

Grounded in the Local

I am writing this from my student exile in Brisbane. I'm supposed to be focussing on my studies, but I can't ignore the environment I'm in - especially when it includes such novelties as a snake in the kitchen. We are in, apparently, the longest drought in Queensland's history - however some say it's poor water management that is the real problem. We're also in the middle of an "emergency" so severe that the federal government feels justified in imposing draconian measures on remote Aboriginal communities: benefit control, bans on alcohol and blatant land grabs that are ultimately designed to open up land held in Aboriginal title to development, especially mining (this is explicitly stated in legislation passed in 2006). Women for Wik, www.womenforwik.org, has been set up by a group of women to monitor the government's actions. And the APEC roadshow recently trundled into Sydney; it's election year in Australia and both Howard and opposition leader Kevin Rudd are working overtime to charm the voters.

While immersed in Australian politics, theatre academia and my usual cyber-roamings, my feet are still firmly planted in Planet Magdalena. I'm in daily contact via email with Magdalenas around the world, regular face-to-face contact with the Brisbane Magdalenas and frequent contact with Magdalenas in Aotearoa. Everyone is, as usual, incredibly busy with myriad projects, many of which you can read about in these pages.

Madeline's current preoccupation is Acting Up, a trust established to provide creative expression opportunities for people with disabilities. She writes: "The work is hard but very rewarding: Andreas and I are regularly witness to small theatrical miracles from participants who many would write off as incapable of artistic expression of such a kind. We are slowly building connections with other companies and individuals within Aotearoa who are working in this area - notably Touch Compass, who are about to launch their tenth anniversary tour; Darron Davies, disabilities drama teacher from Australia now resident in New Zealand; Hilary King in Auckland and in Wellington the Interplay group of Amanda and Sean O'Connor, Ginger Crunch and Kate Tarrant." Madeline is working with Acting Up's founder Amy Szostak to produce a film script Amy has written about

the absurdities of celebrity culture and prejudice against people with disabilities.

As the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust marks a decade of official existence, we are preparing for our second National Gathering at Easter 2008 (see page 3) and still dreaming about our next international festival - what shape and form it may take, when and how we might achieve it. Dawn Albinger shares her own dreams for another Australian meeting and invites us to dream and plan with her (page 7). No doubt these dreams will be



*Helen Moran on the road with
The Bonekeeper.*

progressed at and around the next Gathering. The works-in-progress that were presented this year are evolving in their own rhythms; some of the artists report on progress (pages 3 and 4) while others are taking a break to tend to family life and other projects.

The tenth anniversary of the Trust has been celebrated in small ways throughout the year - at the Gathering, the AGM, and also in the next issue of this newsletter, which will look back on what we've achieved since Sally and Madeline, inspired by Magdalena '94 in Wales, roped in several others and convinced them that a trust to support and promote women theatre makers was a damn fine idea and why not go the whole way and host an international festival while we're at it? Little did they know what they were starting ... ten years on we can look back in awe at not

only what has been done under the auspices of the Trust, but what else it has inspired and supported in the wider community.

We are also approaching the first anniversary of the death of the Trust's founding co-director, Sally Rodwell, on 15 October. It's hard to believe it has been a year - indeed I sometimes find it hard to believe she really has gone, her presence is so vibrant. During this last year I have met and corresponded with many people around the world who were in some way touched by Sally, and have been privileged to listen to their stories of how she inspired and enriched their lives; Sally made such a real and tangible difference, her absence is huge. But it is encouraging to hear people respond to Sally's death as a reminder to heed her inspiration, a motivation to continue our own work with the same courage and determination that Sally showed in hers.

Helen Varley Jamieson

The winter period has been quiet, as the trustees have focused on family and personal projects.

The AGM on July 10th coincided with one of Wellington's most wintry nights, keeping all but the most dedicated away from the meeting. Those who made it were rewarded with whisky, wine, and nibbles to accompany a speedy meeting in a chilly venue (the new Newtown Hall). But small numbers didn't prevent us from officially toasting the tenth birthday of the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust.

Highlights from the AGM minutes include our income from donations being up, thanks to the ongoing Patroness Scheme, and that we broke even (just) at the National Gathering, - once again thanks to individuals' generosity.

Given the success of the Gathering, the meeting resolved to apply to Creative New Zealand for funds to hold a second Gathering at Easter 2008. The application was duly submitted by the due date, and you will hear of the outcome in the next newsletter.

Changes to the



Lovely Lighting Lisa Letter

Kezia and her friends have been enjoying putting my old lip stick on. I am teaching them about cold cream. They are six. They also draw and play a lot about fairies. And argue a lot about things being fair. "It is not fair she rode the scooter all that way and I only get it this much..." It's also not fair that I have so many friends with young children and am finding it hard to visit them. Some are even God Children. What a responsibility. I need to start telling or bringing a different 'God' story each time (the Grandparents will not approve).

Charities Commission were also discussed at the AGM. To maintain our charitable and donee status with IRD, we need to complete a new registration, provide reports each year, and pay an annual fee.

Improving the database continues to be a priority; trustees Lisa Maule and Helen Varley Jamieson are exploring the options and we hope to have a New Improved Online Database and streamlined system very soon.

The next issue of this newsletter will celebrate a decade of the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust, and we welcome your contributions. The copy deadline is Friday 2 November.

The Trust extends condolences to Dale Ferris, whose mother Kui died in August. A regular visitor to Dale and Madeline's Paekakariki

home, Kui was also sometimes present at Trust meetings and gatherings.

And as one life ends, another begins: trustee Jessica Sutherland gave birth to Demetrius John Hereweka Latton on Saturday 4 August. Congratulations to Jess and Rhys, and welcome to the new Magdalena baby.

I have started a clean desk policy for the kitchen bench. My desk however is more ramshacked, but I do have a variety of tools to hand. A stapler, hole punch, sewing scissors, USB cable, a small stuffed horse, 5 home made gobos, dictionary (English and Maaori) and an inflated yellow balloon with ears and a cat face printed on it.

Hmmm, I might make that 'Dog' story.

Spring is springing in Aotearoa. People are emerging as well. See you out there.

Lisa Maule

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The Magdalena Aotearoa Trust is a charitable trust that aims to encourage and promote the work of women in the performing arts.

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Newsletter contributions are welcome, but may be edited. Please send contributions as an attachment or in the body of an email to magdalen@actrix.co.nz

The deadline for the next issue is 2 November 2007

The 2007 Magdalena Aotearoa National Gathering was such a success, the participants were talking about the next one before the first one was over.

A dedicated space for works-in-progress to be shown and discussed is clearly something that theatre practitioners are in need of. By not having any full productions, the Gathering focused our energy on the essential work that goes in before a show gets anywhere near a season. This is the phase of development that gets eroded, cut back and undervalued as economic realities constantly demand “new” work and fast turnaround.

The 2007 Gathering aimed to challenge the sadly typical model of a few weeks development and rehearsal followed by a short season then vanishing into memory. We set out to create a supportive environment to present and discuss half-formed ideas, to map out a different kind of model that acknowledges the time it takes to make strong work and the benefits of collaboration and exchange. It’s not a case of privileging process over outcome, but of recognising that the final outcome is richer when the process is nurtured.

Continuing with this model, we have begun to organise the 2008 Gathering. The venue has been booked for Easter and the call for works-in-progress is now open; further information will be in the next newsletter.

Please contact Magdalena Aotearoa directly if you are interested in participating in any way - we need volunteers as well as presenting artists and participants.

Since the 07 Gathering ...

What’s happening with the works-in-progress presented at the 2007 Gathering? Diane Spodarek is now planning to produce her play and is calling for actors and crew (see page 4), while Interloper has had to deal with company members moving cities (also on page 4); and other artists report back here:

Greetings dear women and men of Madgalena,

Since our gathering I have been on a major expedition to research approaches to *Double Helix*:

I have been to France to study writing and directing with Phillipe Gaulier and took from this the need to have pleasure with whatever we create and bring that through into the performance. In Toronto I stumbled across some books about the topic at the university secondhand book store. They had some exciting photo plates I will use. At a party I met the head of research of a big DNA project and shall capitalize on his media info links. In Britan I went to the two key sites where the research was conducted and took photos. In Denmark at Odin Teatret for their ten day intensive, I revved up over the visual and musical side of the event. And now I am in the south of France trying to buckle down and write - wish me luck!

Nancy Fulford

**Magdalena Aotearoa National Gathering 2008
20-25 March 2008 (Easter)
Newtown Community Centre, Wellington**

INITIAL CALL FOR WORKS-IN-PROGRESS

Deadline: 31 January 2008

Six works-in-progress will be presented at the 2008 National Gathering. Each presentation will be followed by a structured feedback session.

We are interested in work at any stage of development, as long as the work can benefit from a work-in-progress presentation at this time. Minimal technical resources are available.

Proposed work must be women’s work (the primary creative person or people are women) and must demonstrate the potential to be developed into a finished work.

For more information:
email magdalen@actrix.co.nz
or visit <http://magdalena.actrix.co.nz>

The Bone Keeper’s story is blossoming out of the fertile mix of ideas from all the Magdalenas at Easter. She has come out of hibernation, a hard case, being midwifed by my husband Martin Howells and wonderful insightful Madeline McNamara for her coming into the world at the Christchurch Body Festival , September 19 - 23. She will laugh, sift the dirt, shiver and listen in the atmospheric subterranean space of Niebelheim, appropriate for a journey such as she goes on, underneath the SOFA Gallery at the Christchurch Arts Centre. A meeting with Janet Dunn will beget ideas for her costume, a longtime friend, designer David Thornley is shaping the space, and the eight intimate performance events hang there - celebrations of life and celebrations of the unique opportunity for artistic collaboration that Magdalena offers us as artists.

Helen Moran

The work I presented at the gathering at Easter has gone into metamorphosis. Suddenly realised I didn’t want to work alone practising the piano for months and have returned to an idea that I started 32 years ago.... The Visions of Joan of Arc. Its a shadow puppetry project for myself involving other folk in music and other forms of puppetry and clown for mid-winter 2008 production. I hope we get a grant to do it!

Rose Beauchamp

Interloper Regroups

Five months on from showing the work-in-progress of *What it means to be civilised*, we seem to be moving forwards again. As a fledgling company we were faced with the challenge of making physical theatre across distance as Bronny and Ksenja relocated to Auckland and the rest of us remained in Wellington. Initially we tried to have split rehearsals/training sessions in the two cities and occasionally I could get to Auckland, but for me it became unworkable.

For me, making physical theatre, making work that moves, demands a sensing between performers that only comes with time: time spent in close proximity; learning to move and think and breathe together. In my short years with Sally Rodwell, I watched her craft and coax work out of a group of people who had a shared language, a knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, of their physical connectedness. Roadworks was grounded in twice weekly rehearsals which rolled over and over. It is a way of working that I know and works with the rest of my life, a fine balance between full time work, three children and other creative work. I cannot commit to a week's block of rehearsal, even if it is paid, as my work leave is split between holidays with the family and touring with whatever project is ready to go.

So in Wellington, Interloper continues and the 'work in progress' continues to be just that. We train always once and sometimes twice a week and we have drawn in new faces who are attracted to the same possibilities of making work 'the slow way'. Our first devising steps together are focussed on making a mask each and developing a five minute piece to share in November. Then we will take *What it means to be civilised* off the shelf and begin to craft the guts of that strong piece of work into life again.

Chrissie Butler

Seeking actors and crew ...

The fabulous reading and feedback of my one-act play, *Winter*, at the Magdalena National Gathering gave me what I intuitively knew: *Winter* was ready for production. It was put on hold because I had to return to the U.S. and Canada in June for personal reasons, but now I plan to begin the work to see *Winter* on stage when I return to New Zealand on December 1st. It's a two-character play about cultural differences. I'm looking at the question, how can we protest what our leaders do in the name of peace when we don't have peace in our own hearts – in our homes, our cars, our jobs, our bed?

Any actors, directors, designers and producers interested in *Winter*, please send me an email (diane.spodarek@gmail.com) and I'll send you the script. *Winter* takes place in the present on the Kapiti Coast with two characters: American Woman & New Zealand Man. Second time around.

Diane Spodarek

Crows Feet



Crows Feet Dance Collective (above) presented a concert of new works as part of Wellington's 'Dance Your Socks Off' Festival, 7-9th September at the Wellington Performing Arts Centre. The programme featured Jan Bolwell's new choreography *Requiem*, created in memory of her sister who died of cancer a year ago, and *Take Five*, a new work by long-time Crows' Feet member Jenny Cossey. The regular company was joined by guest artist Suzanne Renner, from Dunedin.

Dunedin Fringe Dates

The 2008 Dunedin Fringe Festival takes place from 29 March to 13 April. Artist registration opens on 29 October, with information available on the web site by the end of September. There will be some grants available - apply by 16 November - and artists' meetings will be held in Dunedin on 1 October and Christchurch on 4 October. More information: www.dunedinfringe.org.

Je m'appelle Danielle

Inspired by the National Gathering in April, Shona Holborow has dusted off an old manuscript and got a group of theatre practitioners together to gather up their skirts, oil their bows and sharpen their lighting equipment. *Je m'appelle Danielle* will go into workshop at Paekakariki from October, climaxing in a performance and party on Sunday December 14th. First Kapiti, second the World (well maybe the next Magdalena hui...). Our brief is to have a magic creative and fun theatrical event ... for further information, contact Shona: (04) 9058867

Circus Wins Gold

Congratulations to Women's Circus Aotearoa, who returned from the Secret Circus Olympics with gold medals. They will demonstrate their award-winning items at St John's Church Hall, Paekakariki, on 29 September at 7pm. Koha entrance.

Operate Trust

Christchurch's Operate Trust report that they are planning to run their Feast of New Theatre as a biennial event; in the meantime they have a programme of Sunday playreadings running through until March 2008, and a workshops series, covering writing for the theatre, devising and producing. For further information, contact operate_trust@yahoo.com.au.

French performer and director France Herve is known in New Zealand for her work with *Under Lili's Balcony* during the 1990s. Now based in Paris, she continues to return to New Zealand regularly, and writes here about the process that led to the creation of the short film, *Hades' Window*, which had its New Zealand premier in Wellington in June.

For those who knew Sally Rodwell, the film *Hades' Window* may look coincidental to real events. However, the film was shot 4 years ago and nothing could have been predicted at that time. Its symbolism was inspired by a collaborative work which kept evolving through various spaces and times. I am very grateful to all the people who worked on the making of it with such dedication and patience ... A few months after the shooting, back in France, the death of my father stopped me from focussing on the editing ... eventually I received all the tapes from Wellington after hearing of Sally's suicide.

Thanks to Lucien Johnson who composed the original music for the film my brother and I finalised the editing of *Hades' Window* this year.

Its form, a black and white silent film suited the evocation of a mythical episode (the longing of Hades) but I feel it embodies another mystery which represents Sally's undeniable presence and grace. So in that sense, yes, my film is an homage to her.

In 2003, I directed an 8 week workshop for performers (all artistic areas together theatre, dance, circus, music). Once or twice per week, we would meet for a few hours in the music venue « the Space » in Newtown, thanks to the vital support of Jeff Henderson. The first aim was to offer a regular training (vocal and choreographic) for people willing to maintain or improve their multi-disciplinary skills and simply to play with others. From my background in contemporary dance and at the co-direction of *Under Lili's Balcony Theatre Co.* I kept developing techniques



to help non dancers to achieve physical challenges such as lifts and manipulations, using the breath as a source of propulsion and weightlessness. So people who came to this workshop were motivated to throw each other around the room, shift partners upside down and fly above the ground ...

The second half of the session was to work on improvisations in order to develop a specific stylised convention as a group. For us, the goal became to make a short film combining drama and choreography.

The framework was the study of archetypes from Greek mythology. Each person chose their God to work with through a card game of chance. My process required them to investigate their chosen character and its dualities (hero and villain) but within contemporary situations. When Sally's turn came to randomly choose a card out of 20, she picked up Hades - "the recluse and the Warlock". Hades, god of the Underworld.

I was not a close friend of Sally but I knew that the loss of her husband Alan one year before had left her in an introverted and sombre state. So I suggested she choose another card...to which she firmly replied, as sharp and stubborn as she could be sometimes: "No! my card is Hades, it is a sign, I think the card has chosen me". And that was that. There was no way I could have made her change her mind.

I chose to steer my direction away from depression and focus on exercises that would bring a sense of humour and unpredictability to the work. We worked with human puppetry and ventriloquism. This work was extremely



Workshop session at the Space in 2003



demanding because it required precision, listening and openness for others suggestions. It was also very funny and I saw Sally connect with this and not dwell in the macabre world. Each performer worked over time to develop and evolve their character through regular improvisations within the given constraints. Graceful moves, provocation and fantasy started to define an absurd world which became the world of the film.

I realised at that point that Hades should be the central element of the film. In fact, the entire creative group wanted Sally to be the lead role for the project and their improvisations converged naturally towards it.

The organisation of the Magdalena Festival in Brisbane interrupted the workshop for a while. However, it speeded up the process because half of the performers being part of the team who flew to Australia, we presented a choreographic piece (10mn) constructed around Hades from which I wrote the short film script. I applied for fundings to the French Embassy and they accepted to support the project. From that point, we organised the schedule within a short period

of time. Edward Davis and I choreographed precisely the path of the camera over 5 days rehearsals and then the whole group spent 2 days and a half shooting in Island Bay Studios and at Makara beach.

I had to return to France for family reasons afterwards... I had no idea I would never see Sally again nor that it would take me that long to find the strength to finalise this work...

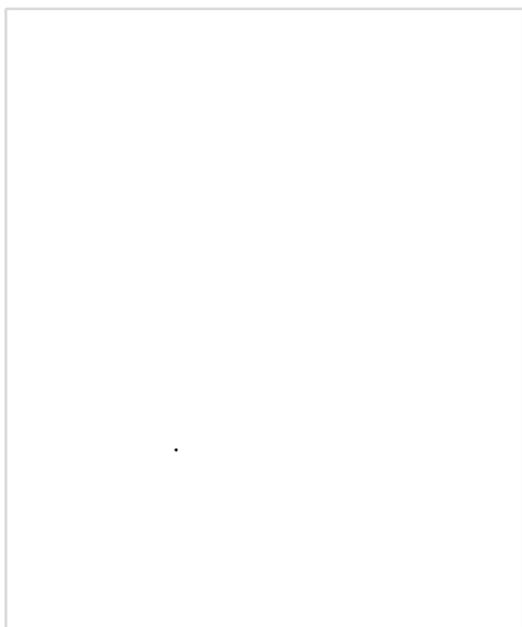
In Greek mythology, Hades is the god of the dark underworld and the keeper of the soldier's souls who bravely died at war. He creates endless festivities for them so that they never get bored. But unable to find light, he knows nothing about the outside world and is trapped inside his own head which is full of rich imagination. He falls in love with the young Persephone and drags her into his underworld.

She becomes depressed being far from her mother so eventually he accepts letting her go once a year to visit her mother in the Spring on agreement that she returns to him in the Fall.

What interested me in this myth was the theme of longing and it became the driving force of *Hades Window*. Waiting for something or someone to arrive.... How does longing move inside us? Longing is the condition of constant desire. There is no beginning nor end to longing but a stream of emotions we go through such as wish, fear, hope, enthusiasm, passion, nostalgia, impatience, and anger... In the act of longing, one faces ultimately the power of their own strength. Longing is in effect an inner battle and quest. For me, it is ultimately the call for change to arrive.

In the final frame of the film, Sally embodies this human fragile state as she holds her hand over her face, hiding from the sun whilst looking towards the horizon.

France Herve



Dawn Albinger, co-director of Magdalena Australia (2003) writes from Perth ...

There are whispers in the air. Across Australia (from Perth, to Maleny, to Melbourne, to Brisbane) and across the Tasman to the Land of the Long White Cloud, it seems some Antipodean women are beginning to wonder whether it might be possible to create another gathering of women theatre-makers. When would it happen? Where would it happen? What would it look like? These are questions I have been asking myself for the past six months since returning from Transit V in Denmark. Here are some of the thoughts and dreams whispering through my head and heart.

I presently find myself engaged with the notion of In/Justice as a creative 'irritant'. I'm attracted to angry women. I love to see anger transformed, through practice, to beauty and hope. What it is we are compelled to speak/sing about and, inversely, where are we silent and why?

Mary-Wynn Ashford, a Canadian peace activist touring recently in Australia, says that in the West we are at the beginning of a social revolution that will move the world towards Justice. She quotes surprising statistics from the Human Security Report which attributes this changing trend to the strengthening of The World Court, International Law, and An Active Civil Society. To this list Mary-Wynn adds: Women. In countries where women make up 40% or more of the workforce the likelihood of that nation going to war is greatly reduced. Queensland poet MTC (Margi) Cronin feels that justice is a process rather than an attainable state, and whilst 'injustice' (or 'discomfort' or 'pain') may motivate the creative act, our creations are not to be confused with solutions. I return again to the words of Jill Greenhalgh, "If we are going to change the world with our theatre then we have to be bloody good at what we do!" Are we trying to change the world? Am I?

At Transit V in February this year I was struck by the ways in which so many women are responding through their work to things being out of balance: Ana Corea responding to more than two decades of civil war in



Dawn performing her solo show, PERFORM(E), at Transit V, January 2007. Photo by Rossella Viti

Peru and offering something beautiful and hopeful without glossing over hard facts; Anet Hennemann (Italy) working with heart - and gut-wrenching stories of refugees and homeless people; Brigitte Cirila and Vox Polyphonique addressing domestic violence with sophistication and wit; Jill Greenhalgh speaking about her new work *The Acts*, a way to respond to numerous unsolved feminicides in Northern Mexico.

Another form of injustice is the invisibility experienced by older women. Else Marie Laukvik presented her work demonstration and was remembered for her role as an actress in the Odin Teatret. Others encouraged her to continue inhabiting this role.

Closer to home, Suzon Fuks recently brought to my attention Indian actress Kalairani, who works hard to preserve her Tamil language and culture through theatre, even as she is lauded as a "Bollywood" movie star: another woman redressing imbalance through her work.

Being at Transit V, and in the ensuing months, I realise I am interested in how we create the conditions for us to meet through our work and how we make it economically viable to do so.

And so I have spent the past six months exploring interesting (and often non-traditional theatre) locations, and having quiet conversations with a handful of artists. Following my nose has led me to places in Maleny (Sunshine Coast hinterland), Caboolture (depressed satellite city of Brisbane), Nungeena (sixteen hectares at the foot of Mount Beerwah - mother mountain - owned and managed by Indigenous Women), and Perth (literally the most isolated city on earth). Personally I would love to see something happen in at least two of these places.

My thinking is contained. With economic viability in mind I've been exploring a core concept of collaboration and co-facilitation of workshops; for example, pairing six international artists with six Australian ones to run six 'workshops'. There could also be performances by and forums with the invited artists. I am interested primarily in creating the conditions for the artists to meet but also there is a strong need for community engagement. I continue to meet women who are hungry for connections and development in their craft. The themes that excite me personally are around Justice and Hope and how we are responding through our work to Things Being out of Balance - in our countries, our communities, our families, ourselves.

I am dedicated to creating an event in July or September 2009. I would love to pull together with anyone else who has a dream to make something happen and to pool resources. Perhaps something could flow from Perth to east coast Australia to New Zealand, or back the other way? I look forward to the dialogue and in the coming together. Aroha,

Dawn Albinger

Issue 12: Women - Theatre - Song

The twelfth issue of The Open Page has arrived, and it's gone multimedia! Or at least, bi-media.

In keeping with the theme - Women-Theatre-Song - the journal comes with a CD featuring 14 songs from the contributors. There are songs from performances, songs handed down from grandmothers, traditional songs and original compositions; some are sad, some funny, some to get up and dance to.

Within the pages of the journal there are in-depth articles about women and song, news of women's theatre projects around the world, and Madeline McNamara's *Farewell To Sally*, in memory of Sally Rodwell.

Editorial

Cherifa Kersit, a Berber from Morocco, appeared suddenly. She was singing. Her strong voice brought a landscape of mountains and deserts into the room. She was joined by Ni Nyoman Candri, who entered from the opposite side, introducing the Balinese sounds that accompany the temple dances of her lush tropical island. Then Luisa Calcumil, a Mapuche Indian from Argentina, came in. Dressed in her ritual costume, she carried a seed in her hand as a good omen that she wanted to share. Meanwhile, smiling and confident, she directed her song to everyone present. I added my introductory speech to their voices. This was the opening of the Transit 4 Festival in Denmark in 2004. The songs communicated beyond borders, language, cultural references and tradition, generating an emotional tie between listeners and performers.

Songs bring people together. A song remembers; it gives access to a place some call spiritual, others psychical or personal, and others still historical or social. Song is a poetic structure, a melodic expression, the music of everyday life. Song is rhyme, rhythm, composition and voice. Song belongs to the private sphere and to the space around us: it connects the intimate being to the outside world. Song belongs to that basic level of theatre that conveys energy, imposes presence, attracts or generates distance, creates space and evokes images, reveals and conceals personalities and feelings.

Many grandmothers and some mothers emerge in the articles of this issue, as if to indicate that songs had a stronger influence on our lives in the past. This is perhaps true in the personal sphere but at the same time the articles reveal how connected singing and speaking are and how strong is the impact of song in our craft. Two articles concentrate on dance as the song of the body in theatre. Other articles remind us how the dramaturgy of meaning depends on intonation as well as on words. Music is everywhere: in the sound of life, of instruments, of voices; material to be inspired by and an artefact to



offer. The mythical sirens of literature and the seductive and dangerous sirens of our contemporary world continue to cry out against injustice and discrimination.

The Editorial Board of The Open Page decided to accompany this issue with a compilation CD of excerpts provided by the authors, to complement the written word with the aural sensation of the vibration of the voices and music. And while listening, we start working on an Open Page Publication under the title Theatre - Women - Letters, digging out from the past words exchanged on paper which mix personal and professional experiences and plans. Much of women's testimony in theatre history comes from letters, and up until ten or so years ago, when we all began to use e-mail for communication, these were still an important form of exchange for many of us working in international theatre projects. We would like to discover the secrets in these letters, secrets that might be useful for our future activities, in the same way as we have done with the songs which accompany, inspire, organise and reveal a sense of our work as women in theatre: an emotion-filled tide flying over the clouds to reach people in other continents and eras.

*Julia Varley
Holstebro, August 2007*

Order The Open Page

Copies can be ordered from Odin Teatret by emailing odin@odinteatret.dk; alternatively, send a cheque for \$30 to Magdalena Aotearoa, PO Box 27-300, Wellington, along with your name and address (selected back issues available for \$25 each).

Magdalena Sin Fronteras: 8-18 January 2008, Santa Clara, Cuba

In Cuba, difficult economic and political conditions are forcing the country into survival strategies. In the midst of these difficulties, the arts continue as the shield of the nation; artists maintain a critical and committed view, consistent with the dignity they have always protected.

Magdalena Sin Fronteras I (2005) was a cultural success involving theatre people and intellectuals from all over the isle. The biggest educational event in the history of Cuban theatre, it was high quality because of the shows presented; and moving because visitors were confronted with an alive and challenging reality. For many of the teachers, the experience put into action the solidarity and commitment of the spaces of cultural resistance where human dignity is, after all the most important thing.

That's why we are committed to re-enact Magdalena Without Frontiers in spite of the current difficulties. We want to maintain and defend spaces of real encounter; to make possible new encounters, to hear other voices, to discover how to invent strategies of solidarity; and to give the main role to women theatre makers who every day must find the energy to persist in the path of creativity and the commitment to what we do.

We can't offer luxurious conditions for the work; but we can offer good conditions for the work; and that should be the most important part of

Roxana Piñeda

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Estudio Teatral de Sta.Clara



(centre) and Sally (right) at the end of Magdalena Sin Fronteras, 2005

Miss Carter's Magic Balloon Ride

Thaumaturgical Secretary for Demeter's Dark Ride - An Attraction, and co-organiser of the 2007 Gathering, the inimitable Miss Emma Carter reports from afar:

Jet-lagged, flu-ridden and several kilos lighter....yep, I've just returned from another brilliant/exhausting/exhilarating summer (Scottish version thereof) at the Gilded Balloon - one of the largest venues of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. We had a severe lack of NZ representation in the venue this year - this was left solely in the hands of the self-titled 'Kiwi Mafia' Front of House team, of which I was one of the managers. Our Aussie counterparts had some very successful exports this year though with five female stand-up solo shows. Sista She and the House of the Holy Bootay is an Australian hip-hop/comedy group, who, if it existed, deserved the Spirit of the Fringe award. Their enthusiasm for the 'church' of Sista She was infectious and relentless - a complete joy to have around for the season - and they appeared in just about every guest slot available. The other notable Australian appearance was from Ali McGregor (of La Clique fame). To be honest, I didn't see those shows in their entirety. In fact I hardly saw a damn thing, but that's

Theme: Actresses-Directors

What motivates many actresses to start working as directors; and what paths do they follow in the construction of shows? What strategies protect the work within groups, and what are the paths of survival as leaders of creative processes and theatre groups?

Confirmed attendees: Jill Greenhalgh (UK); Julia Varley (Odin Teatret, Denmark); Cristina Castrillo and Bruna Gusberti (Teatro delle Radici, Switzerland); Geddy Aniksdal (Grenland Friteater, Norway); Déborah Hunt (Maskhunt, Puerto Rico); Patricia Ariza (Teatro La Candelaria, Colombia); Clara Inés Ariza (Teatro Tierra, Colombia); Elizabeth de Rosa (Singapore); Iben Nagel Rasmusen (Odin Teatret, Denmark); Flora Lauten y Raquel Carrió (Teatro Buendía, Cuba); Nelda Castillo (El Ciervo Encantado, Cuba); Estudio Teatral de Santa Clara (Cuba). (Note: There are more artists to be confirmed)

International Participants: admission is open until **November 30**. Only 20 international participants will be accepted. You will be responsible for your airfare to the city of Santa Clara and your expenses for accommodation and food. We can help you to find accommodations near

part of the parcel working in Edinburgh at that time of the year. I was working 13+ hours a day, every single day, so there's a certain occupational hazard involved in disappearing into a warm, dark room for an hour in that you tend to be the one snoring in the corner, despite the quality of the work on stage. Never a good look from the staff!

I did manage to catch a small amount of brilliance though: *Miracle in Rwanda*, written and performed by Leslie Lewis Sword (New York) tells the tale of Rwandan genocide survivor Immacule Ilibagiza, who spent 91 days hidden in a small bathroom with 7 other Tutsi women. This is a harrowing, beautifully told tale in which Leslie simply steps in and out of a marked square in the space that represents the bathroom as she makes flawless transitions between Immacule, her various family members, the priest to whom the bathroom belonged, and the Hutu aggressors. I missed seeing this in the intimate 50-seater space it was originally programmed - it sold out every day so we had to add a second show in a larger venue. It certainly still worked, though I think there would have been a certain magic in being within a couple of meters of this woman!

Miss C (Emma Carter)

Magdalena Australia

A group of eight women met in Brisbane on 27 August, to catch up and talk "things Magdalena". Anna Yen brought the video documentary of the 2003 PETA festival, *Changing She-Images - Women Re-imag(in)ing the World*, held in March 2003, which most of us had not seen. It gave a great overview of the festival's extensive programme and included interviews with many of the performers as well as talking to the organisers about their political motivations. We also saw a short video of one of Anna's current collaborative projects, and Anna spoke about her attendance at Magdalena Singapore (2006) and *Piezas Conectadas* in Barcelona in March this year. Helen Varley Jamieson spoke about her experiences at Transit V in January, and the Magdalena Aotearoa Gathering in April and everyone shared projects they are working on at the moment.

The group swelled to 15 for the next meeting, on September 17. Everyone introduced themselves and spoke about their work, then Sue Rider read Dawn Albinger's letter (see p.9). There was enthusiasm to hold an event at Easter next year in Brisbane, similar to the Magdalena Aotearoa Gathering, and something along the lines of what Dawn is imagining in September 2009, perhaps in collaboration with Magdalena Aotearoa. Suzon Fuks then showed some of her experimental videos.

The group will next meet on 29 October, and there is an email list for interested people to join.

For more information, email: scotiam@optusnet.com.au



Miff Revisits the Edinburgh Fringe

In 1999, I left NZ and headed straight for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Not to work, just to check it out, and to give myself a sense of direction besides that of finding a job, and haircut and a place to live. I almost stayed there, but some kind of 6th sense kept me moving (until I got to Norway, that is).

2007 and I am, against all odds, doing a masters in theatre at the University of Oslo. At the end of last semester, we (me and 3 fellow students) decided to make a study tour: destination Edfringe. We arrived for the last 5 nights, having sorted out a packed programme for ourselves.

I only saw one truly bad piece of theatre which was an experimental/improv piece performed by some young, English, half-naked and

aggressive students of theatre - one of which presented the worst (and therefore quite offensive) Australian accent I have ever heard.

The best piece I saw was Alice Bell, by Lonetwin theatre (www.lonetwin.no). Theatre in the traverse, a simple sceneography of a 25 by 3 metre green dance floor - a playing field for the sometimes wonderful but ultimately tragic events of Alice Bell's life; a story, we are told, they made up themselves.

Through song and meta-telling the tale is strategically laid out before us with the use of simple props - school chairs, a table and 5 ukelales. I loved it, and it's not often a work of theatre inspires me to say that.

Greetings from the land of Nor,

Miff Moore-Evenson
Oslo, Norway

Eugenia at Shaky Isles

Lorae Parry's play *Eugenia* will be presented in London by Shaky Isles Theatre, 21-28 September. Set in the early 1900s, it tells the story of an Italian immigrant woman who passes as a man in New Zealand.

Shaky Isles Theatre (www.shakyislestheatre.com/), the UK's only New Zealand theatre company, was founded by Toi Whakaari graduate Emma Deakin in 2006. The company is dedicated to presenting culturally diverse and innovative theatre in the UK and giving New Zealand theatre artists and playwrights a platform for their work in the UK and abroad.

come into the present moment!



Sally Rodwell's monologues, *Gonne Strange Charity*, can be purchased from Magdalena Aotearoa for \$25 (includes postage & packaging). All proceeds go to Ruby Brunton. Send cheques along with postal address to Magdalena Aotearoa Trust, PO Box 27-300, Wellington.