

Editorial

Lives - During Raw Visions, a Magdalena Festival with workshops, in July 1993, Susan Bassnett gave a lecture on biography and autobiography concluding with a poem about Sarajevo's Romeo and Juliet read and interpreted first from a historical perspective and then from a personal point of view. At the Magdalena Festival in 1994 women from different countries spoke publicly about their beginnings in theatre. We have seen many performances and characters which directly relate to the actors' and directors' personal lives, or talk about other known and unknown women's lives. Workshops on dramaturgy teach how to start from women's personal life stories so as to transform them for a theatrical use. The theme for the second issue of *The Open Page* can be understood as biography, autobiography, personal stories, historical representations and daily experiences; the articles range from historical testimonies to the story of one day in a theatre-woman's life, from sharing experiences in creating characters and performances built on different women's existences to telling of the processes which transform personal experiences into objective stage material.

Reading through all the articles what strikes me is the passion with which all the women relate to theatre. Reading becomes like a passage through life itself, starting with Flora Lauten still in her mother's womb and finishing with the death of Trinidad Guevara, an actress whose memory Beatriz Seibel tries to resurrect. It is probably not by chance that the presence of Latin American women is so strong in this issue: *Lives* as a theme immediately connects to the question of identity and the artists' precarious condition, so strongly felt in that continent. Who am I? The woman, the actress, the character? None of them? All of them? How can I achieve my artistic ambitions and survive economically? How can daily life and stage life adapt to each other?

Lives presented to the spectator and lives which remain protected within the private sphere are confronted differently in the articles. Mostly women do not divide the professional and private spheres, for them theatre is life and life is theatre. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to find the words which explain what has to remain a mystery: life. Laura Mariani touches on this inhibition felt by actresses trying to re-present their world in writing while Donatella Massimilla recognises the importance of women's lives to create roles in a new dramaturgy. Kjerstin Norén, Geddy Aniksdal and myself choose to let the details speak while Cristina Lastra concentrates on a single day and Kozana Lucca on her hair. Janne Risum, Maria Pia Battaglia, Patricia Alves, Anna Furse and Sanjukta Panigrahi span over whole existences. For Patricia Ariza, Iben Nagel Rasmussen and Silvia Ricciardelli theatre is the technique, inspiration and obstacle with which to present themselves. Lis Hughes Jones points out how beginnings in life also contain an ending. The central issue of motherhood is often present, because - as Deborah Levy says - "unfortunately women can't afford to be silent, and mothers especially cannot afford to be silent". It is the closeness of the private and professional spheres so particular to women that give all the articles a special touch and interest, emphasised by the diversity of themes and by the context of this issue as a whole. Finally, *Open News* - a new section of the journal which we hope will be developed in the next issue - contains shorter pieces of information regarding current work in relation to *Women - Theatre - Lives*

We live in a time when unemployment, delinquency, child abuse, immigration, religious fanaticism give rise to problems which indicate that life in general is losing sense and value. Some react yet again by proposing solutions such as fundamentalism, traditional family structures, capital punishment and curfew laws for teenagers. Others search for solutions in opposite directions. Both as women and as theatre practitioners and scholars we need to join in. In our work, in our lives we find sense and value. We need to share our experience, without the illusion - but with the hope - that our voices can change something.

Julia Varley
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