

MEG STUART & TIM ETHELLES

Shown and Told

KAAI
THEATER

21 > 23/11 20:30 | KAAISTUDIO'S
DANCE / PERFORMANCE | 60 MIN | IN ENGLISH

**Like boarded up windows,
like stone steps,
like the sound of voices from a far away room,
like the smell of burning,
like the way that condensation forms on windows,
like searching for something,
like searching through rooms.**

– Tim Etchells

NL *Shown and Told* is een dynamische performance-collage, opgebouwd uit gestructureerde improvisatie en associatieve sprongen. Het is een ontmoeting tussen choreograaf en danser Meg Stuart en schrijver/performancekunstenaar Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment). Samen gaan ze op zoek naar de relatie tussen beweging, beeld en het lichaam als performance-instrument. Steunend op levendige beelden, zowel fysiek als talig, creëren de twee performers een dialoog die afwisselend stoer, ontroerend en komisch is. *Shown and Told* ging in 2016 in première in de Kaaistudio's – en keert nu terug na een uitvoerige toernee.

FR *Shown and Told*, une rencontre entre la chorégraphe et danseuse Meg Stuart et l'auteur et créateur de spectacles Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment), est un collage dynamique composé d'improvisations structurées et de sauts associatifs. Ensemble, ils partent en quête de la relation entre le mouvement, l'image et le corps en tant qu'instrument du spectacle vivant. S'appuyant sur des images vivantes, aussi bien physiques que langagières, les deux artistes créent un dialogue alternativement dur, émouvant et comique. La première de *Shown and Told* a eu lieu en 2016 aux Kaaistudio's et y revient à présent après une longue tournée.

EN *Shown and Told* is a dynamic performance-collage founded on structured improvisation and associative leaps. It is an encounter between choreographer and dancer Meg Stuart and writer/performance artist Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment). Together, they explore the relationship between movement, images and the body as a performance instrument. Using lively images, both physical and linguistic, the two performers develop a dialogue that is by turns tough, moving and comical. *Shown and Told* premiered at the Kaaistudios in 2016 – and it is now returning after an extensive tour.

'FOR ME, COLLABORATION IS BEING OUT OF FAMILIAR TERRITORY'

an interview with Tim Etchells
by Eva Decaesstecker (Kaaitheater, November 2016)

They've known each other for decades and worked together several times before. *Shown and Told* is their latest collaboration and consists of 'a structured improvisation'. I spoke with Tim Etchells on an early November morning about improvisation, collaboration and above all, about Meg Stuart. Etchells: 'My connection to Meg's work was always around shape shifting and moving.'

You have worked with Meg Stuart in the past. How come you're both working together again?

Meg and I have indeed been working together for a pretty long time. I contributed text to a couple of her productions in the beginning of 2000 or so and I still follow her work when I can. There has always been a connection and a set of things that we share as interests and concerns, even though our work is very different. We found each other again almost by chance a couple of summers ago, when we were both involved in Boris Charmatz's improvisation project *Expo Zéro* in Berlin. We were part of a larger group working on different things in that project. Meg and I chanced upon a couple of improvisational structures that seemed very interesting and asked for further investigation – so that was a kind of re-connection. For the piece we developed that material and added many new things into this evening, combining fixed material with elements of structured improvisation.

Where do you get your forms and material for the work from?

For me this project fits with a couple of other things that I have been busy with – the solo *Broadcast/ Looping Pieces* which I made a few years ago and an ongoing collaboration with violinist Aisha Orazbayeva, both of which involve me working with language and improvisation. Basically, over the last twenty years I have gathered a collection of language fragments that I haven't put into a finished text – it's an ongoing collection of language material, a notebook or a scrapbook that includes texts I've written alongside things from the newspaper and bits of overheard conversation as well as things from movies or the internet. Working with that material allows me to speak in different situations and make

different connections – it's a raw material that I can activate in many ways.

For *Shown and Told* are you working with spoken materials, whereas Meg does the physical form?

In some ways yes, at least for parts of the piece that distinction holds. But on the other hand, the desire to work with this collection of language fragments is also wanting to put them into physicality: to put them into embodiment and into time and space. In that sense, they become related with physicality. They go from being words on the computer screen or on the page to words in a body, in the air. I think, the way I am trying to work with the language is also about how the language sits in my body and how it animates me in space. Even at the level of breathing it becomes very physical, because sometimes I'm trying to speak very fast or trying to describe or respond to what Meg is doing. It has always a kind of movement aspect to it. For me, these two things are not really separate – as ephemeral as the voice is, it is still connected to the body. At the same time, there are also moments within the work where I'm not speaking and Meg is speaking, or we're both not speaking. It shifts in several directions.

You mentioned there are common concerns between Meg and you. What kind of concerns are you talking about?

The biggest and simplest connection is our common idea of a human being as a kind of meeting point for many different voices, impulses or presences. That might be physically, but also linguistically. For me the connection to Meg's work was always around shape shifting and moving. The instability of the human subject and its presence. The way people are many things in performance but also in the world. Many forces, narratives and possibilities move through us in any given moment. I think we both comment that in different ways. It always has been there in my work with language especially and I see related ideas very strongly in a lot of Meg's work on movement. I think the ground we meet in has been that around these ideas.

What are qualities of Meg as a performer that makes it interesting for you to collaborate with her? What do you really appreciate of her?

There is a very sort of deep listening that Meg is doing to what she is and what she is made from.

CREDITS

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY Tim Etchells & Meg Stuart | LIGHT DESIGN Gilles Roosen | COSTUMES Annabel Heyse | TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Jitske Vandenbussche | LIGHT TECHNICIAN Tom Bruwier | TOUR MANAGER Delphine Vincent | PRODUCTION Damaged Goods | MEG STUART & DAMAGED GOODS ARE SUPPORTED BY the Government of Flanders and the Flemish Community Commission

You see that in Meg, when she is moving and when she is constructing a piece. It's a commitment to understanding the world in a complex and individual sort of way. I contributed to a couple of her larger pieces at the beginning of the years 2000 and what I really liked was the sense of Meg searching for things, searching for the work. The rehearsal room was full of impulses and opinions and inputs from other people – so much so that at times she might have looked snow-blind or overwhelmed. But over time I realized that she was very carefully taking in all of these possibilities, sifting and organizing them and producing an extraordinary sort of balanced compositional work from all of it. That's something that I admire.

In my own practice with Forced Entertainment and in other contexts, I have another version of that same process I guess, but it's always very useful to see somebody else working through material in that way. And in particular the way that Meg orchestrates chaos - that's is really something that I celebrate and learn from. Maybe that's the fundamental thing when you are working in performance: organizing the material, deciding what's there and what not. It's a common creative question I guess, but I'm fascinated by different approaches.

What is for you so powerful about collaboration in general?

The group Forced Entertainment feels like home to me, where I could say 'in that room I know exactly where I am'. It's 32 years of figuring out how to be together. Other collaborations are usually about being off balance: being out of 'familiar territory' in a conversation or framework that I don't fully understand. That's definitely what's there with Meg: I think I can articulate about 30-40% of what we're doing but for the rest, there is not really a language. That means that in the process we are sort of blundering – the work, when we are in the studio together, is ahead of my ability to describe or articulate it. I like that. Just like in any collaborations that I value apart from the company: I like that feeling of creating a space between us, where different kinds of rules can operate.

Has improvisation always been an important part of your work?

In my work, beginning with the company, there wasn't really improvisation. There were only structures, roles and systems. Then there came more improvisation in the rehearsal room, but the aim was to make something where everything was fixed. Improvisation was a kind of tool in the studio, but it wasn't something you did in public. Then at a certain point, I think driven by a fascination of what happens in improvisation, there was the desire to create structures that would allow the improvisation in public as well. It's trying to find ways to bring that work into public, more radically I suppose. Of course, when it comes to *Shown and Told* – over time it gets

more solid. We know more and more what we're doing or what the options are.

Are there ways of working that you see in Meg's practice that you take over in your own?

Years ago, Meg saw this monologue piece of mine, which I wrote for the American actor Jim Fletcher, called *Sight is the sense that a dying person tends to lose first*. It's a monologue. In an hour, it is trying to describe everything in the world with no particular order. Jim has this very strong, blank, calm delivery and he brings the whole text in this way. He doesn't really vary much. It is very compelling and also sort of strange because it really keeps you in this place and moves around very little. After the performance, Meg said to me that she wondered what it would be choreographically. And I think, when I am watching Meg's work, I am often thinking what it means to me in terms of my work with language and performance. What would it be to incorporate this or translate it? What could I learn from this? If I translate this into my doing, what would it be? Of course these are impossible questions to answer, because there is no direct translation. However, it is one of the ways that one gets drawn into another territory: by this thought experiment about taking on something from somebody's practice. At the same time we do share this interest in the fragment and moving from one state to another. I tend to think about that in linguistic terms or in narrative terms, but I know that connects very deeply to energy and physical proposition in space. So I know that when Meg's talking about those things, the route or connection to what I'm doing is always quite strong.

There is something about the relation between language and doing, language and physicality, language and image. Language can be a kind of controlling or fixing force in relation to image or to doing, which often seems to be more ambiguous and less defined. Something that I have struggled with in my work since the beginning: being in love with language, but also trying not to let it be this controlling, fixing form. To upset the capacity for closing things down that spoken language has. One of the things that Meg and I are exploring, perhaps, is trying to find ways of working with language and image and language and movement, that allow the language to be open, poetic and on the same level as other kinds of material. I think that this is really important: to allow the language to exist as texture or musicality or energy rather than semantics. A lot of my work in the last few years has been focused on this space between language as a conceptual force and language as a musical or poetic force. *Shown and Told* work might be another route around that, in collaboration with Meg.

MORE #TENDER ART

ANNELEEN KEPPENS

Movement Essays

Inspired by the essay in the tradition of Michel de Montaigne, Anneleen Keppens has choreographed and will dance three *Movement Essays*. Each piece explores a different elemental dimension of abstract dance – while at the same time making associations outside dance. Together they form an intimate and multifaceted dance solo.

Kaaistudio's | 18 & 19/12 | dance

ORLA BARRY

Spin, Spin, Scheherazade

In this humorous and passionate monologue performed by Einat Tuchman, Orla Barry explores the boundaries of art, gender, and the rural everyday. She describes the experiences of an artist who returns from the city to her rural roots and is reborn as a hybrid 'farmer-artist'. Coincidence, humour and a subtle language game are the ingredients of a production that blends oral historiography with personal memories.

Kaaistudio's | 5 & 6/03 | performance | EN

KATJA DREYER & KAREN RØISE KIELLAND

Cry me a river. The quest for the source

An expedition to the source of the Styx has taken Karen Røise Kielland and Katja Dreyer to the heart of Greek mythology. They breathe new life into an old myth through numerous encounters with local residents and their stories about the river. The performance begins with multiplicity and chaos, but the closer to the source, the more order and monochrome silence begin to surface.

Kaaistudio's | 5 & 6/02 | theatre | EN

SARAH & CHARLES

In the hands of puppets

In this performance about information fast food, vanity, fiction and the urge for affirmation, the artistic duo Sarah & Charles goes in search of the ultimate form of submission. In an age in which social media and the internet are expanding our view of the world, our minds appear to be narrowing emotionally. The performers invite you to a creative wellness centre where you can put your decision-making on hold.

Kaaistudio's | 22/04 | performance | EN

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