



THEATRE CAFÉ FESTIVAL 2008

EVALUATION REPORT

The Project

In this third edition of our Theatre Café project, Company of Angels returned to Tooley Street, London SE1 with an expanded programme presented in two neighbouring venues, the Unicorn Theatre and Southwark Playhouse.

As well as staged readings of five new European plays for young people, Theatre Café Festival featured a co-production of *This Child* by Joel Pommerat with Pilot Theatre and The Junction, Cambridge and the award-winning *Norway Today* by Igor Bauersima in an adaptation by Company of Angels' Associate Artists, Imploding Fictions. Additional events included the International Symposium and the announcement of the Young Angels Theatremakers Award 2008.

Theatre Café is a little festival with a big reach. In 2009/10 some of the plays presented in Theatre Café 07 and 08 will appear in theatres throughout Britain. This intimate event focuses on a whole genre of exciting work and provides a simple and agreeable ambience where people can exchange ideas and plays across language barriers.

Theatre Café has three starting points:

- it is very difficult for new plays to break language barriers and be enjoyed across borders
- play readings are generally perceived as static and make little impact, especially on young audiences
- young audiences rarely have the opportunity to meet playwrights from different countries, drawing reflection and inspiration from the encounter.

Theatre Café aims to address these by:

- translating outstanding European plays for young people and circulating them around Europe
- creating an innovative way to present new writing, in a special environment in which a staged reading becomes a unique, exciting event
- starting a European platform dedicated to the exchange and translation of plays for young people

A 'Theatre Café' is a theatrical space designed to create an informal, intimate atmosphere where audiences can relax and feel involved. The closeness of the public to the actors makes post-show discussions natural.



The Programme

READINGS

Sense

by Anja Hilling
translated by Logan Kennedy & Leonard Unglaub

Bulger

by Klaas Tindemans
translated by Gregory Ball

Sandholm

by Anna Bro
translated by Mia Theil Have and Max Webster

Nightblind

by Darja Stocker
translated by Philip Thorne

Headcase

by Esther Gerritsen
translated by Rina Vergano



Piers Harrison & Tom Golding in *Sense*
Theatre Café Festival 2008

PRODUCTIONS

This Child

by Joel Pommerat
translated by Nigel Gearing

Norway.Today

by Igor Bauersima
translated by Marlene Norst
adapted by Imploding Fictions

YOUNG ANGELS THEATREMAKERS AWARD 2008

featuring ***Invasion!***

by Jonas Hassen Khemiri
translated by Frank Perry

Theatre Café International Symposium
13 – 15 November 2008



The Plays

SENSE (SINN)

by Anja Hilling (Germany)

translated by Logan Kennedy and Leonhard Unglaub



Five stories, five senses. A play about teenagers, love, and the need to make radical choices. An intense, poetic journey into touching, inhaling, tasting, hearing, seeing and experiencing life to the extreme. While each story links to the next part, all five 'Senses' are also plays in their own right. Theatre Café features two episodes, *Nose* and *Tongue*.

Anja Hilling won the Theater Heute 'Best Emerging Author' award in 2005.

Directed by John Retallack (*Nose*) and Brenda Murphy (*Tongue*)

Cast: Nose: Piers Harrison, Tom Golding / Tongue: Jasmine Mohammed, Ery Nzaramba

BULGER (BULGER)

by Klaas Tindemans (Belgium)

translated by Gregory Ball



"We were old enough to end up in prison, but too young for anyone to listen to us. They thought children like us came from another planet."

Although loosely based on the 1993 case, this play is not a reconstruction of the Bulger murder. Deliberately blurring the line between good and evil, the play challenges common perceptions of guilt and innocence.

Bulger won the Berlin Theatertreffen New Playwriting Prize 2008.

Directed by John Retallack

Cast: Tom Golding, Jasmine Mohammed, Esther Smith



SANDHOLM (SANDHOLM)

by Anna Clemensensen Bro (Denmark)
translated by Mia Theil Have and Max Webster



A young woman calling herself Job arrives at the gates of Sandholm, an asylum centre near Copenhagen. She won't say where she is from, but claims to be able to speak to God. Soon people start turning to Job for salvation. But then Job's past catches up with her... Witty, moving and intensely thought-provoking, the play was inspired by the author's stay at and interviews with residents at Sandholm.

Directed by: Mia Theil Have & Max Webster

Cast: Rachel Edwards, Tom Golding, Piers Harrison, Jasmine Mohammed, Ery Nzaramba, Esther Smith

NIGHTBLIND (NACHTBLIND)

by Darja Stocker (Switzerland)
translated by Philip Thorne



Leyla's life is on the verge of collapse. Caught between affection and violence, desire and self-destruction, she is faced with the decision of her life. Elegantly constructed, Darja Stocker's extraordinary debut play tells of liberation and endurance - as well as the necessity of dreaming.

Nightblind won First Prize at the Heidelberger Stückemarkt 2005.

Directed by John Retallack

Cast: Rachel Edwards, Tom Golding, Jasmine Mohammed, Esther Smith



HEADCASE (DE KOPVOETER)

by Esther Gerritsen (Holland)

translated by Rina Vergano



"I understand that some people suffer from chronic optimism... I don't hold it against them, as long as they keep it to themselves." Lena is a successful painter – with a big secret. No one knows that she is paralysed from the neck down and paints all her pictures with her mouth. Unsentimental and witty, Esther Gerritsen's play radically breaks with social conventions.

Headcase won the Dutch-German Youth Theatre Prize in 2008.

Directed by John Retallack

Cast: Rachel Edwards, Piers Harrison, Ery Nzaramba, Esther Smith



Tom Golding and Esther Smith in *Bulger*
Theatre Café Festival 2008



Writers

“I think it was a very inspiring and well organised festival. You could feel that it had come to life out of a great passion and interest in theatre for young people. And a genuine wish to be inspired by theatre from outside England.

The danger with international readings are, that they sometimes seem like a commercial for a country (“come buy Danish writing!”) which is a bit weird to me. But this was pure love of theatre. Great.

I came home with new polished international glasses. Ready too look a bit more out at the world.”

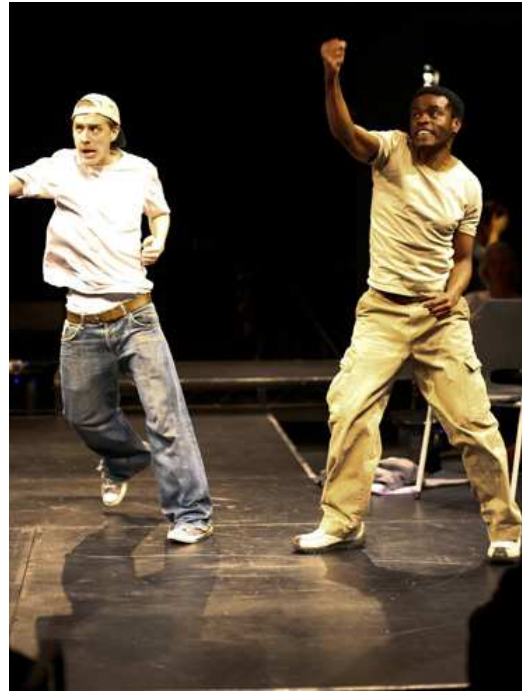
Anna Bro, Sandholm

“The reading of my play paid very much attention to detail. I especially liked the fact that it was not over-directed but still offered the audience many opportunities to engage with the text emotionally.

The actors seemed very engaged and extremely willing to get involved with the play – which cannot necessarily be taken for granted given the short rehearsal period they had.

The whole festival atmosphere I thought was very lively, full of genuine interest, and most importantly for me, focused on the programme content.”

Darja Stocker, Nightblind



Tom Golding & Ery Nzaramba in Sandholm Theatre Café Festival 2008

“I had a great time. It was inspiring, interesting and intriguing for me as a writer to see my own text being performed in four very different ways, by the same actors over the course of one afternoon. But at the same time I do believe that it was a problem that the four directors had so limited time. However it was great to take part in a jury with professional theatre people, and to be able to discuss the excerpts in a straightforward manner.

Thanks for inviting Abulkasem to London, let the Invasion begin!”

Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Invasion!



International Symposium

13 – 15 November 2008

Led by Chris Campbell, Deputy Literary Manager, National Theatre, the Theatre Café Festival International Symposium brought together more than fifty delegates (writers, translators, directors, producers and other industry professionals) who, over the course of two days, watched five play readings, two performances and the Young Angels Award showcases, and participated in the panel discussions following each performance.

The specially designed Theatre Café setting in the Unicorn's Clore Studio successfully created a feeling of intimacy allowing for human, intimate performances and lively, engaged public debate afterwards, while the atmospheric Southwark Playhouse provided a very contrasting, but equally intimate setting for the evening performances and the Theatre Café Party.

The Panellists

Chair / Navigator: Chris Campbell – Deputy Literary Manager, National Theatre

Corinna Honold – Dramaturge, Thalia Theater Hamburg
Graham Whybrow – former Literary Manager, Royal Court Theatre
Klaas Tindemans – author, *Bulger*
Anna Bro – author, *Sandholm*
Mia Theil Have – director / translator, *Sandholm*
Max Webster - director / translator, *Sandholm*
Darja Stocker – author, *Nightblind*
Philip Thorne – translator, *Nightblind*
Lydia Ziemke – freelance director, Schaubühne Berlin
Erica Whyman – Artistic Director, Northern Stage
Jenny Worton – Artistic Associate, Almeida Theatre
Marelle van Rongen – Producer, het Syndicaat, Amsterdam

Young Angels Theatremakers Award 2008:

Jonas Hassen Khemiri – author, *Invasion!*
Lisa Goldman – Artistic Director, Soho Theatre
Richard Oyarzabal – Chief Executive, The Junction, Cambridge



Philip Thorne, Darja Stocker, Lydia Ziemke & Chris Campbell
Theatre Café Festival 2008

Young Ambassadors



Adebisi Adenaike
Theatre



Jack Ayers
Theatre & Film



Andi Bradley
Theatre



Yolande Bramble Carter
Theatre & Media Studies
English Lit



Stephanie Hadfield
Theatre



Portia Marie Mason
Theatre, Singing,



Sam Pearce Davies
Theatre, Maths, English Lit



Ellie Standeven
Theatre



Sherelle Vellinor
Theatre & Singing

9 'young ambassadors' from the BRIT School of Performing Arts in Croydon watched all readings and performances and gathered their feedback prior to the International Symposium.

Chris Campbell, the Symposium navigator, then relayed their take on the plays during the post-show discussions. The young ambassadors joined delegates for the performance of *Norway Today* and the Theatre Café Festival party on Friday night, which enabled delegates and ambassadors to have very animated, in-depth discussions about the plays and their overall festival experience.

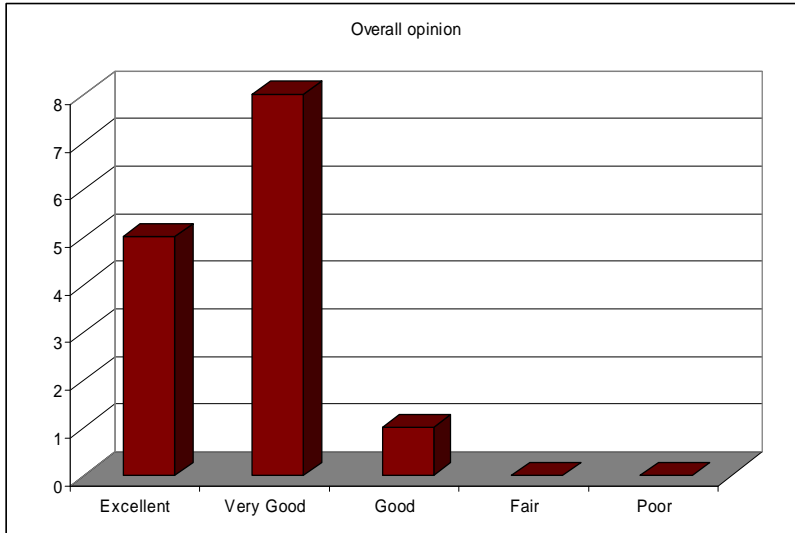
A DVD made by the Theatre Café Festival Young Ambassadors about their impressions and opinions on Theatre Café will be available in early 2009.



Delegates¹

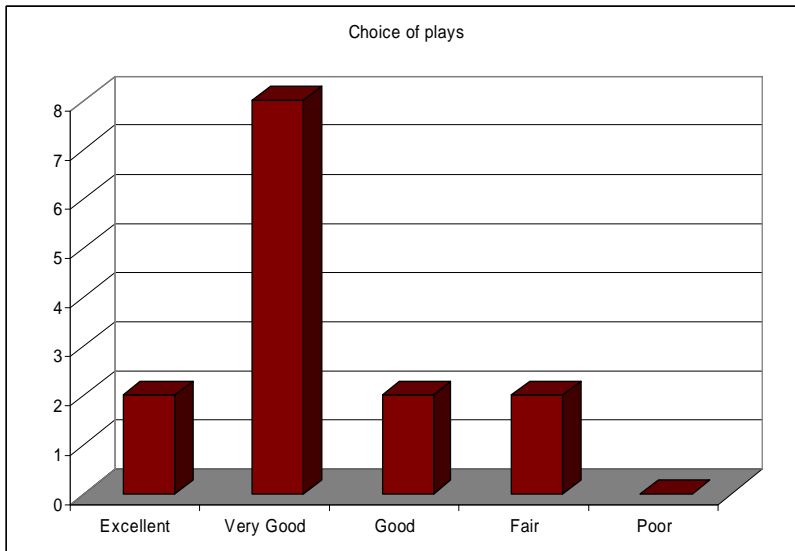
What is your overall opinion of the International Symposium?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 35.7% |
| V. good | 57.1% |
| Good | 7.1% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 0% |



How would you rate the choice of plays in the programme?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 14.3% |
| V. good | 57.1% |
| Good | 14.3% |
| Fair | 14.3% |
| Poor | 0% |

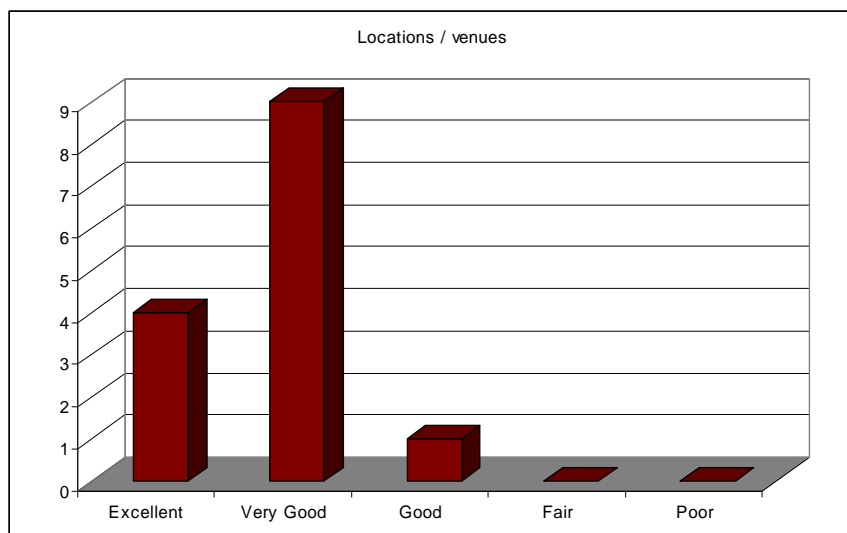


¹ Based on 14 returned questionnaires from 50 delegates.



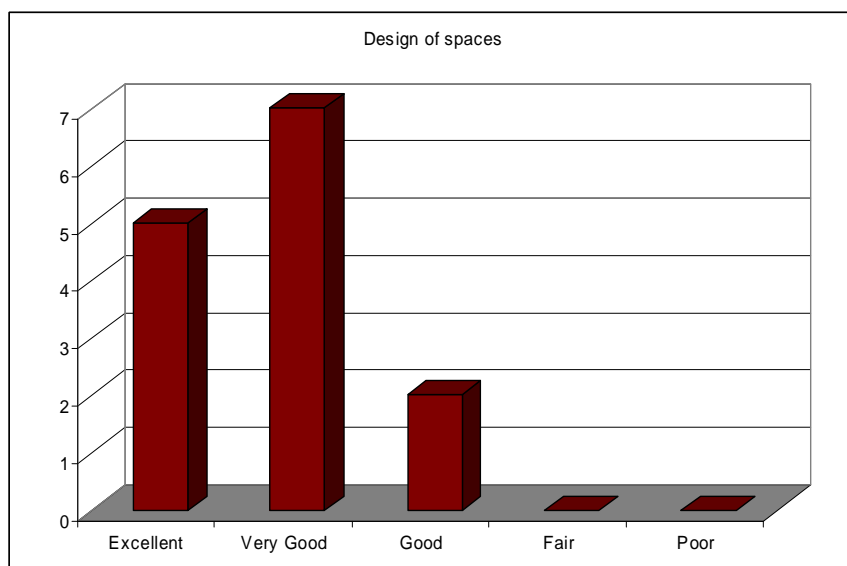
How would you rate the Unicorn Theatre and Southwark Playhouse as locations for the event?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 28.6% |
| V. good | 64.3% |
| Good | 7.1% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 0% |



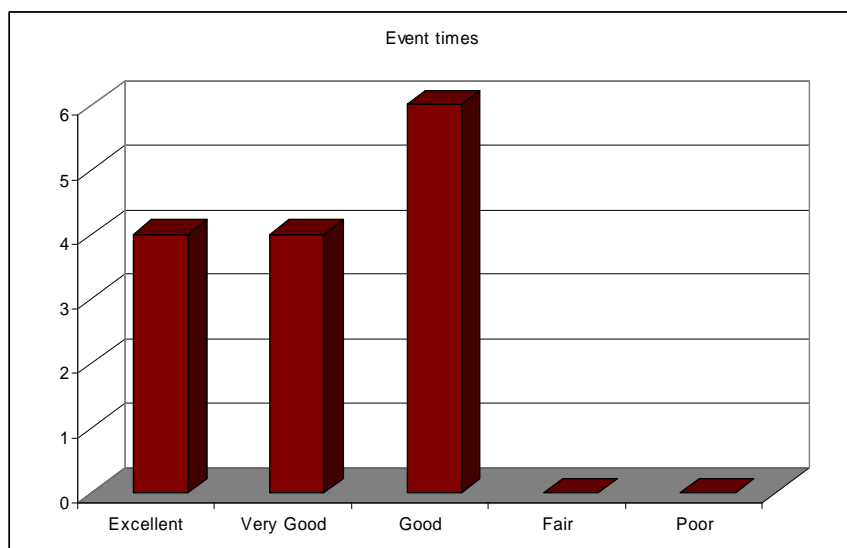
How would you rate the design / appropriateness of the space for the event?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 35.7% |
| V. good | 50.0% |
| Good | 14.3% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 0% |



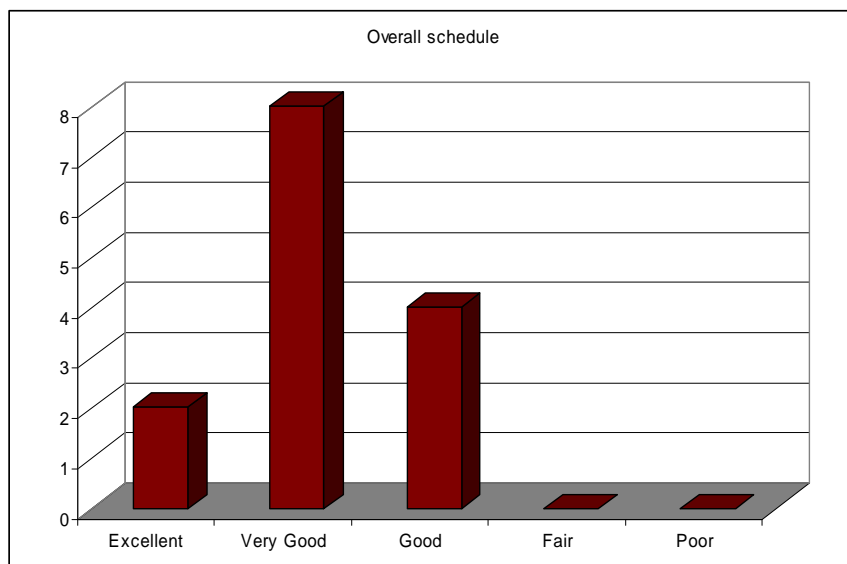
What is your opinion about the times of the event (days of the week)?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 28.6% |
| V. good | 28.6% |
| Good | 42.9% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 0% |



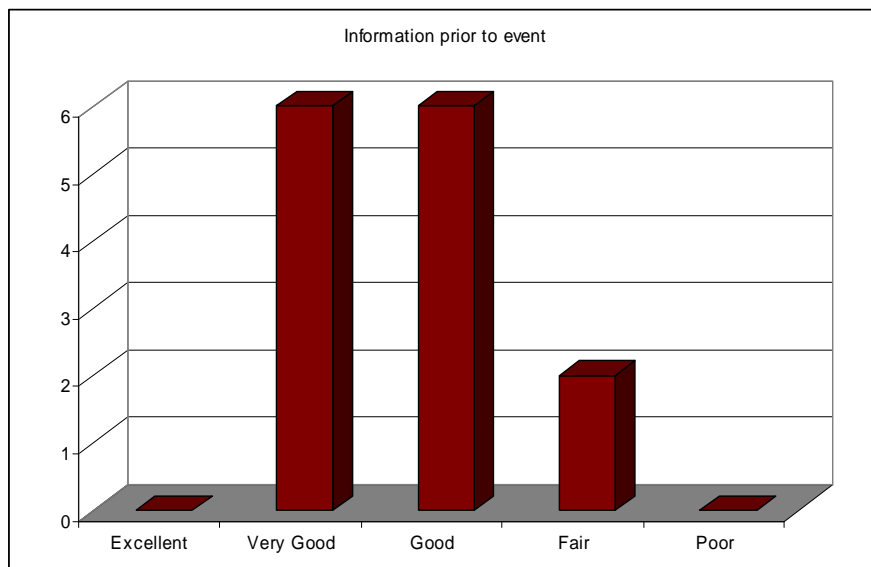
What is your opinion about the overall schedule of the event (no of plays, timings, breaks, etc)?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 14.3% |
| V. good | 57.1% |
| Good | 28.6% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 0% |



How would you rate the information available prior to the event?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 0% |
| V. good | 42.9% |
| Good | 42.9% |
| Fair | 14.3% |
| Poor | 0% |



What did you like best about the event?

"A great opportunity to learn and network."

"I really enjoyed the readings and the showcase of This Child. Interesting collaboration you made there!"

"The opportunity to hear work being read (to a very high standard), and meeting colleagues / networking."

"It provides an opportunity to see some international playwrights and to meet other people who are interested and support new writing."

"Staging and production standards, Chris Campbell."

"The informal nature of it, that it becomes a meeting place."

"Very good staff and food. Thank you for the hard work that went into it. Keep doing it."

"Fantastic atmosphere, very interesting mix of work and people attending – and different to other events I've attended (and very good food!)"

"Standard of performances very high, opportunity to question directors and / or writers and very well compèred by Chris Campbell."

"I really appreciate the opportunity to see work as a reading – it's a form I really like and something I don't get to see very often."



“A great few days that was hugely beneficial to work we’re developing at our venue.”

“Excellent! Especially the networking!! And meeting the writers...”

What do you think could be improved about the event?

“I would like to see the young people involved brought into the whole process. Their opinions are the most important.”

“More transparency as to the criteria for choosing scripts.”

“Maybe hold two festivals a year?”

“Variety of plays / overriding question that holds them together.”

“Better advertising outside Southwark Playhouse so that passers-by could discover what was going on.”

“I think the event needs a headline or leading questions that we can refer to throughout.”

“Longer time for panel discussion and more discussion on specific topics led by leading practitioners (e.g. translation, devising, co-producing etc).”

“I would have preferred to have seen This Child performed by one company – I did not get to see it the year before. Overall it’s a great event, the third one I’ve been to.”

“Possibly allow some time outside the venues for out-of-towners to explore!”

“More comedy! Everything was a bit serious and heavy – nothing against that, but some different, more irreverent approaches might be interesting as comparisons.”

“I would have loved to have seen and heard more from the organizers of theatre café – why these shows and not others, why no UK work, how choices were made etc.”

“There could have been UK writers of plays for young audiences to discuss the differences of work produced more.”



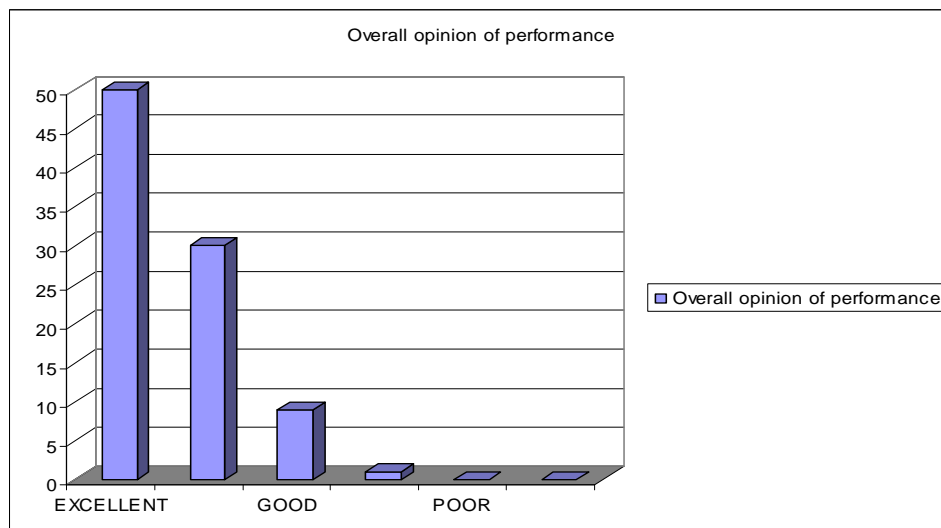
Delegates at Southwark Playhouse during Theatre Café Festival 2008



Audience²

What was your overall opinion of the performance?

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | 55.5% |
| V. good | 33.3% |
| Good | 10.0% |
| Fair | 1.1% |
| Poor | 0% |



What did you think about the reading?

"I thoroughly enjoyed it and thought it was beautifully written and very poetic. I was totally engrossed and really felt what was being said."

"I loved the staging and the way the characters were telling their story to us as if we were actually there in the play."

"I found the reading really profound and I could visualise the setting and characters in the play. I was almost sitting there in a trance where I could close my eyes."

"The story was very gripping and the acting kept me hooked. It was very imaginative and the language was very sensual!"

"The actors conveyed the atmosphere and setting extremely well, the humour was natural and I really felt that I was in the scene with the actors."

"I felt very connected to the performance. Did not think it was a reading – it felt as if it was a normal performance."

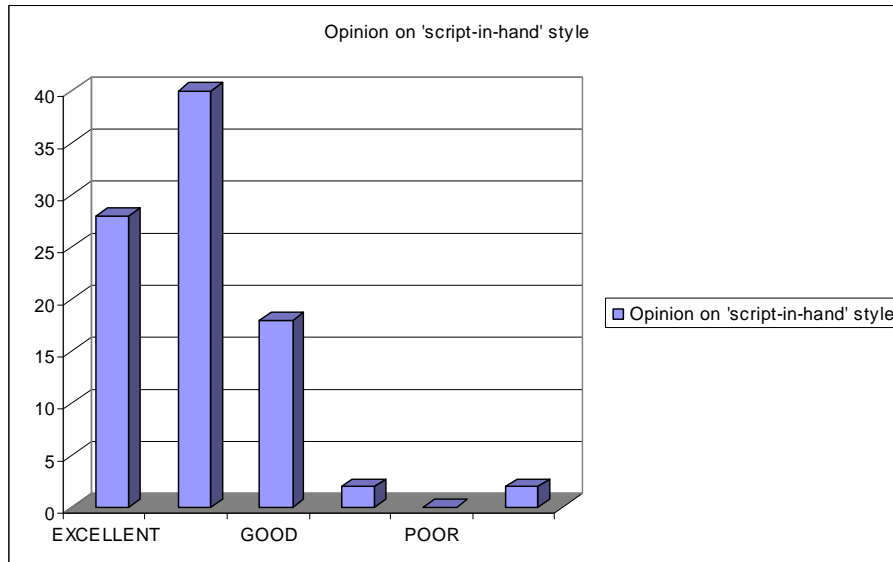
"Amazing! Very gripping, emotional story and intriguing plot the acting – outstanding!!"

² From a total of 90 questionnaires returned after different readings, including those of the Young Ambassadors and a group of 32 students from Southwark College



What was your opinion about the fact that the play was 'script in hand'?

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Excellent | 31.1% |
| V. good | 44.4% |
| Good | 20.0% |
| Fair | 2.2% |
| Poor | 0% |
| Not ticked | 2.2% |



Can you say why?

"It was no problem at all – I nearly forgot it and the scripts were integrated very well in several places."

"It didn't get in the way of telling the story, it added to it."

"It didn't matter because I was totally consumed by the language and intense description."

"This made everyone focus on their own imagination / view of the play."

"Well, it was a reading, so they need the script! And the actors read very well, calm and focused."

"I would have liked to see the actors without script but it wasn't a major issue."

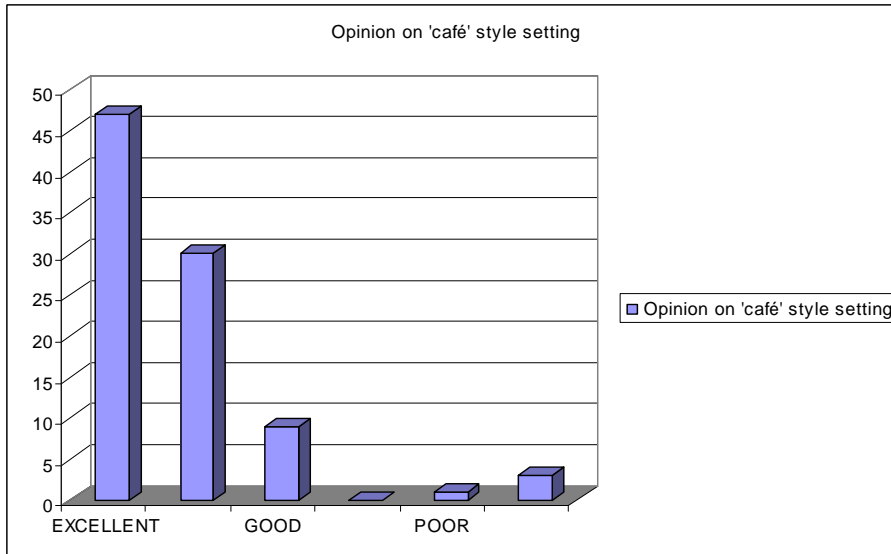
"It was interesting, it didn't distract but made it more 'raw' –by the end you forgot the actors had them."

"It showed a work-in-progress and made me more interested."



What was your opinion about the way the theatre was set up as a 'theatre café'?

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Excellent | 52.2% |
| V. good | 33.3% |
| Good | 10.0% |
| Fair | 0% |
| Poor | 1.1% |
| Not ticked | 3.3% |



Can you say why?

“Comfortable, welcoming, good view, different, felt more involved.”

“Very welcoming, relaxed, makes you want to sit back and listen.”

“It gives an excellent platform in order for people to share.”

“Very intimate setting, made the play more intense.”

“Casual atmosphere – very inviting, not intimidating.”

“Intimate atmosphere – makes you feel part of the process.”

“Most appropriate, allowing concentration on the text.”

“It was very different, I liked the candles, but we could not always see all the facial expressions.”

“It made the reading more effective.”

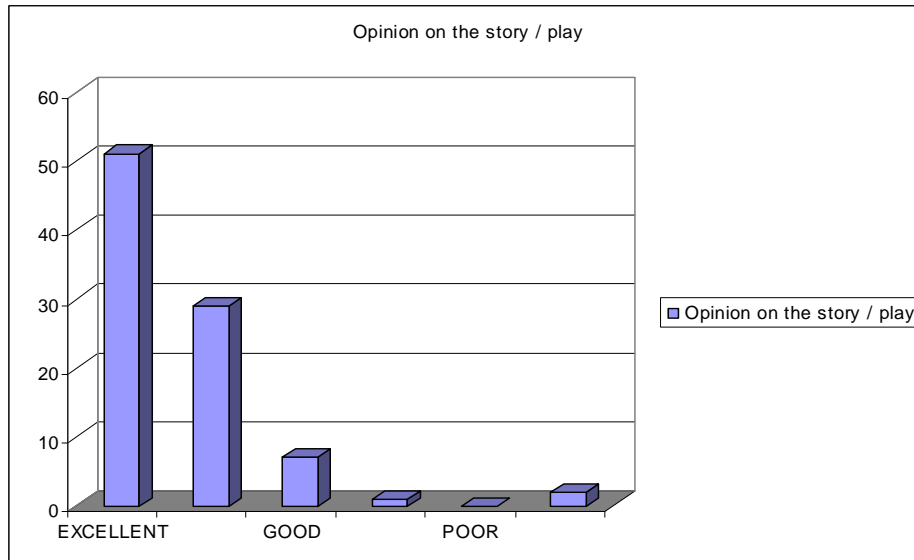
“Very intimate setting; helped the audience to be absorbed by the play and empathise with the characters.”

“Intriguing and made me feel comfortable.”



What was your opinion about the story?

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Excellent | 56.6% |
| V. good | 32.2% |
| Good | 7.7% |
| Fair | 1.1% |
| Poor | 0% |
| Not ticked | 2.2% |



Can you say why?

“Very moving, good pace, had the audience engaged.”

“Powerfully emotional.”

“I loved the piece – it was very sensitive and thought-provoking.”

“Engaging, dramatic and emotional. Very good indeed.”

“Slightly overly disturbing but excellently written.”

“Extremely intense; I was immediately drawn in.”

“Interesting, moving, well-read, funny.”

“Evocative, sensual.”

“I could relate to the stories / characters.”

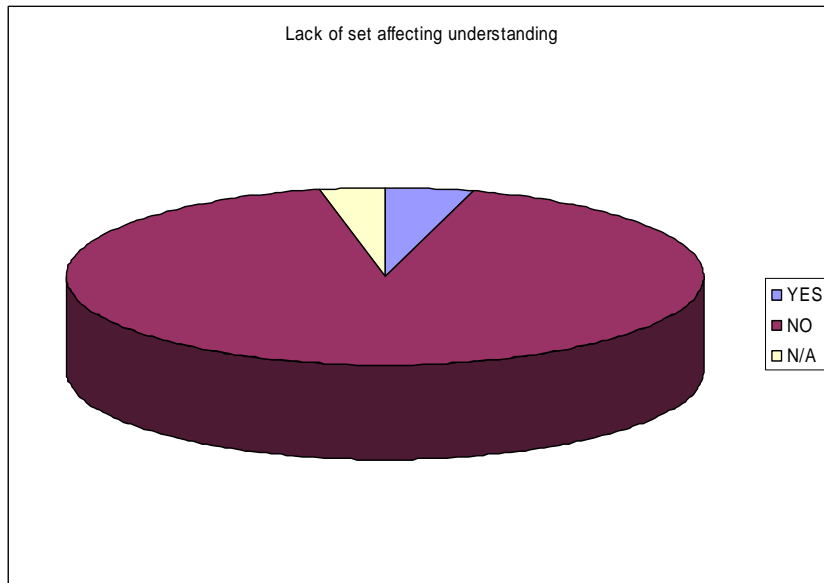
“Equally disturbing and hilarious, very poetic.”

“Gripping story and very relevant.”



Did the lack of set affect your understanding of the play?

No 83 (92.2%)
Yes 4 (4.4%)
Not ticked 3 (3.3%)



Can you say why?

"The language and movement, especially the eye contact, more than made up for it."

"It worked very well without it."

"Set is not needed as the script was strong enough to be performed anywhere."

"It is versatile and allows for abstract thinking."

"It makes it less predictable."

"The text says it all!"

"It would have been nice to have some props."

"Play readings are about the text / scripts - not the staging."

"It's simple and very effective."

"Without set I was able to focus more on the language and words."

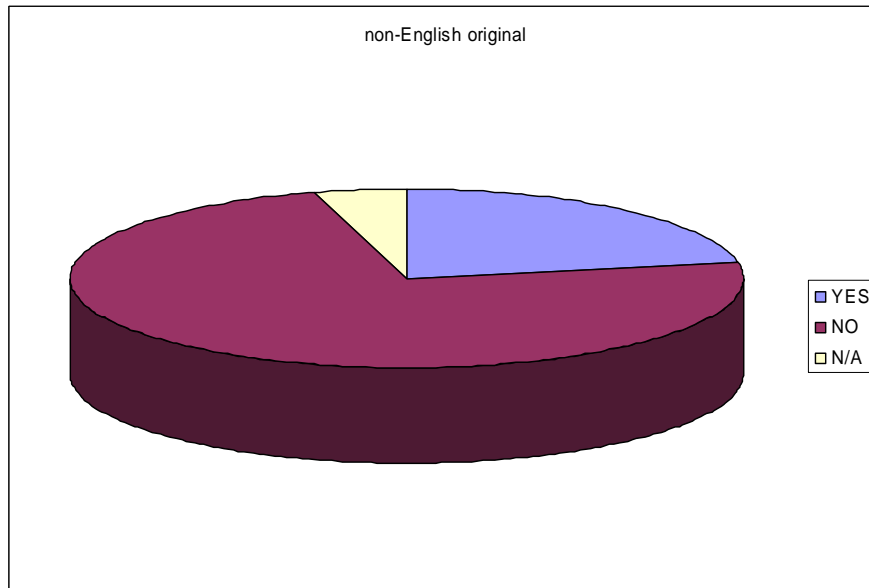
"The language and script more than made up for it – it was easy to follow and visualise."

"It didn't need a set, it was perfect the way it was."



Could you tell that this was not originally written in English?

No (73.3%)
Yes (22.2%)
Not ticked (4.4%)



Can you say why?

"It had the right slang and charismatic movement."

"Very natural and adapted to English terms."

"It flowed beautifully."

"It was translated really well."

"Language was natural and informal while still poetic."

"Excellent translation – just the references to Amsterdam were a clue."

"The English was really clear, so I didn't notice it came from another language."

"It all made sense and ran smoothly."

"It never crossed my mind that it was in another language; the translation was very good!"

"Because they used some words that were not English."

"It felt like it was set in another culture, the food and names of people reminded me that they are not English writers."

"I knew already, but you couldn't tell because it flowed perfectly."



Any other comments?

"I loved it! Would love to see it when fully developed."

"The lack of set made the piece feel organic and real – I really enjoyed it!"

"Brilliant translation and extremely good performances from all."

"A great way of testing things out and an opportunity to see work not usually performed in this country."

"So inspirational – I loved it so much!!"

"These readings made me feel good."

"Beautifully read – a heart-felt account with plenty of emotion. Interesting how the stories intertwined."

"I really look forward to seeing them when they are 'finished', although I felt that they were perfect as they were. Well done!"

"It was a great insight into the different cultures."

"I came to see it not knowing anything about the play or even that it was a reading. I found it really accessible and the characters were believable."

"It was awesome!"



Jasmine Mohammed & Esther Smith in *This Child*
Theatre Café Festival 2008



The Cast

The Theatre Café Festival ensemble were:

Rachel Edwards, Tom Golding, Piers Harrisson, Jasmine Mohammed, Ery Nzaramba and Esther Smith.

The ensemble was supported by members of **Southwark Playhouse' Youth Theatre** in *This Child* (**Judith Asman, Grace Chilton, Lilly Kroll, Ibrahim Shote and Doug Wood**).

They were directed by **John Retallack, Mia Theil Have, Ellen Hughes, Brenda Murphy and Max Webster.**



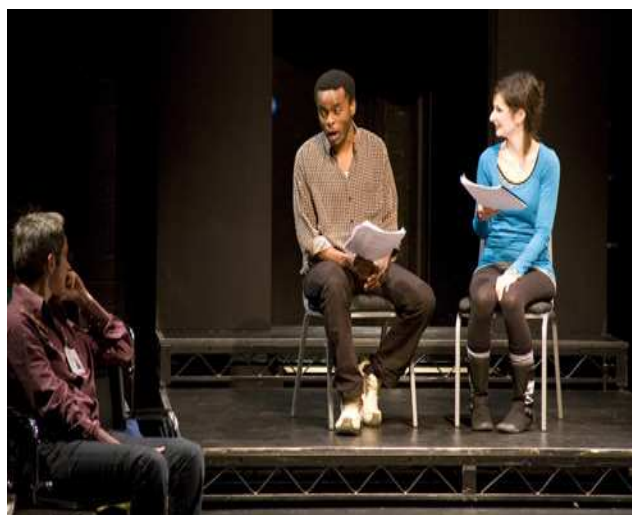
Doug Wood and Esther Smith in *This Child*



Esther Smith and Tom Golding in *Nightblind*



Rachel Edwards in *Sandholm*



Ery Nzaramba and Jasmine Mohammed in *Sense*





RACHEL EDWARDS

Andrews Hamilton Ltd
020-8491 7904

Previous credits include:
Mariana Pineda (Arcola), *All Quiet on The Western Front*, *The White Album* (Nottingham Playhouse), *Faster* (Filter Theatre, BAC) *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Birmingham Rep)



TOM GOLDING

Mike Leigh Associates
020-7935 5500

Previous credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Creation Theatre Company), *Year 10* (BAC), *Cinema* (Latchmere 503), *The Seagull* (Greenwich Playhouse), *Newsrevue*



PIERS HARRISON

Brunskill Ltd
020-7581 3388/9 / 020-7584 8060

Previous credits include: *Romeo and Juliet* (Battersea Arts Centre), *Winter* (Hampstead Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Teatro Vivo), *The beach* (Theatre 503)



JASMINE MOHAMMED

Acting Associates
020-7607 3562

Previous credits include: *Blue Funk* (Weaver Hughes Ensemble), *Edward II* (Eyestrings Theatre Company); *Baghdad Burning*, *Tom Jones*, *15 Minute Hamlet* (all BBC Radio Drama)



ERY NZARAMBA

BWH
020-8996 1661

Previous credits include: *Barabas* (Hall for Cornwall), *Romeo In The City* (Theatre Centre national tour); Film work includes *G54* (writer / director; Beyond TV Int. Video Festival 2006)



ESTHER SMITH

TCG Artist Management
020-7240 3600

Previous credits include: *Little Women*, *The Kitchen*, *Chorus of Disapproval*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Serious Money* (all for Guildford School of Acting)



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Sandholm

by Anna Bro

translated by Mia Theil Have &
Max Webster

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Bulger

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translated by Gregory Ball

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Nightblind

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translated by Philip Thorne

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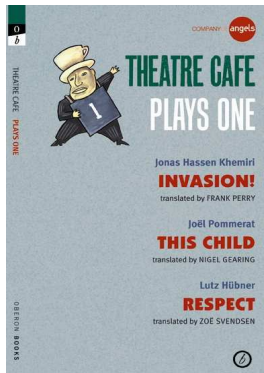
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HOT OFF THE PRESS!

The new Company of Angels book featuring the hit plays of Theatre Café 2007:



Theatre Café – Plays One
Published by Oberon Books

£11.99

ISBN: 978-1-84002-893-5

Includes

Invasion! by Jonas Hassen Khemiri, translated by Frank Perry
This Child by Joël Pommerat, translated by Nigel Gearing
Respect, by Lutz Hübner, translated by Zoe Svendsen

Also available:



COMPANY OF ANGELS
Four Plays by John Retallack
Published by Oberon Books

£9.99

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