Šop says: “having entered into myself, I shut myself by myself”, there is still much willingness for new beginnings. For its 20th celebratory edition Eurokaz marks a change in its programme policy by abandoning the usual practice of inviting touring pieces, in favour of producing and coproducing projects with artists and institutions from Croatia and neighbouring countries Slovenia and Hungary. New international connections and contexts that will be established by means of authentic working assumptions, should offer our theatre institutions the experiences which they will not be able to give up so easily.

Ideas that open pathways are fragile; resistance against them is historically accountable. First, we must persist, accepting the burden of imposing a context onto something that would prosper much better on its own, and then we must believe that the first big bangs of *genius* will coalesce into a navigable sequence of *talented* achievements, enduring at the edge of their own death. To put it simply, our task could be nicely condensed into Paul Valéry's: to *feel the strength of weak ideas*.

Gordana Vnuk

¹ *Eurokaz*'s first edition received the financial support from the cultural programme of *Universiade 87* (Students' Olympic Games) held in Zagreb in June that year. It was the only initiative that survived *Universiade* and became a regular manifestation. Its main funders until this day are the City of Zagreb and Croatian Ministry of Culture.

² *Young People's Theatre Days* – an international theatre festival programmed and organized twice a year by the theatre group *Coccolempocco* (founded by Branko Brezovec) of which the author of this text was a member. *The Days* .. took place in Zagreb from 1974 – 1977.

³ *Young People's Theatre Days of Dubrovnik* – traditional *Dubrovnik Festival* invited *Coccolempocco* to move the *The Days* ... from Zagreb to Dubrovnik and gave it a limited time span (10 days) to programme international innovative theatre (something like a festival within a festival). *The Days* ... lived in Dubrovnik a short life of three years (1980-1982) when they were removed from the programme. *Dubrovnik Days* .. created an emphasis on productions for open spaces and invited artists such as *Bread and Puppet*, *Els Comediants*, *Radais*, *Tuxedo Moon*, *Farid Chopel*, *Soon 3*, *Dog Troep*, etc. It collaborated closely with *Polverigi Festival*.

⁴ *IFSK (International Festival of Student Drama Groups)* alongside with student festivals in Parma, Erlangen, Istanbul, Nancy and Wrocław in the sixties was one of the most important meeting points of alternative theatre practice. It started in Zadar in 1961 and then moved to Zagreb from 1962 until 1973.

⁵ That suspicion from Croatian theatre circles has followed *Eurokaz* almost till today. It is interesting that most of Zagreb's directors and actors did not come to see the productions presented at *Eurokaz*, and there was a time when students of the Academy of Dramatic Arts were warned to keep as far away as possible from the *unhealthy* influence.

⁶ This latter was slightly more difficult. Although *Eurokaz* has invested itself into symposiums, round-tables, and discussions, many years will pass until the appearance of relevant texts about the festivals' productions and a new *fraction* of critics who were, I dare to say, educated at *Eurokaz*. Croatian theory and criticism simply did not know how to write about what they saw at *Eurokaz* in the beginning, and found it difficult to describe the presented; it lacked the contemporary concepts and referential apparatus to responsibly grasp the arrival of *new theatre*. Still, the reception of *Eurokaz* in theoretical and critical circles (there was never a problem with the audience's reception) is a sad story that requires a text and complete analysis on its own, and is not the topic of this text.

⁷ Although *discoveries* are an important part of *Eurokaz*'s orientation, there is a continuous determination to give support to *lasting names* of world theatre, names that are *starting points* of directions and trends, and so simultaneously the creators and the outcasts of those trends. *Eurokaz* presented strong artistic personalities like H. J. Syberberg, Achim Freyer, Jan Fabre, Robert Wilson, Gerald Thomas and others; there would have been even more had there been a financial will for these especially demanding productions.

⁸ In July 1981 a group of people visiting *Polverigi Festival* gathered in the garden of Villa de Polverigi and enjoying spaghetti and wine, talked about a common European theatre spirit, the need to meet and exchange ideas and projects. They were Philippe Tiry, Patrick Sommer, Steve Austen, Velia Papa, Roberto Cimetta, Jean-Pierre Thibaudat, Branko Brezovec, Gordana Vnuk. This informal gathering showed the necessity to meet on a regular basis. Already the next meeting, regarded as constitutive in Paris in October that same year brought together about 60 participants. The network that has retained its original name of the Informal European Theatre Meeting until this day grew rapidly. Each year plenary meetings are held in a different country.

⁹ Soc. Raffaello Sanzio is today the star of world festivals everywhere, from Canada to Australia. At the time of their first productions in the mid-eighties however, they were labelled with slurs such as *amateurs* or *dilettantes* by the same people who co-produce their productions today.

¹⁰ Analysing iconoclastic theatre, defined in these terms, we can rely on the anti-psychological theories of Deleuze and Guattari who, in their book *The Anti-Oedipus*, write of the fluxes of desire. Our unconscious is too vast to have an object of desire. “One could rather say that desire lacks subject, or that desire lacks a stable subject...” (*The Anti-Oedipus*). Society imposes objects of desire in order to implement repression. The unconscious does not ask what the meaning of the object is but what is its usage. The unconscious does not create images, but the energy of desire: it does not produce the concrete, but produces the production, the mechanism of the unformed. The desire does not ask: *What does it mean?*, but *How does it work?*. The meanings belong to the reading. Every codification is a system of ideological traps, for “the imaginary consciousness makes nothingness, the absence of essence, its object” (Durand). The obligation of this kind of theatre is “not to deliver reality, but to create an allusion to the conceivable that cannot be represented” (Lyotard). Iconoclasm and its theoretical base were discussed on several occasions at *Eurokaz* round tables, also a book titled *Disturbing (the) Image* was published on the occasion of a festival of iconoclastic theatre I curated and organized at *Chapter Arts Centre* in Cardiff, 1998.

¹¹ E.G. Craig, having in mind the notion of the super-puppet, conceived after the example of some theatre forms of the Far East, as follows: „Naturalism comes when artificiality has become obsolete and boring. But do not forget that there is also a *noble artificiality*”. Closing the access to his inner being, whilst emphasising the Craigean “actor’s impersonal magic”, the iconoclastic actor usually offers a single gestural line for the character, leaving it to the spectator to do the rest.

¹² The state did not want to support Nordey and his efforts with appropriate increase of financial means (for example, Nordey, in order to make the theatre a truly public theatre accessible to everyone, reduced the ticket price considerably what caused financial difficulties). Nordey did not prolong his contract and is today working as a freelance director.

¹³ Eurokaz is commenting on the situation in the Croatian National Theatre in Split at the time when Mani Gotovac was its director.

¹⁴ This text was written in 2000 and was dealing with Croatian theatres at that time. Analysis of today’s situation, since the direction of many theatres has changed, would in some cases involve other names and other examples.

¹⁵ The direction shared between Sasha Waltz and Thomas Ostermeier lasted until 2005 when they split and Sasha Waltz moved out from the Schaubuhne with her ensemble.