

Anette Røde Hagnell

Memory Pictures

AT INSTITUTET FÖR SCENKONST, PONTREMOLI 1989

She is standing in front of me, smoking, nervous, holding large, faded sheets of music. “I have never taken singing lessons before”.

Her eyes meet mine for a split second, then dart away, like her laughter.

“And I have never given any”, I answer, looking at my hands. Silence. Then she looks at me at length before saying: “Let’s get started”.

*What am I doing here?
Suddenly I know that I won’t
know until afterwards and,
by then, I will have arrived
elsewhere.*

AT INSTITUTET FÖR SCENKONST, PONTREMOLI 1989 (during the one year workshop for actors and directors)

So, what am I *doing* here? What am I *doing here*? Me, *here*.
What am I *doing* here?

I lift arms and legs, do something, whatever, jump around, turn around, trying at least to find a rhythm, something, whatever, to cling to, so that the work will become a what instead of a why.

All the others are silent, all twenty. They are moving and jumping around me. The observers don’t comment or say anything to us. But out of the nothingness comes something, trembling like the first leaf in April.

The floor is so red and the walls are a shimmering of gold, which shines on me, on all of us who want something and try. *What* do we want? We don’t know. I am afraid. There is no clear end, just a narrow path, consisting only of what I have just done, the distance I have walked. Apart from that, nothing.

The worst thing is that nobody speaks, not even a “yes”. They just sit there and refrain from saying anything.

What am I doing here? Suddenly I know that I won’t know until afterwards and, by then, I will have arrived elsewhere. That’s where my panic lies, and possibly a tiny grain of art.

WITH INSTITUTET FÖR SCENKONST, MALTA 1996

The day has almost gone. A day of work. Magdalena and

Ingemar did not get to work on the performance. We got stuck on how to organise the seating for the audience.

The rostra were not in the middle of the room, as Ingemar wanted. So we carried wood blocks for five hours. Big, black, rough structures on a dirty floor. No one thought about marking them. Taking them apart was quick, but then we had to replace them in the same order! "Pure madness", someone shouted, but by then three hours had passed. Otherwise silence. We carried like ants, one here, one there. No matter what we did, it turned out crooked and some blocks were left over. Suggestions, giggles, serious expressions: what would we use to build the stairs up to the back row?

People walk in and out: they have ants in their pants, the Maltese. John arrives with his sweaty aura, and talks in a forced manner. The sponsors have pulled out, we won't be paid.

"So ... shall we place the big blocks in the middle and then add on the smaller ones?" "No, we should use those right at the back!" Moving around, panting; the splinters under the skin hurt.

It looks awful. "But if we take those over there, the first row can sit on the floor!" Moving around, dragging, considering, looking.

Magdalena should leave now, have a coffee, free herself from the world of rostra and concentrate on the performance. We force her to rest.

Moving around, throwing; wildly. Five hours go by without stop.

So finally, we moved the rostra, we succeeded. Now only everything else has to be done.

**WITH GRENLAND FRITEATER AND DOPA
LAX ON TOUR, 1997
(Geddy sings *Rema 1000*)**

But what is she doing now? She never used



to ... which bar did she jump, where is ... Ohhh! There! Bar fourteen! But in double tempo, help! Now ... it slows down and ... how long do we have to wait? There, she starts again and now I will soften the entrance, put in a *ritardando* and there the choir can come in "and isn't that just what", um pa pa, um pa pa, and so on and so on.

She is panting like a stallion, looking out beyond me. She waits another second, and I'm with her, knowing that she will choose the right moment.

I have never heard her doing this song in this way before. She takes this banal song in her arms. She has grown wings and she soars above everything, spreading tiny, beads of gold.

I do my best to stay really close to her, my safety net stretched out, so that she can invent, phrase, alternate, colour and flap her wings high and low. We are flying, landing and ending together.

Then we give it back to the choir again. A second of silence. Then I laugh. This was the wildest ride I have ever been on! But it did make us all feel alive.

**WITH INSTITUTET FÖR SCENKONST
ITALY 1994**

(*Apparizione*, directed by Ingemar Lindh)

When will it be our turn? Stamping of boots and lines spoken outdoors in the rain.

Do I know? Will I know intuitively when it will be right to fit in a tango, between the bride's veils, aestheticism and pure realism? Three improvised simultaneous performances which should become one. Will it happen?

It is raining all the time. Will I know instinctively when we have to start and with what? No. I am in panic. Maybe I better play the waltz. I have to decide this before the audience leaves and Ingemar senses my fear. "The tango, Magda! Now!" Damn it! I should have kept a steadier tempo and now they are already starting the gorilla scene here, just next to us. Aren't they screaming a bit too loud, drowning our song?

Do these scenes fit together? Keep the tempo now, it's flowing well and Magdalena sings like a human goddess today.

Roger is stamping around in his boots, listening, following. Even the gorillas over in the corner have found a rhythm and although

the rain is pouring down the audience stays put.

Afterwards they walk towards us, old and wet with tears or rain on their faces, and give us what we have waited for during years of hard work: "Thank you". We gave to them, and they opened up.

Translated from Swedish by Petra Lindblom

ANETTE RØDE HAGNELL

(Sweden) was born in 1966 in Stockholm where she was educated and worked as a classical pianist. In 1989 she joined a one year workshop for actors and directors at Institutet för Scenkonst in Italy where she started a musical collaboration with the group. This began her career as a theatre musician, voice teacher (mainly for actors) and stage artist, working with groups such as Institutet för Scenkonst, Grenland Friteater and Studium Actoris.