**European Polytheatre**

**Report – 5th workshop in Thessaloniki | 1st - 4th of July 2014**

**“The Boats are arriving”**

**Workshop on historical plays**

**Day 1 – *Hello, bonjour, γειά σου, ciao, hallå, olá***

Several of the workshop participants arrived earlier to Thessaloniki, and found both great scenery and hospitality. Everyone was excited and eager to start working from day 1. The first part in the programme was a tour around the city of Thessaloniki. We meet before the White Tower, and took a buss, that drove us past several important sites in Thessaloniki, which gave us participants a well needed overview of the city and it’s unique offerings. On the tour we saw how intermeshed the history is in Thessaloniki, ancient times is coexisting with the present in a very unique manner. After the participant’s had a lunch we meet for the first time to work with the performance. Bruno Mathelart - the director of the performance and main coordinator of the workshop - outlined in his usual inspirational manner the task in front off us. This was done in the Music Centers rehearsal studio, a place we returned to every day during the workshop.

Every workshop session Bruno started with a short brain-gym session. In order to get us all into a more focused state of mind. Something that was truly necessary with all the great things with Thessaloniki all around us, and the nice people in the workshop not the least. The physical part of the workshop was mainly conducted by Véronique Damoiseaux. In a workshop manner we worked with different kinds of physical exercises: solo, in pairs and in larger group constellations, and this material seamlessly evolved into scenes in the performance.

As a part of the workshop we all went out from the rehearsal room and practiced our sequence of seven movements on the pier with the Aegean sea as audience, and few other onlookers.

**Day 2 – Throw-back wednesday**

A very special day, with the excursion to Vergina. A buss took us to the village of Vergina and there we were guided through the Great Tumulus. It contains the royal tomb of Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, as well as Alexander IV of Macedon, the son of Alexander the Great. The excursion was deeply profound and it felt very privileged to stand in the Great Tumulus, surrounded by history of such depth. To actually walk on the burial site, to see the weapons and utensils made for such a long time ago, and to see the incredibly beautiful handicraft of that time. Such as the golden grave crown of Philip II of Macedon.

After we came back to Thessaloniki, the workshop continued. More brain gym with Bruno, more of the exercises of Véronique. And a introduction to Belgian culture ”The Belgian dance”, a dance that had been performed in different cities in Belgium some years ago. Responsible for the seemingly impossible feat to teach us the dance was Marie MoroYarguelles, and she did it with great patience and elegance.

Bruno had asked the different countries to prepare a migration song for the workshop, and now was the time to sing the songs for the first time in the group. It was a great mix of songs, that truly added distinct flavor to the performance. Every country contributing with their own cultural background through a song.

The evening we all spent in the hillside of Thessaloniki, at Kreonidis restaurant. A beautiful place, with wonderful food. And perhaps one of the most dangerous places in Greece to be a waiter at. In short a wonderful evening. Some of us ventured even higher, and visited the Trigoniou Tower and experienced the grand view of Thessaloniki by night.

**Day 3 – A walk through the town and rehearsing at the same time**

We all gathered under the shadow of the White Tower. Here we started with rehearsals for the first scene, the reception of the boats with the migrants, done with dance and song. There after we marched with our EU-flag, to the next stop of the performance, to the Roman site by the Navarinou square. The rehearsals here was about movement, positioning, reaching the audience, communicating and filling the space (read: the square). Challenging but nothing compared to what we were up to later on during the next day. We walked from the Navarinou square (with our flag) passing by the Hagia Sophia, there two songs should take place. And from there to Modiano, which is the market that was closest to our hotel.

Now Bruno gave us a very exciting task, to study the vendors of Modiano. We should look for movements, and sounds/words/shouts, that we should memorize. To create our own little improvisation. After we had done this, we had lunch.

At 14.00 we started with rehearsals in the Music center. Brain-gym as usual, and then we got a taste of a yoga-inspired warm-up. We were also working on the market scene, dividing us in different groups, vendors and buyers, and learned the song ”Havenu Shalom”. We also had another go at the Belgian Dance.

The day was intense and it was decided that we should have no common dinner this day, so if anyone wanted to go to bed early it should be possible.

**Day 4 – The Grand Day**

The last day of rehearsals and also the day of the performance. The rehearsals started with brain-gym now at the White Tower. The finer details of several scenes were worked upon.

At 16.00 we meet right outside of Modiano, the market was not yet fully closed when we arrived so the sales were still on. So now a very exciting rehearsal took place, where we amongst venders and buyers tried to learn new choreography, directions, lines, and songs. Under some parts of the rehearsals it was more the vendors (the real vendors) that was the loudest and most active. The greek song about Thessaloniki made them melt and sing-along though.

At 19.30 parts of the performance team meet by the harbor to board the boats, the Thessaloniki sea scouts were ready to take us out on the sea. They did it with humor and elegance. Just in time we arrived to the performance site, where the singing and dancing already had started.

The performance went on as a locomotive. From site to site, with texts, dance, movement. Two very touching moments were the songs performed at Hagia Sophia and the wonderful duet at the Jewish museum. The performance ended were we all started to perform outdoors, at the pier. Here the Belgian Dance was performed, and then the bouzuki night started. Dance, and music. Audience and performers all together. A wonderful manifestation for the performance, workshop and the whole project.

We were all extremely satisfied with the performance, and very happy for the audience response we all got.

**Day 5 – A day at the beach**

Now the workshop had come to an end, and the project had had it’s official finale, what could be better than to go to the Sani Beach. We had a wonderful day, enjoying the sea, the beach and the sun.