

# GOLDSMITHS Research Online

Performance

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## Don Juan Who?

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Image on the cover: John Kirby, *Untitled 2005–6*, oil on canvas, 78¾×59in (courtesy of Flowers Gallery, London)

*Never mind the disagreeable things that  
may happen. Let us think of the pleasant ones.*

Molière DON JUAN OR THE STATUE AT THE FEAST



## **DON JUAN. WHO?**

a co-production with Mladinsko Theatre and Athletes of the Heart

**directed by:** Anna Furse

**dramaturg:** Željko Hrs

**cast:**

Damjana Černe

Željko Hrs

Marko Mlačnik

Tanya Myers

Matej Recer

Giovanna Rogante

Marie-Gabrielle Rotie

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Damjana Černe, Anna Furse, Željko Hrs, Tibor Hrs Pandur, Marko Mlačnik, Tanya Myers, Matej Recer, Giovanna Rogante

**with contributions from:**

Maruša Geymayer-Oblak and Ruth Posner

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**translation to Slovenian:** Tibor Hrs Pandur

**translation to Italian:** Giovanna Rogante

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**realised by:** Sandi Mikluž

**costume design:** Mateja Benedetti

**composer and sound design:** Nick Parkin

**lighting design:** Mischa Twitchin

**video:** Janez Janša

**language consultant:** (Slovenian): Mateja Dermelj

**executive producer (for Athletes of the Heart):** Mik Flood

**producer (for Athletes of the Heart):** Emma Haughton, ArtsAgenda

**producer (for Mladinsko Theatre):** Tina Malič



**stage manager:** Mitja Trampuš

**lighting operator:** Matjaž Brišar

**sound operator:** Marijan Sajovic

**video technician:** Dušan Ojdanič

**wardrobe:** Nataša Recer, Andreja Kovač, Maja Švagelj, Slavica Janošević

**costume makers:** Jože Koprivec, Marija Boruta

**make-up artist and hair stylist:** Barbara Pavlin

**props master:** Dare Kragelj

**set construction:** Mladinsko Theatre workshops

**music on the recordings:** Matej Recer – accordion,  
Marjeta Skoberne – cello

**composer of Mon Dieu:** Charles Dumont

**film extracts used:** *The Private Life of Don Juan*, 1934, directed by Alexander Korda;

*Crin-Blanc*, 1952, directed by Albert Lamorisse

**With special thanks to: Matjaž Berger, Barbra Egervary, Peter Hulton, John Kirby and Flowers Gallery, Dušan Ojdanič, Nataša Recer and Marjeta Skoberne**

Scenes: *Myth: Venus and Vulcan – The Fall – The Seduction Plot – The Don Juan in Our Minds – Seduction 1 – What She Is Thinking, What He Is Thinking and What He Is Prepared to Give Her – Seduction 2 – What They Are Made of – Seduction 3 – What Don Juan Did in the War – Seduction 4 – Drag King – Seduction – What He Wants / What She Wants – The Raw Deal – If He had Stayed ... – Separation – Dolores, Don Juan's Faithful Steed, a Perspective – Friends\_re-united.com.*

Don Juan is forever in search of perfection, in other words something that does not exist in the world. And time and again women want to prove to him, and also to himself, that it is possible for him to find in the world everything he is searching for. The misfortune of these women is that their horizons are worldly – only when they suspect, to their horror, that he is not searching for life but yearning for death, do they recoil from him.

Ödön Von Horváth preface to  
DON JUAN COMES BACK FROM THE WAR



DON JUAN. WHO?  
A WORKING MANIFESTO

by Anna Furse May 2007

- Theatre is poetry
- Physical theatre is a state of mind
- The terms 'dance' and 'theatre' become meaningless distinctions when the performer is embodied, expressive and scenographic
- We will thus call our work 'theatre' though to some it will seem more like dance or dance-theatre and we will not care for the definitions
- The actor is a creative artist
- Language is visceral
- Characters are formed on stage in front of the audience
- We have to manifest our differences
- We have to manifest our similarities
- The Chorus is a perfect strategy for ensemble ethics
- The Chorus of individuals struggling for consensus is a model of democracy
- We are always representing and showing that we are playing at pretending
- No theatrical illusion that isn't at the same time prepared to reveal its mechanisms
- No décor, only scenography
- From the functional and the essential the poetry of the theatre is forged
- Resist the literal. Look instead for how our minds are really working
- Be prepared to sweat, jump, run, fall, cry, be naked
- Love irony
- Strategy: Seduce the audience letting them know all the while that you know and they know what's going on
- Let the body reveal the subtext
- Let the imagination run riot
- Find the passion
- Enjoy the joke
- Play the game
- Learn the cha-cha





*Mainline eighteenth-century thought thus came to regard sex as thoroughly natural, indeed as forming the soul of nature itself. ... In real life and in fiction, amorous encounters were cast time and again in the metaphors of a war of the sexes, in which it was the male role to contest, lay siege, overcome and gain a victory.*

Roy Porter LIBERTINISM AND PROMISCUITY

## DON JUAN LEGEND AND TEXTS

Anna Furse Charente, August 2007

Don Juan is a legendary fictional libertine, whose story has been retold by authors of plays, poems, novels, operas, and films over five centuries. The name is used figuratively as a synonym for ‘womaniser’, and thousands of websites will attest to the idea of a Don Juan as a virile seducer. As an existential anti-hero he represents Man for whom conventional morality and religious authority hold no sway, hence his irrepressible need to escape marriage and reproduction. Psychoanalytically he is the *puer aeternus* (eternal boy) who can never let intimacy mature into relationship and who has a compulsion to keep returning to the seduction game (*repetition neurosis*) where he can replay out his opening moves, always in control. He arguably survives most vigorously in contemporary popular culture as James Bond, a high-tech version of the swashbuckling hero – sexy, adventurous, invincible – and always on the move.

In the Don Juan legend, he seduced (or raped) a young noblewoman and killed her father. Later, he invites this man’s posthumous stone statue to dine with him. The statue/ghost father agrees, then appearing as the harbinger of Don Juan’s death. The statue offers to shake Don Juan’s hand, and thereupon drags him to Hell. There Don Juan meets The Devil who tells him that everyone in Hell is cast in a role, and presents him with a Jester’s suit, telling him that he would make an excellent fool. Don Juan, insulted, protests that he is unrivalled as a man who has made a thousand sexual conquests. Intrigued by this claim, The Devil tells him that if he can correctly name one conquest, he would not have to wear the suit. Thus begins a parade of women not one of whom Don Juan can name correctly. Finally, one woman stands before him in tears. Struck by her true love, he looks into her eyes, turns to The Devil and takes the suit.

The legend has spawned many versions over the centuries, too numerous to include all here. But to give some idea: most authorities agree that the first recorded tale of Don Juan is the play *The Trickster of Seville and The Stone Guest* by Tirso de Molina (publication date uncertain, 1615–1625). Molière’s comedy *Dom Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre* was written in 1665, and in 1736 Goldoni wrote *Don Giovanni Tenorio, Ossia Il Dissoluto*. Another famous eighteenth century version is of course Lorenzo da Ponte’s libretto for the Mozart opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). In the nineteenth century the Romantic poet Lord Byron’s famous epic version of *Don Juan* (1821) is considered his masterpiece, though it remained unfinished at his death. Other significant versions in that century include: Pushkin’s play *The Stone Guest* (1830) and Alexandre Dumas’s play *Don Juan de Marañá* (1831).

What do you expect of me?

*Seduction is the habit of the lifetime.*

Tirso de Molina

THE TRICKSTER OF SEVILLE AND THE STONE GUEST

In 1843 the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard discusses Mozart's interpretation of Don Giovanni in *Either/Or*, in which he dialectically opposes ethics as boring and dull to the irresponsible bliss of aesthetics. In 1861 another poet takes up the theme: Baudelaire in his *Don Juan Aux Enfers*. At the dawn of the twentieth century George Bernard Shaw's play *Man and Superman* (1903) includes a substantial text *Don Juan in Hell* in Act 3. In the same period we have Guillaume Apollinaire's novel *Les Exploits d'un Jeune Don Juan* (1907) and in 1910 Gaston Leroux's novel *Phantom of the Opera*, which includes an opera called *Don Juan Triumphant*.

The Second World War period re-examines the figure in relation to war – Ödön von Horváth's *Don Juan Returns from the War* (1936) – and existentially – Albert Camus representing Don Juan as an archetypal absurd man in the essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Interestingly in this same period two women approached the theme, though lesser known: Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *After the Death of Don Juan* (1938) and Suzanne Lilar's play *Le Burlador* (1946). Ingmar Bergman's play *Don Juan* in 1955 was followed by his 1960 film *The Devil's Eye*. Other cinematic versions of note include: the 1926 silent film *Don Juan* starring John Barrymore, *Adventures of Don Juan* starring Errol Flynn (1949), and in 1934 *The Private Life of Don Juan*, Douglas Fairbanks Senior's last film, which we have quoted in this production. Other films include Jan Švankmajer's animation version *Don Juan* in 1969 and Roger Vadim's gender-reversal *If Don Juan Were a Woman* starring Brigitte Bardot (1973).

*I have never known happiness. It was not love for  
Woman that delivered me into her hands: it was fatigue,  
exhaustion. When I was a child, and bruised my head  
against a stone, I ran to the nearest woman and cried  
away my pain against her apron. When I grew up, and  
bruised my soul against the brutalities and stupidities  
with which I had to strive, I did again what I had done  
as a child.*

George Bernard Shaw  
DON JUAN IN HELL from MAN AND SUPERMAN

Contemporary film versions include *Don Juan De Marco* starring Johnny Depp in the title role with Marlon Brando (1995) and Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* (2005) in which the middle-aged, crumpled, Don Johnson protagonist, mooches on his couch watching the Douglas Fairbanks movie. Finally in this non-exhaustive list, we might cite among others Peter Handke's 2004 novel *Don Juan (As Told by Himself)*, Joni Mitchell's song and album *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977) and most recently in 2007: Douglas Carlton Abrams's novel *The Lost Diary of Don Juan*. All of which suggest that as an archetype, whether as macho rogue/seducer/careless lover/immoralist/free spirit/existential hero/marriage breaker/sex addict or just the stuff of erotic imagination, Don Juan endures ...

*... it is possible to construe women's inclusion as willing participants in their own seduction as a sleight-of-hand disguising their exclusion from the language which performs it ... Stories and novels are bent, like operas, on seduction. They are out to cajole complicity from readers imagined in postures of mutinous independence. So long as the narrative of male seduction ignores the woman as its reader, or at best assumes her to be androgynous, the text will have closed in on itself, protecting its embalmed view of men's and women's libido....*

Jane Miller THE SEDUCTION OF WOMEN

## COMING TOGETHER WITH DON JUAN

Stephen Lowe Nottingham, July 2007

In Japanese Buddhism there is an expression – *Itai Doshin* – that embodies the central aspiration for the creation of a truly democratic society. Roughly translated as – *Many in body, one in mind*. The *many in body* celebrates the unique individuality that we all possess, the *one in mind* – that we might also, by respecting each other’s uniqueness, search together for the central life-affirming values that we can all celebrate. It is a direct challenge to the duality that still dominates so-much of Western philosophy – the split between the ‘existential’ and ‘essential’, the individual versus society, Good versus Evil, and Us versus Them.

The dream of all this ‘coming together’ is what in theatre we call *ENSEMBLE*. When ensemble occurs, the model of life for all of us is revealed and the dualities fall away. And somehow our hearts are touched.

Of course it is rare, and difficult to attain. But the challenge is there. How do we come, without sacrifice or compromise, to *ONE MIND*? As a playwright you’d expect me to say the initial creation of a ‘text’ is the heart, the magnet, the central inspiration, which hopefully will draw the company together. And of course I will! But an equally challenging way to work is to enter on the epic journey of the collective piece. The project *Don Juan. Who?* set off with the most challenging of desires – to build bridges between artists across the cultural and linguistic divides, and to focus on one of the most provocative of

*Maybe the best proof that the language is patriarchal is that it oversimplifies feeling. I’d like to have at my disposal complicated hybrid emotions, Germanic train-car constructions like, say ‘the happiness that attends disaster’.*

*Or: ‘the disappointment of sleeping with one’s fantasy.’*

Jeffrey Eugenides MIDDLESEX

our common myths – that of the priapic man himself – the expression of a force that permeates all our histories. And, courageously, to leave open what the final meaning might be, to enter into unknown territory. Literally. The group dived into the myriad possibilities of cyberspace, exploring the dangerous freedom of a medium where players could hide, and risk, create and re-create themselves – *the modern equivalent of Don Juan's Masque Balls*. There are the first sightings of a text of great integrity and wit, and then in the next stage, the courageous meeting face to face, words fuse with a newfound physicality of expression and gradually fragments of potential meaning or rather pulses towards deeper imaginings began to surface. A process at all times of uncertainty, since initial certainty would not have been a true journey, holding out the possibility of only fixed traditional destinations.

*Don Juan* is a significant journey for all of us including most centrally we the audience. What is envisaged by this work demands to be shared. And in that desire there lies at heart a belief, that we can communicate with each other, that there is hope – and that perhaps even, if only for a time, we, makers and witnesses, can become one together. And perhaps that old devil Don Juan can take us all on his legendary horse and gallop us into unknown hills, and unimagined cities.

*Don Juan is in perpetual motion. He cannot stop.*

*If anything, masculinity is experienced as a 'lack'. It is something that you have to have which means that you don't 'have' it. And you can 'have' it only by doing it, in the sense that to know that you have to it, you have to have an outward manifestation of it, and outside guarantee that you have to acquire again and again.*

*In other words, it is only other people [who] can guarantee your masculinity. Or, you need this guarantee and feel you have to have it in order to survive.*

Adrienne Rich  
ABOUT MEN



## From Cyberspace to Theatre Space

Anna Furse Ljubljana, July 2007

Like so many things we make, this project began with the smallest of ingredients – a word and a hunch. 1997: in conversation with Željko about men and war and sexual politics, I learnt the word *inat* that translates amongst other things as ‘pugnacious male stubborn pride’ – the stuff of warmongering. Our dialogues subsequently continued in the cyberspace that was beginning to take root in all our ordinary lives. I was then struck by the effect this virtual space might have on our sense of who we are as *presences* for each other, and how ideas of gender might shift as we evolve with new technology. The idea for *Don Juan. Who?* took root.

The next step was the creation of our private *cyberstudio*, intended to mimic all the requisites of an ideal theatre base: studio, reflective space, research archive. I cast and then invited the geographically dispersed company to meet here regularly to explore themes of men and masculinity via the range of Don Juans in literature and how He survives as a contemporary archetype. Each week I would set a theme and writing structure and then sit back and enjoy the dissolution of my directorial guidance – for the most part, only occasionally stepping in and identifying myself to refocus the work.

There was a certain pleasure (that Helene Cixous has called ‘*jouissance*’ – an untranslatable word combining joy and orgasm) in this collective, anonymous writing process. As words tumbled in front of our eyes, we learnt to hide in the screen, to nest, to flirt, to challenge, to argue, to flaunt, to cry and laugh ‘out loud’, to cheat, to lie, and most vitally, to masquerade and mimic each other in an environment in which there was, by design, no gender stability. Most of us admit to metaphoric cross-dressing. Many have now forgotten our individual authorship, such was the writing-pleasure-trance that we plunged into, losing ourselves as *cyborgs* for a brief hour or two each week. We collaborated in building our text, its poetry and its rhythms by removing censors and allowing ourselves to be interrupted by the unpredictable timing of words becoming visible as dictated by our on-screen tool. We learnt to play with interruption. We became, accidentally, a Chorus.

In the summer of 2006, we met and read some raw material out loud. Surprise. We’d written words worth speaking, words that had theatrical potential. In the end we had 500 pages to press into dramaturgical shape. We eventually began rehearsals in a unique way, holding in our hands a text we had voiced together, perhaps a new version of collective creation.

*Men go to their caves and women talk.*

John Gray MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS



If we began with an idea for a work that would be about (Balkan) Men, what have we come to? Something else of course. Our performance is certainly more generic, more messy, intimate and personal. A piece made of pieces of all of us, of the self-conscious exploration of our experiences and fantasies of Don Juanisms – not only seducer and *puer aeternus* but existential anti-hero. What is the mechanism of the Don Juan narratives? What's He made of? What's He jumping away from? What is Freedom? How do Women feel about Men today and *vice versa*? We have wrestled with this from all sides, culturally, imaginatively, confessionally, psychoanalytically. "How can I have an authentic feeling in this culture?" one of us complained. If we are made of so many received and mediated ideas, are we also, maybe, making Love? ...

We return to The Scene: a silverscreen cliché of seduction and abandonment. Around this coil other emotions and conflicts within ourselves and with the opposite (sex). For our Don Juan actually doesn't exist and nor does She. As He says in the end, He's a construct, but a construct nonetheless that, despite any sexual-political changes in the last decades, manages to survive in millions of website-fantasies and, as we've discovered, lurking somewhere perhaps in all our minds.

The rest is a history germane to a co-production across two countries with such distinct theatrical traditions, political backgrounds, cultures, funding systems, audiences, artistic formations, rehearsal approaches. Our collaboration has

*Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range  
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;  
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange  
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,  
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;  
Men have all these resources, we but one,  
To love again, and be again undone.*

Lord Byron DON JUAN

survived many obstacles, not the least funding pressures. We never lost our nerve, nor the integrity of how this project needed to evolve, over time, with the right kind of laboratory conditions in both cyber and real space.

For me it has been vitally about the privilege of working with an ensemble of outstanding performers – brave, physically inexhaustible, imaginatively alive, intellectually rigorous and who take responsibility for themselves and for the creation as a whole. It has also been about a long gestation both in research and devising, an opportunity all theatre artists crave and rarely get.

Our governments are withdrawing support for culture. Theatre is seriously threatened. Forced to reinvent ourselves, co-productions such as ours might become not only desirable but imperative. We have much to learn from working together, for it is in the pragmatics of everyday production that we discover the precise details of our differences and how to grapple together for a common purpose. I wish to thank every individual artist, manager, translator, dramaturg, producer, administrator, technician, seamstress and cleaner in both countries who has participated in bringing *Don Juan. Who?* to life. And I hope that as our audience you might find even a small part of yourself and the Don Juan in your own imagination in our work.

*If Don Giovanni can be said to be about anything, it is, among other things, about the dangers of over-reaching. Faust loses his soul by impudently using it to purchase omniscience. Don Giovanni spends his soul trying to assert sexual omnipotence. Both characters come to grief by failing to recognize that human powers are bounded and that the identifiability of an individual personality is annihilated by the attempt to include everything.*

Jonathan Miller Introduction to THE DON GIOVANNI BOOK



## The Virtual Gym

Željko Hrs Ljubljana, July 2007

Through the numerous conversations with Anna about the project *Don Juan*. Who? it soon became clear that it would have two phases, the virtual and 'the real'. The virtual space had to be a space where we could meet regardless of the geographical dispersion of each member, because the ensemble would be and is international. So I worked on the logistics for the construction of this virtual gym, which consisted of three elements: an open-coded program called *upstage*; a kind of a virtual stage that enables the ensemble to meet either in the form of avatars, which move on the 'stage' – screen, or to be present only in the dialogue box and completely anonymous. In the beginning we also considered using webcams, but as it turned out they were unnecessary. The second element to make up our password-protected virtual space were the wiki pages, where everyone could publish their written contributions, commentaries, add internal or external links – basically a space intended for work in-between our live sessions. The third element was a sort of a common limbo, an archive where we stored the saved material from all our live writing sessions, including visual material, reference articles and documents in their uncut form. This virtual studio was completed in the autumn of 2005. Our first sessions were exciting and invigorating. We were like a bunch of kids in a strange new playground for which the laws and rules had yet to be invented. The ensemble's computer skills varied greatly, but with time everybody improved.

The core of our research together was without a doubt *upstage*: initially the onscreen space onto which we entered as avatars (which one chose or created oneself and where one could change the background and props), in which we sometimes found ourselves all together and that was a lot of fun. But it actually turned out that the most important medium for us was the dialogue box, where each of us could be present in word form. The word is my body as I enter into the screen. The word signals my point of view, my emotional state, my view of the world.

*“as I touch the keys, I jump into darkness  
as I touch the keys, I feed myself  
a new form of a lonely nearness  
when I touch the keys, I am not I  
my flesh melts, evaporates and am only words  
when I touch the keys, I realise, that through them I can only*

*express fragments of my thoughts and emotions  
to touch is to echo, the touch is a word and different from a word  
it tells stories, feelings, longings ...”  
(from the 24th live writing session, 29/9/2006)*

Words flowed through the screen, sometimes frenetically, sometimes recklessly, sometimes just poised on the lookout, when only the cursor pulsed into nothing and announced the next torrent of words. The emotional charge one could feel from the rhythm of repeated words or the ‘silence’, that is, the absence of words was incredible. The stream of words was the collective result of our presence, without a guide to guide us. Everybody had to be prepared for constant adaptation and had to let their thoughts be forced into another direction, contrary to their original intention. This openness and readiness to subsume your ego for the collective together with the technology of writing itself (where words fall into a common stream with a slight time shift, forming unexpected meanings) produced a new alloy composed of ten points of view. For everybody involved it was a remarkable experience and a test. It wasn’t always easy because none of us ever ventured to write a play online before. And not everybody stayed the course ...

By the end of the eighteen-month research period we ended up with a mountain of words. Five hundred pages of a verbal diarrhoea amidst which diamonds shone. Even during the group sessions Anna and I were sifting the material. An analogy with sifting river mud in gold mining seems appropriate. The mountain was shrinking: from the first sifting we got to three hundred and twenty seven pages of material with great potential. The second sifting yielded two hundred and two pages of a structure without dialogue. In the final phase of the working draft we held in our hands seventy five pages of text. This was our starting point when we entered into the ‘real’ space. We knew that the text would have to be cut no matter how painful such an operation might get. And now, after seven weeks of rehearsals, we hold not only in our hands, but already in our minds, forty seven pages. Approximately ten percent of everything that we have written. A ten percent outcome, then. *Not bad, not bad*, as Don Juan would say.

*The word phallus comes from Greek. The Latin was fascinum, which had the associated meaning of ‘magical spirit’ and this is the derivation that most dictionaries prudishly gives for the modern word ‘fascinate’.*

Reay Tannahill  
SEX IN HISTORY

The process of co-mingling in virtual space as we wrote together has, in a very special way, connected all the participants. The virtual space was a global reference space, the beginning of a dynamic dramatic process, the search for a word that might articulate your thoughts, the possibility of becoming someone else, to use masks and mimicry: the basic tools of acting used through the microcosm of the word. This collective experience has continued via different means in the search for a theatrical form in 'real' space, where physical action substitutes psychology as a foundation from which the word can spring.

*The majority of great heroines and prima donnas, in Western tradition, have been abandoned women. Even the word 'heroine' reflects that tradition. It derives from Ovid's Heroides or Heroic Epistles, the classic book in which fifteen famous women, from Penelope to Sappho, write letters of passion and despair to the men who have left them. Again and again the pattern is repeated: the lover stamps his image on the woman's heart and goes; she stays, pursues him with her thoughts, and gradually turns her sense of abandonment into a way of life. Ovid acknowledges no other kind of heroine ... It was only with the rise of the libertine, however, that the modern abandoned woman really came into her own. For the business of the libertines is precisely to make as many abandoned women as he can.*

Lawrence Lipking DONNA ABANDONNATA

# TOUCHING GLASS

Tibor Hrs Pandur



I dance through your spaces blind  
And if I break something I masturbate  
Because I don't know what I'm breaking  
And even if I don't break anything I masturbate  
I love not feeling my own touch

I finger your room as if touching you  
I imagine you alone in your body  
Alone with your pleasures  
And pain, I imagine

I imagine you alone in your touch  
I imagine your touch inevitably clean  
I imagine you with great expectations  
As the first morning you can remember  
Unattainably immaculate  
Close yet unborn  
As the storm that's coming but never comes  
As these tears tomorrow

I wanted to send you something beautiful and simple  
Do you know how we kiss when you leave?  
I drink from your glass





To be faithful to one woman  
means neglecting the others.  
My feelings are so  
wide-ranging and extensive,  
I'd have all the women share them.  
But they, alas, can't grasp this fine conception;  
my generous nature they call deception.

Mozart DON GIOVANNI (libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte) Act II, scene I



## PERFORMERS ON DON JUAN ...

Here and now, in this moment I am Don Juan, but only in my head. I like myself, I'm a very beautiful man ...

In my body and voice I am Doña Juana, I speak, feel and seduce as Doña Juana. I'm a double personality: simultaneously the seducer and the seduced. I travel on this narrow path and think to myself: in the present moment I find only two kinds of intelligence exciting; on the one hand studying, researching this personality, forms, concepts, and on the other I'm excited by things that flow through me, from the depths of my soul. I find that 'withholding knowledge' is a burden.

Where's the sense of it all? We research as much as we are able to and can understand, although we can never understand completely.

It seems to me that it is sometimes useful to look through the eyes of our specimen, and then maybe we can comprehend and see what they see.

DAMJANA ČERNE

Just as in our text we say Don Juan is "like Schrödinger's cat, a fantastic theorem that you can puzzle over, a phenomenon which refuses to be caught, seen, trapped by the eye of the consciousness of Man" our performance at this stage of development is elusive, still a palette of infinite possibilities *vis* how the wave function of the working process will crumble into one event. So until it happens before an audience, it remains like the cat "dead and alive at the same time". As Anna observes, opens, guides, builds, corrects, resonates, reflects on why, how, and what is happening between seven differently dressed/undressed subjects during their interaction with each other, the space, sound, music, and light, we are thankfully far from the established paradigm of twenty-first century theatre where it is assumed that 'good text/good actors' are enough and where direction and experimentation are doomed. We continue to persist instead, as Nietzsche would say, "To have the courage to be unfit for one's own time."

MARKO MLAČNIK

Invited by Anna to join this fascinating, anonymous and collective dialogue pulsing across cyberspace, the Don Juan in my mind revealed herself/himself ripe in contradictions, challenging my 'politically correct' self-held notions of sexual relations; desire versus reason, control versus surrender, freedom versus responsibility. Don Juan: a

demonic threat to status quo, an enemy to the possessed and the possessor, an irritant to people like myself seeking security in the known. Here in Ljubljana, we are bridging cultures, gender and language and our text are becoming physically embodied. As a woman, mother, wife, sister, friend how do I make this story of Don Juan my own? I begin to see how the clichés lie locked in my own physicality ...

My wish? As *Athletes of the Heart* I hope we touch the capacity of the heart to move into the unknown beyond territory, possession, national identity and time.

TANYA MYERS

*For me every man is Don Juan, until he is proved innocent. What does this quote from our text mean?*

Am I guilty just by being? Do I have to fall in love with every woman that happens to slip into my bed? What about those who walked out on me? This happens. It's happened sometimes, to me and to my friends. Do those women have to prove something as well?

All different, all equal. Stop the heart!

MATEJ RECER

*... under the picture of the breaker of the rules of marriage, as the thief of wives, seducer of virgins, shame of families and insult for men and fathers – appears another person: human character led against his own will by obscure craziness of sex. Under the image of epicurean is a pervert. He deliberately breaks the law, at the same time driven by kind of fallacy nature far away from any nature ... Let the questioning was he homosexual, narcissistic or impotent to psychoanalysts.*

Michel Foucault THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

Don Juan. *Who?* represents for me the dilemma of the settled versus the nomadic instinct in the human being. Our Don Juan's 'crying for beauty' is the painful perception of the volatility of perfection and his consequent escape from it as soon as it manifests itself, before it decays, obsessively galloping towards the next desperate evasion from the life cycle; mutation, death, transformation ...

GIOVANNA ROGANTE

Entering into the world of *Don Juan. Who?* has come at a timely moment in my life. I ask myself what are my desires, what is my pleasure? Does desire always need to be harnessed to love? I already know the answers. Don Juan gives me the internal horse to embrace the present and free myself from all the unnecessary imposed and internalised images, constraints and values. I interpret Don Juan as the free spirit of anarchy, desire, radicalism that exists in each of us regardless of gender. Through his image I find the empowerment to live my life as I want to live it and not as how others/ society expect us to live it.

MARIE-GABRIELLE ROTIE

*The rebel character of the hero made him a pattern of Romanticism: a loner, a kind of suicide, a saint of love and the personal quest for knowledge, whose final incarnation perhaps was Genet, seen through the eyes of Sartre.*

*... But one has to take care with this type of lure: a fantasy of control will always seduce the disenfranchised.*

*(Unemployed teenagers wear combat fatigues and gigantic boots; prostitutes solicit business by boasting of their dominatrix methods.) This is perhaps the final twist in the seductions of Don Juan, that the victims are flattered into believing themselves in charge.*

Marina Warner  
VALMONT – OR THE MARQUIS UNMASKED

## Short biographies of the artists



**ANNA FURSE** trained on a scholarship to the Royal Ballet School, then formative study with Peter Brook's CIRT in Paris and Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium in the 1970s and research into new dance/physical theatre in the 1980s. She is an award-winning director/writer of over 50 productions touring Europe, Asia and the USA. Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, she directs the MA in Performance Making and curates the Performance Research Forum. Guest Professor Princeton University, USA (Program in Theater and Dance), she is a published writer, journalist, frequent speaker at international conferences and international workshop leader. Her published texts

include *Augustine (Big Hysteria)*, Harwood 1997 (produced internationally since), and *Gorgeous*, Theatre Centre Plays Vol 1, Aurora Metro 2003, currently in repertory at The New Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco. Artistic Directorships include Bloodgroup (1980–1986), Paines Plough (1990–1995) and Athletes of the Heart that she founded in 2003. With two awards from The Wellcome Trust she created innovative multi media works on bio-ethics and infertility (*Yerma's Eggs*, 2003; *Glass Body*, 2006–7). In May 2007 her radio debut as writer-director *My Glass Body*, with composer Graeme Miller, was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 (Sweet Talk Productions). In the summer of 2007 she completed a 2 year project on her performer training system *Graphic Body* at the Choreographic Lab, University of Northampton and received an ArtsAdmin Bursary to travel to India and Poland to research her next project *Dust* with Jola Cynkutis and Khalid Tyabji.

Immediately after his graduation, **ŽELJKO HRS** became a member of the Mladinsko Theatre ensemble. He has been one of the pillars of the ensemble since the early 1980s, when the theatre reached wide international recognition.

He has also collaborated with Koreodrama Ljubljana and has appeared in numerous films. In 1993 he took part in the international co-production *Sarajevo*, based on the text by Goran Stefanovski and directed by Slobodan Unkovski, which was first presented in Antwerp – the Cultural Capital of Europe 1993 and subsequently toured to London



Tanya Myers and Damjana Černe

(Lift, Riverside Studios). He worked with Anna Furse on the project *Kaspar: Speech Torture* (Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana, 1997).

Lately he dedicates much of his time to dramaturgy: apart from the current collaboration with Anna Furse, he has worked as the dramaturg of many internationally acclaimed performances by the group Betontanc and the Mladinsko Theatre.

Apart from her work in the Mladinsko Theatre, where she's been employed since the early 1980s, **DAMJANA ČERNE** has made a mark in the Slovene theatre space with her creations in independent projects and theatre groups, most notably with the director Dragan Živadinov – she appeared in two of his cult performances, *The Baptism under Triglav* and *Gravitation O*, the first theatre performance in the world to take place in weightlessness. She appeared in Lubiša Ristić's *Missa in a minor* which toured London (Riverside Studios, Lift) in 1985.

She is active also outside Slovenia: in 1993 she worked on the international project *Sarajevo* (in Antwerp – Cultural Capital of Europe), recently she appeared in the role of



Matej Recer, Marko Mlačnik, Željko Hrs

Gertrude in the 'oriental' version of *Hamlet* made in Bosnia, and took part in the European co-production *Stories of Europe, The Attendants' Gallery*.

**MARKO MLAČNIK** is an actor, dancer and choreographer. With the exception of seven years when he was working as a freelance artist, he has been a member of the Mladinsko Theatre since 1983. He formed part of the pioneer generation of the Ljubljana Dance Theatre, creating some important roles especially in the performances by Ksenija Hribar. He has worked closely with the director Dragan Živadinov as an actor and choreographer in the performances *The Baptism under Triglav*, *Noordung Prayer Machine*, *1 : 1*, *Gravitation O*. He appeared in *Missa in a minor* (Lift, Riverside Studios, 1985). His international work includes collaborations with Dance Energy group, Munich; Pralipe Roma Theatre; project Sarajevo, Antwerp – Cultural Capital of Europe 1993; he also had a notable role in the film *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard.

**TANYA MYERS** trained at Dartington, and has been working professionally in mainstream and experimental theatre, television and film for 25 years. Under the name of Juanita MacMahon, she is one of the UK's most experienced readers of audio books.

She has been co-artistic director of Meeting Ground Theatre Company since its inception in 1986, and together with her husband, playwright Stephen Lowe, she produces and acts in new writing projects exploring the politics of the imagination.

In recent years she has focused on her own written work which includes *Shoes* (2003) and *Small Waves* (adult fairytales about exile both directed by Tom Wright) which was performed in England and Canada with her daughters Lily and Martha. She is currently working on a new play exploring rites of passage about the ageing process and attitudes toward death and eternity.

In the nineties, **MATEJ RECER** was a member of the internationally acclaimed and award-winning theatrical-dance group Betontanc. He co-created all of the shows by the group from 1989 to 1999, including the winner of the Gran Prix Bagnolet '92 *Every Word a Gold Coin's Worth*. Since 1999 he has been employed full-time by the Mladinsko Theatre but began his collaboration with the theatre even earlier. He has worked as TV show host, occasionally appears in television and film roles, and collaborates (as a guest) with a wide range of theatres – from commercial to experimental ones such as Via Negativa.

**GIOVANNA ROGANTE**, performer/director, has created her own work since 1977, her first solo produced by Jean Louis Barrault for Theatre D'Orsay. Her productions have been presented in festivals in Europe, Canada and the USA, including International Berlin Festival, Dance Umbrella, Wrocław (Poland) and Inteatro in Polverigi. She has collaborated with the Wooster Group, Athletes of the Heart and Laurie Booth. She has studied with Decroux, Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Min Tanaka, Yoshi Oida, Richard Schechner and many others. She has also taught at Goldsmiths University, London Metropolitan, Workstadt and EDDC in Arnhem, and Simon Frazer University in Canada.

**MARIE-GABRIELLE ROTIE**'s own productions have been supported by the Arts Council and the British Council and performed internationally. Since 2004, she has had commissions from The Place Prize, Royal Opera House, Nuffield Theatre, Home Gallery, The Place Theatre and Royal Festival Hall. Her new touring solo *Black Mirror* was commissioned by Laban, and recently shown in Croatia and Portugal.





*Giovanna Rogante and Marie -Gabrielle Rotie*

Butoh collaborations include duets with Atsushi Takenouchi and Ko Murobushi. Choreographic roles include performances for Sir Peter Hall's *Bacchai* 2002 at the Royal National Theatre and for the Royal Shakespeare Company. She also worked as a solo performer for Athletes of the Heart in *Glass Body*. She teaches for Goldsmiths University and Laban and is an internationally recognised teacher of butoh, and director of Butoh UK.

**MATEJA BENEDETTI** is a costumographer and fashion designer. Her costume designs have made a mark on numerous performances by the director Matjaž Pograjc (in *Betontanc* and *Mladinsko Theatre*), by Dance Theatre Ljubljana, etc., and her theatrical presence is growing stronger. She has participated in many competitions, fashion shows and exhibitions in Slovenia and abroad and received several awards. Her designs are characterised by the interplay of unexpected materials and witty details. In 2005 she created her own trade mark **BENEDETTI Pure Couture**.

**JANEZ JANŠA** is a media artist, performer and producer. His art is characterised by strong social connotations, and is recognisable because of his intermedial approach. He is a co-founder and the artistic director of the non-profit cultural organisation Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art. Its primary focus is on artistic production dealing with the research of social, political, aesthetic and ethical questions.

For the past five years **NICK PARKIN** has been teaching environmental & Site-Specific Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London. He previously worked as a performer/dancer, touring all over Europe. For the past 23 years, he has also worked as a composer and instrumentalist for numerous dance and theatre companies in the UK and Europe.

He has over ten CD releases and specialises in electroacoustic sound works and films derived from his interest in environmental and site-specific work. He won the First Prize in the prestigious International Bourges Electroacoustic Music Awards 2001 for *Magmas*.

Besides lighting design work (including the Royal Court Theatre and the Young Vic Theatre, London), **MISCHA TWITCHIN** is a lecturer and theatre researcher at the Goldsmiths, University of London. A founder-member of the London-based performance collective, Shunt, he also designs, writes, directs and performs in his own performance projects.

The **MLADINSKO THEATRE** was established in 1955 as the first professional theatre for children and youth in Slovenia. In the eighties, it was gradually re-structured into a theatre which combined borderline theatre research and the thematisation of political subversiveness in interdisciplinary works. Today, it is known for a wide range of innovative poetics of various young directors and the phenomenon of ‘ensemble energy’ – the Brookian approach towards acting, which is not based on star hierarchy, but on an acting laboratory connecting individual bravura parts into a strong whole of the acting ensemble.

**ATHLETES OF THE HEART** is a production company created by Anna Furse in 2003. Devoted to transgressing both artistic and geographical boundaries, current projects reflect her interest in the effect technology has on ordinary lives as well as her ongoing passion for refusing to carve a distinction between theatre of spoken words and theatre of the body. Her vivid, physically driven productions insist on the poetry of the theatre as a live medium. Athletes of the Heart is produced and managed by ArtsAgenda, UK.



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**ATHLETES OF THE HEART**



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