

Between Art and Commerce

Everyday Practice in Modern-Day Contact Puppetry

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Abstract

Contact puppetry is a western interpretation of the ancient Japanese *bunraku* puppetry. In the last decade or so, the popularity seems to have grown exponentially. As part of the performing arts, contact puppetry is a creative industry. These industries are characterized by seven properties, according to Richard Caves in his book *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). By means of three modern-day contact puppetry productions (*War Horse*, Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, and *A Dog's Heart*), the aim of this thesis is to identify if everyday practice in contact puppetry follows the creative industry 'rules' as portrayed by Caves' properties. And if so, what can be (preliminary) said from a cultural economic point of view about the economic and artistic reasons to use contact puppetry?

Key Words

Contact puppetry, bunraku, creative industries, Richard Caves, War Horse.

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Word of Thanks

*Jamais seul, jamais cent et toujours dans la foule
Être mille ou cent mille et tout le monde qui l'écoute
Il est là le jour qui se rêve
Le voilà le jour qui se rêve*

Robin des Bois, 2013

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Preface

I must have been about six years old and cute as a button. Absolutely no match for my loving dad, who could not resist my big begging eyes when it was time to go to bed. And so I got to stay up late and watch TV, lying on the couch, curled up against him. I'm guessing that's a pretty common picture for dad's and their little girls. And mostly it's just one of my many fond childhood memories. Nevertheless, it's also the start of a lifelong trauma.

One night I remember asking my dad which film we were going to watch. 'A fun movie about a doll' was his answer. And it was! I loved it and over time I saw many of the sequels as well. The one where the doll had a bride was my absolute favorite. It was not until many years later I linked my ridiculous, but genuine fear of dolls with my childhood acquaintance with 'Chucky', the (killer-)doll from this horror film sequence.

Usually, fear of dolls is a trauma you can live a long and happy life with. However last year I got an internship at Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. To create the illusion of an underwater world on stage, the creative team used many theatrical solutions – one of them being puppetry. Puppetry in my opinion was just a fancy word for freakishly large dolls and so I was not too happy with the artistic excesses of the creative team. Until I met Toby.

Toby Olié is a smart, funny, sweet, grown-up man who still likes to play with dolls. A lot. But the most unusual thing about him is that his enthusiasm is more contagious than the common cold. Before you know it, you're talking with him for an hour about this very small aspect of a doll –sorry, puppet– without even realizing that it's an unusual subject and a rather odd way to spend your time. When you've met Toby and talked to him about his dolls –puppets– you will just have to face the fact that he brainwashed you, but in the nicest possible way.

Even though I'm still a pediophobiac, the infection got to me too. Before I knew what hit me, I spend hours and hours of watching YouTube video's and reading all kinds of websites and articles, finding myself somewhere between sheer horror and a childlike excitement. Performing arts might have been my first love, but puppetry became my... well, to quote Madame Bovary: 'he was becoming her mistress' (Flaubert, 1857: 316).

However, not all my geese were swans and I noticed that there was something weird going on. Puppetry is an ancient art form, but there has been a resurgence in the past couple of years. Not that strange, as many things come and go. But still, something bothered me. After thinking about it for a couple of days I realized what had struck me: the economic recession.

This recent rise of puppetry came in a time of economic disturbance, worries, and depression. A growing need for art in economically stressful times has happened before, but this particular art form happens to be a rather expensive one. In a time where many companies and

initiatives go bankrupt, this costly form thrives. Reason enough for me to wonder. Reason enough for me to extend my newly found interest in puppetry to my academic life. This thesis is the result of my academic curiosity.

General Introduction

Puppetry is an ancient art form that consists of many subcategories. Nowadays we're still very familiar with puppetry in many forms, shapes and sizes. In The Netherlands all kids grow up with *Jan Klaassen*, the famous hand puppet and his wife *Katrijn*. Other well known forms of puppetry are ventriloquists and marionettes. And what to say of Sesame Street and the Muppets?!

Most of the forms of puppetry mentioned above focus on kids and/or comedy. Lately, and I use that term loosely, puppetry has seen a revival in terms of quantity as well as audience. The number of (successful) puppetry performances has grown and the target audience shifted from children to all ages (or in some cases not suited for children at all).

One form of puppetry especially has benefited from this revival. It's a modern adjustment to the ancient *bunraku* puppetry, very technical and mechanical in its execution. Finn Caldwell, renowned puppeteer, calls this form of puppetry contact puppetry, as the puppeteers (almost always more than one, as is common in *bunraku* puppetry) are in close contact to the puppet they are operating (Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell). During the course of this thesis I will use Finn's connotation 'contact puppetry', since it describes the act of puppeteering in more than one way – as will become clear.

I came into contact with contact puppetry last year, when I was an intern at Disney's The Little Mermaid by Stage Entertainment. The puppet designer and puppet director Toby Olié got me interested in his work through his sheer enthusiasm. Within no time I found myself watching video fragments of and reading about puppetry. There was however one thing that I couldn't put my finger on: why the revival?

Puppetry is by some considered to be a cheap art form, but in fact it's rather expensive – especially a form like contact puppetry. The puppets are highly technical/mechanical and take great skill, time and effort –and thus money– to create and work with. Once you've got them, they'd might last for a long time, but they need multiple 'handlers': puppeteers. And as William Baumol and William Bowen (1966) taught us, labor is a relatively expensive.

But if puppetry is this expensive, why is it so successful in economically harder times and even during the worst of the recent depression? To figure that out, I turned to cultural economics hoping for an answer. To my surprise I found that cultural economists have had no interest in puppetry – the only researches I found where about the history and social usage. Actually, with the exception of the history of puppetry and the social use of puppetry in medicine, with children, and in third-world and Asian countries, puppetry showed to be quite an under researched area of expertise.

Research

This lack of puppetry research quickly, though hesitantly, brought me to the idea to be the first cultural economist to describe puppetry. As Robbert Dijkgraaf, director of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Science (IAS) says: '*Nieuwe inzichten ontstaan eerder wanneer je in het diepe springt*'¹ (Twaalfhoven, 2012a: 6).

But how do you do that? For starters, you narrow it down. As said, puppetry is an ancient art form and it has many subcategories. The form that has had its recent and prominent revival however is a modern form of the ancient *bunraku* puppetry. In terms of Finn Caldwell, one of the interviewees in this thesis and celebrated puppeteer, I'll refer to this form of puppetry as contact puppetry (Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell).

The revival of contact puppetry has been remarkable, as it has been widely spread throughout the performing arts. Where puppetry was often associated with children's theater (the Dutch *Jan Klaassen*) or comedy (ventriloquists) in the past, it's now used in many different art forms, from popular to high culture.

Given the lack of prior research, the aim however is no longer to fully investigate the success of contact puppetry in economically difficult times, but it's first and foremost to figure out if puppetry can be considered by cultural economics at all.

To be as comprehensible as possible within the limited scope of a master thesis, I chose to approach the use of contact puppetry based on decisional moments in three different cases. The first case is of course Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, where it all started. The second case is *War Horse*. This play, or so-called theater experience, is often indicated as the start of the puppetry revival. The final case is *A Dog's Heart*. In this case the puppetry is used as part of an opera. Three cases, three different performing arts, but are there also three different reasons to want to use puppetry?

With the cases lined up and the marvel about contact puppetry in place, the only remainder was the theoretical framework. With help of the cases I can describe what happens in practice, but is there a way to clarify or explain it? The theoretical framework best suited for this task is set up by Richard Caves in his *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). Within this book Caves' describes seven properties that encompass all cultural industries. Cultural industries? I thought we we're talking about puppetry?

There still isn't one clear cut definition of the creative industries, but the consensus on which industries belong to them has become more and more universal. In 2001 the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the UK, released a creative industries mapping document, consisting of the twelve sectors that make up the creative industries. These industries are (1) advertising, (2)

¹ Rough translation: It's likelier to gain new insights when you take the plunge.

architecture, (3) arts and antique markets, (4) crafts, (5) design, (6) designer fashion, (7) film, video, and photography, (8) software, computer games, and electronic publishing, (9) music and the visual and performing arts, (10) publishing, (11) television, and (12) radio. This subdivision of the creative industries is quite commonly accepted, although slight difference can occur, such as broadcasting instead of television and radio or the addition or exclusion of some categories (for instance the addition of board games or the exclusion of software). Overall, the creative industries are ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of economic property’ (DCMS, 2001: 5).

The DCMS (2001) and Caves (2000) alike mention the performing arts sector as part of the cultural industries. Puppetry is a subsector of the performing arts and ‘individual creativity, skill and talent’ are certainly inputs in the sector with ‘potential for wealth and job creation’. This means that puppetry is a part of the creative industries.

The seven properties described by Caves (2000) are a lay of the lands of the creative industries. He claims that all creative industries are affected by these properties, only differentiated by the extent in which they matter. In other words: no matter the creative industries, these properties will be of influence, but to what degree can vary according to the industry or sector.

There are two separate elements here: the first are the properties, the second is the application of the properties. If the properties are a lay of the lands, the application of the properties is your road map to a certain creative industry or sector. For cultural economists it matters whether or not an industry follows the properties and which properties are the most important: this gives a base line (a lay of the lands) for future analysis. Next to this base line on contact puppetry, the decisional situations and the application of the properties will help to sketch the road map.

Value of Science

Richard Caves has the tendency to write in an anecdotal manner. His book therefore was not only a success within the academic field, but widespread. The merit of this approach is up for discussion. To some it's the road to popular and shallow science, while for others it's the way to bring science to society. I'm a member of the second group, since I've always had a hard time dealing with science for science's sake.

The second group has become louder in its calls for applied (or perhaps only applicable) science. Last year an edition of *Boekman*, a Dutch prestigious magazine on art, culture, and policy, was devoted to the gap between art and science². Former business leader of the Dutch National Theater and expert on the academics of labor economics in the arts Berend Jan Langenberg actually

² *Boekman* 91; *Kunst en onderzoek*, 2012, 24(3).

claims that the gap between worlds (arts, science, policy) is so large, that we can no longer understand each other (Langenberg, 2012: 70-78). He is however positive on the possibilities to bridge the gap.

To me, science reveals truths that can help society progress – no matter whether you talk about medicine, the beta sciences or the social sciences. But progress cannot be made with the findings buried under layers and layers of academic chatter, described in terms unfamiliar to non-academics even if they are professionals in the field, or when only published in obscure scientific magazines with an edition of hundred and fifty worldwide.

The *Nederlandse organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (NWO), the Dutch organization for scientific research, even calls to keep in mind the societal stakeholders while conducting and describing research (Twaalfhoven, 2012b: 90). Not to ‘dumb it down’, as the counter argument often is, but to get the desired impact and to prevent rapports with relevant but incomprehensible findings ending up collecting dust on the bottom of a drawer.

The idea of Caves theory therefore spoke to me. Not just because it’s a encompassing theory about the cultural industries, but because his approach hands me the means to make my research accessible, to scientist, professionals, and everyone else who is interested, alike.

What’s Next?

As no cultural economists have looked into puppetry so far, this thesis will sketch this base line for contact puppetry nowadays, by looking into the daily practices. Does the everyday practice in puppetry follow the cultural industry ‘rules’ as portrayed by Caves’ properties? And if so, what can be (preliminary) said from a cultural economic point of view about the economic and artistic reasons to use contact puppetry?

To answer these questions, first a number of things need to be dealt with. Together with my supervisor Erwin Dekker, we decided very immodest that this thesis would become the ‘missing chapter in Caves’. This also has its consequences for the structure of the thesis and the manner of answering the above questions.

Starting with this general introduction is quite common. However, it will be followed with other extended introductions. For starters, to say something about the current use of puppetry, we need to place it in the broader perspective of the history of puppetry, focusing of course on the most relevant aspects for this thesis and the contact puppetry described. Then, although cultural economist have not written about (contact) puppetry yet, there is an academic discourse concerning the performing arts. Some theories will prove to be highly relevant and applicable to contact puppetry. Finally, I will introduce my own research an choices.

The advantage of such a lengthy introduction is that the reader will get a better understanding of all elements involved. The downside is that with introductions in three separate fields, the depth and breadth of the information is limited and the information remains very 'to the point'. Besides the relative lack of depth, there is also the danger that the introductions feel very 'loose' and unnecessary. However, the introductions are essential stepping stones of information that will be tied together in the presentation of my research further on.

The presentation of this research will take place in a slightly unconventional way. I will start by introducing the 'how and why', pretty common. Then I will, as promised above, put all the pieces, history, theory, and practice, together as if in a chapter of Richard Caves' *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). Although this chapter will be part of this thesis, it should also be 'stand alone' in the sense that it ought to contain all relevant information to understand modern contact puppetry as a creative industry – hypothetically printable in Caves' next edition. The chapter is readable and accessible, so that the findings of this thesis will not only be available to academics, but if needed and/or wanted to those in the field as well.

Introduction in the History of Puppetry

In the general introduction I've already mentioned that puppetry is an ancient art form. Within the scope of this thesis it's not possible to describe its entire history. It would also defeat the aim of this chapter, as its goal is to clarify the current state of puppetry, and especially the current use of *bunraku* or contact puppetry, so that later on we can build on this knowledge for the present research.

Growing Up?

Did you have your favorite stuffed animal? Most children start with stuffed animals. Then they add toys, such as dolls and action figures. All toys are inanimate, but through play we bring life to them. The stuffed animal is our first try. It's a one piece no movement figurine. Dolls and action figures are a step up. They have moving limbs and can turn their heads; the play turns more lifelike. Later on in life, in school or at home, we learn to build our own figurines and every time we will go a step further. First we make our own sock puppets, then stuffed animals, cardboard puppets that move with strings, et cetera.

Giving life to inanimate objects is considered to be part of growing up and socializing. However, it's not only part of our lives, it's also part of our cultures: cultures grow up as well. The first puppets found are about 25.000 years old (Blumenthal, 2005: 11). They're one piece and only a couple of inches tall. If these really were the first puppets and what their exact use was is unclear, as this is from long before documented times.

In better documented times one of the most famous puppet makers is the ancient Greek Daedalus, who did not only make wings for his son Icarus, but also toys for King Minos (Blumenthal, 2005: 12). These toys were built out of many elements and had movable parts. But ancient Greece wasn't the only part of the world where puppets were made; all over the world forms of puppetry developed. Relationships between nations back then weren't as common as they are today, due to difficulties in transport and long distance communication. Still the rate of development of puppetry around the world, even in the most outskirts, is quite alike. It seems growing up follows the same path, no matter on which end of the world you live.

This development of puppetry got even stronger when travel became more common and more available (Blumenthal, 2005: 14-22). In the twentieth century puppetry traveled the world and crossovers emerged for the first time. Halfway through the twentieth century the modern media gave puppetry their last boost to get puppetry into living rooms around the world. No one in the modern world nowadays grows up without puppetry.

After the industrial revolution not just the traveling and communication but also the technical developments took a flight. Puppetry is no different in this aspect. After the boom in

quantity, the quality developed along steadily, but in two directions. The first direction was that of automatons (Blumenthal, 2005: 13). These are puppets that move without the visible help from humans. This used to be done by cogs and levers, perhaps even activated by water flowing. Nowadays we've progressed into robotics.

The other direction puppetry took is that of transparency. The puppeteers are visible, as a deliberate and artistic choice. It asks the audience to engage and actively use their imagination to envision the story that's been told. The techniques and materials used have developed over the ages, but the traditions remain of importance – whilst robotics is a new form.

As with the child, cultures developed and grew their forms of puppetry, it only took them a little longer. But the current state of puppetry is that of an adult art form.

Adult Puppetry?

When talking about dolls and puppets, thoughts soon go out to children. I've even used the metaphor of a growing up child to describe the development of puppetry through the ages. And saying that we all were raised with puppetry will almost immediately move thoughts to Sesame Street. However, most of us are also familiar with The Muppets, which could be described as Sesame for adults.

Even though The Muppets are for adults, they are satirical. The same holds up for ventriloquists like the currently popular Jeff Dunham. But this view upon puppetry is a limited one. When we take the broader, historical perspective, puppetry has long been a valued adult art form. The alteration into a children's form of puppetry is hard to pin down, but seems to align with the upswing of the modern media.

The recent upswing of puppetry is turning the tide again though. Yet it would take a detailed analysis of the puppetry sector to pinpoint where this tilting point was at. For the general audience two shows are milestones. The first one was the musical The Lion King by Disney Theatrical Productions, which actually got a Tony Award for Best Musical in 1998 (Blumenthal, 2005: 34). This show was produced in many countries, countless cities, and seen by millions of people around the world. It was one of first large scale productions using 'transparent' puppetry, where the animals were not represented realistically, but embodied by uncamouflaged actors 'wearing' puppets.

The second key production has been War Horse. Unlike The Lion King this was quite an unfamiliar story and the main character of the show is a puppet without a voice. Joey, the 'war horse' is not an anthropomorphic figure that speaks, like Simba in The Lion King, but represents an actual horse. The makers of the show studied the body language of real horses to be able to represent the horses emotions and thoughts on stage, but without the use of words.

Both shows were based on stories for children: The Lion King was based on the Disney animation film and War Horse is based on the children's novel by Michael Morpurgo. However, the target audience for neither of the show consisted of children. And in both cases this turned out well³. Puppetry got back to an adult audience again.

Handspring Puppet Company

The fact that puppetry has changed and progressed a lot in the past century can be attributed to some very enthusiastic puppeteers and puppet companies around the world. These companies have kept the form alive even in times of little to none interest and pioneered into the puppetry we've got nowadays.

One of the most influential puppet companies in the world has been the South African Handspring Puppet Company. Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler started this company in 1981. Ever since they've been responsible for literally hundreds of shows, some of them really changing the landscape of puppetry and the society surrounding them. With their puppetry they've addressed political sensitive subjects, such as homosexuality and the apartheid's regime in South Africa.

It was Handspring Puppet Company that developed the War Horse puppetry and seemingly changed the field of puppetry to a great extent. The puppets in War Horse are based on the tradition of puppetry build by them, which is always hands on, i.e. close contact. This is based on multiple puppetry traditions, such as stop frame (or stop motion) and *bunraku* puppetry (Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler).

The latter is the most prominent, as this form of puppetry was highly technical, detailed and asked for multiple visible puppeteers. In War Horse three puppeteers handle one horse. None of them are hidden: one of the puppeteers is outside the horse, while the other two are operating from the inside, but the horse is semi-transparent. Although the horse is build from a mixed form of different sorts of puppetry, the typical traditional influences are very present in the workings of the horse as well as the workings of the organization of Handspring Puppet Company. What's more, everyone in the company learns about traditional puppetry. However, they also learn that rules can be broken – and so War Horse was born.

Bunraku?!

So, traditions. What is this *bunraku* puppetry that lies at the heart of contact puppetry and which other forms have played their part? *Bunraku* is a Japanese form of puppetry that dates back to the

³ The Little Mermaid, based on the Disney film and the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, was not intended to be a kid's show either, but in The Netherlands it did come to be one and therefore diverges from the other two cases at this point.

seventeenth century⁴. Back in the day it was a popular form of entertainment and it crowded out the more traditional forms of puppetry. Nowadays, the traditional *bunraku* puppetry is sustained through subsidies.

The modern contact puppetry has borrowed many ideas from the *bunraku* style. *Bunraku* puppets usually were quite large, three to four feet; in the metric system that means they were about a meter high. The puppets need three people to operate them: the *omo-zukai* is the main puppeteer who operates the head and facial expressions of the puppet as well as the right arm and hand. The *hidari-zukai* operates the left arm and hand, while the junior puppeteer, the *ashi-zukai*, handles the legs.

Usually all three handlers wear black traditional costumes, only showing their faces. These are worn to avoid drawing attention to the puppeteers. Some puppets will have less puppeteers, as they depict less important characters. But no matter how important the character, the puppeteers never make a sound.

In most cases the puppetry is used to perform a *yoruri*, a dramatic, epic poem. The *tayu* will then give the narrative of the story, while a *s(h)amisen* (a Japanese string instrument) player provides the musical underscoring. The *tayu* and *s(h)amisen* player are both considered as artists on their own and not only as supportive of the *bunraku*.

Although the connection between *bunraku* and contact puppetry is unmistakable, it's not the only influence in creating *The Little Mermaid*, *War Horse* and *A Dog's Heart*. For instance *War Horse* makes use of shadow puppetry and *The Little Mermaid* uses rod puppets.⁵ Mixed forms of puppetry are getting more and more common as it gives the audience the best of all worlds.

UNIMA

Although the mixing of puppetry is common, it also dilutes traditions. Therefore an international organization for puppetry was founded in 1929 in Prague: Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA). UNIMA is affiliated with the UNESCO. The mission of the organization is to 'promote artistic excellence, social cohesion, cultural awareness, environmental sustainability and economic growth through the power of puppetry'. UNIMA is active all over the world.

⁴ Although *bunraku* is Japanese, the origin may or may not lie in Korea; there is no exact clarity on this (Blumenthal, 2005: 22-23; Currell, 1985: 35).

⁵ The shadow puppetry in *The Little Mermaid* was cut during the rehearsal period.

Introduction into the Academic Discourse

The academic discourse is the general term used for the ‘hot topics’ in the academic field. Professor doctor Arjo Klamer, most renowned for his work on the value based approach of culture at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, rather speaks about a ‘conversation’⁶ (Klamer, 2007). Scientists publish their results and other scientists respond by means of comments or new publications. Through this ‘conversation’ the science is validated. That does not always mean that it’s the whole and complete undeniable truth, but at least it brings about a version of the (stylized) truth academic experts can support.

As there isn’t any cultural economic research on puppetry there isn’t any discourse either. However, puppetry is part of the larger field of performing arts, which is researched quite extensively. Not all researches are applicable to (contact) puppetry and certainly not all theories and fields of cultural economics can be discussed here. Besides that, cultural economics isn’t the only science that has shown interest in the (performing) arts. Other social sciences like ‘regular’ economics, sociology and philosophy have thoughts that could be useful as well.

In this section I’ve made a selection of some of the main theories in the social sciences, apart from the seven properties by Caves that will be dealt with separately later on, that are applicable and will add to the understanding of everyday life in (contact) puppetry. All theories will be introduced in a general, non-exemplary way. In a later chapter all theories will be tied together and/or tied to (everyday practice of) contact puppetry.

Money, Money, Money

Cultural economics is a relatively new science. In 1966 William Baumol and William Bowen were the first economist who took an interest in the field with their publication of *Performing Arts – The Economic Dilemma*. In this book Baumol and Bowen discuss the problems in economical stagnant sectors, such as medicine and arts.

Stagnant sectors, according to Baumol and Bowen, are sectors where outputs are not determined mainly by capital (machinery), but by labor force (people). The performing arts are a shining example of this structural stagnancy.

Baumol and Bowen (1966) call this structural problem the cost disease, a chronic illness that only could be remedied by subsidies and philanthropy. This disease has two ailments: the productivity lag and the earnings gap. The former means that productivity cannot increase alongside technology in stagnant sectors. In sectors where capital is the main input, productivity increases fast due to technological progress. Stagnant sectors don’t benefit from that technical progress, as their

⁶ In fact, Klamer speaks of multiple conversations, within fields (arts, science, medicine) and within specialties (performing arts, puppetry, contact puppetry, economics, cultural economics, the value of culture, et cetera).

input is based on human labor. Baumol and Bowen don't see any solutions to this element of the cost disease, since in their view a technological change will always effect the quality of the output (example: a live play is not the same as a DVD).

The latter ailment, the earnings gap, focuses on the outcome of the production lag. Because productivity in regular sectors benefits from the technological progress, output increases. A higher output means that the income increases and that wages can go up (that's brusque the economic viewpoint). When the productivity lags in the stagnant sectors, the wages won't increase at the same rate – thus creating a gap between the regular and stagnant sectors. The gap would increase to an extent where hardly anyone would be willing or able to work in the performing arts, so it needs to be kept artificially low. Hence the subsidization and philanthropy cure mentioned by Baumol and Bowen.

As happens in a conversation, Baumol and Bowen got a lot of response in the academic discourse. Even nowadays their theory is up for discussion. The fundamentals of the theory aren't often questioned, but the everlastingness of the disease is. As mentioned, Baumol and Bowen speak of a chronic disease, but some technological changes have actually made it possible to produce faster or cheaper with the same quality. However on the whole manpower is still often the most important input and the wages in general (not just in the performing arts, but overall in the cultural field) are low (Abbing, 2002).

Income according to cultural economist David Throsby is not only of influence on the earnings gap, but can have an effect on (the quality of) output as well. In *Economics and Culture* Throsby (2003) describes the three possible functions of income in the creative economy. Income could be seen as a sole maximand, which entails that the artist is only in it for the money. Incomes in general might be low, but there are exceptions. Sherwin Rosen named this the long-tail effect. A small percentage of artists are superstars who earn incredible incomes, while the largest group earns very little to none. In a graph this large group looks like the long tail of the very small superstar group. These superstars, this potential of future wealth, draws people into the creative sector merely for the money, like a large jackpot makes people buy lottery tickets.

Given the average low incomes of the sector, it's not very likely that the group who views income as a sole maximand is a very large group. A much more realistic viewpoint is that of those who view income as a joint maximand. They want to make art, but they also need to earn a nice living. No starving artists here, but well fed professionals who do not only enjoy art, but also enjoy some other aspects of life and who are not willing to sacrifice everything for their art. Some will succeed to get there through the arts, for others multiple jobholding is often the solution. This means that they've got one of more other jobs to make enough money to support them and their art. Patrons are another option, but not everyone is so lucky.

The last function of income mentioned by Throsby is income as a constraint. This group of artists is in it only for the art. They will sacrifice everything for their art and view income as a constraint. They need it for their workplace, for their materials, but it doesn't have any other meaning to this group than a means to an end. And in that sense it holds them back when they want to create something they cannot afford. We all know *For the Love of God* by Damien Hirst, but not every artist who thought of it could have afforded to create a diamond laced skull. One element all three groups seem to have in common is that they all are willing to take a risk (the one larger than the other) for their art.

So far we've learned that the performing arts sector is a stagnant sector where it's hard to make a living. Subsidies and philanthropy help to maintain incomes, but in most subsectors of the performing arts people will only view their income as a joint maximand or as a constraint instead of their main concern. In the unsubsidized performing arts some fortune-hunters might take a chance to hit it big, but by and large wages are low and working in the sector is a risk. But who are these people in the performing arts we've been talking about?

Artists?

An ongoing debate in academics as well as in many living rooms is 'what is art?'. That blue stripe on a red canvas, is that art or something you're kid could have made⁷? And if it is art, how do you separate it from what your kid made? By where you see it? By the price? By the maker? And following up on this discussion: who is an artist, who is a craftsman, and who is just an amateur? Many questions and no answer, or perhaps numerous answers.

As in the living room, this debate in academics can run high. Many respected academics have tried to answer it, but at least as many have created counterarguments, supplements, critiques, and so on. But even though the conversation has not yet led to a general consensus, there have been some noteworthy ideas on the matter.

One of those ideas comes from sociologist Howard S. Becker, who wrote *Art Worlds* in 1982. In his book he gives a sociological view on how art worlds function. These worlds are the separate, but interconnected, sectors in the arts. He does not classify them by who is in them, but by how they organizationally relate to each other.

Becker (1982) does not wish to decide who are artists and who are not. He claims that insights gained from studying how art worlds decide what's art and what's not themselves are the best insights to gain understanding of the practice with. In his book he includes many examples of art and artists that would have been excluded if he had used the prevailing classifications of art and artists and according to his perspective that would have caused him to lose many interesting and

⁷ *Who's afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue*, by Barnett Newman.

enlightening cases. He calls these artists Naïve Artists. Not because they are not trained (institutionally), but because they function completely outside all forms of organized art worlds, which is also an observation on the art worlds to gain insights through.

Even though Becker classifies through the organizational structures of worlds, he does not deny the influence of the artists in the world, therefore he does not only categorizes the Naïve Artists, but also the Integrated Professionals, Mavericks, and Folk Artists. The latter group creates creative products outside of professional worlds. They create it for the fun of it, not to sell. And if they do sell, it's within a limited scope of friends, family, and local fairs.

Mavericks are professionals who operate on the edge of an art world. Their work is not accepted or they cannot work within the conventions of the art world, but they remain connected. *Avant-garde* artists are no Mavericks, as they are accepted in their own *avant-garde* world. One of the most famous Mavericks of all times is Vincent Van Gogh, who wanted to be recognized as a painter, tried to sell, but was not accepted. Only after his death he got recognition and became an Integrated Professional.

This last category of artists is the largest group. All of these artists work in organized art worlds, no matter how large or small, successful or niche. Within the art world, conventions on what, who and how structure the working field. Aesthetic conventions are the governing body, although they are not always rational or legitimate. This is also why it's so hard to define art and artists, as the 'rules' are irregular and shifting. And even so, for the most part, we all know what and who is meant when speaking of art and artists.

But how about crafts? If there is a fine line between art and non-art, where is the line between art and crafts? Becker (1982) notices that artists do not wish to be mistaken for craftsmen, even though the qualifications of a craft, skill, knowledge, technique are applicable to them and have positive connotations. In older definitions the craftsman made useful objects, but Becker has observed that craftsmen also added aesthetic criteria to their work. The only clear difference between artists and crafts he sees is that craftsmen are more specialized, while artists are broader in the sort of work they create.

Cultural economist Ruth Towse (2010) agrees with Becker that it's not a researchers place to make a distinction between who is an artist and who is not, but she also recognizes that in research you sometimes need to make practical decisions. If you want to research the average artist income (are they poor?) then you need to know which incomes to in- or exclude. And if you're writing your Master thesis on puppetry and want to summarize some of the academic discourse on puppetry in the performing arts, you need to know if you need to look into theories on artists, craftsmen, humdrum workers, or perhaps even on something entirely different. Therefore Towse uses a much simpler but less sophisticated distinction of creative artists, performing artists and cultural workers.

Creative artists are those who have a vision and performing artists are those who execute it⁸. The challenge in Towse's division lies in the category of cultural workers. The humdrum workers are easily excluded from the rest of the cultural workers, as they are not connected to the art work at all (accountants, secretary's, and the like). But there is also a large group of people whose skills add to the work of art, such as costume designers, architects, makers, et cetera. Towse mentions that they're recognizable by the fact that their skills are not exclusive to the creative sector, although they do seem to have a strong affiliation (proven by the lesser pay they get in the cultural sector than somewhere else) and influence on the art work.

Although Becker and Towse focus on different aspects, they both aim at the institutional organization of the field. In general, two other divisions are used in academics. The first one has been described as the 'essentialist' approach and focuses on the intrinsic qualities of the art work or the artist. In prior days this was for example done by making a checklist of all the qualities a good painting should possess. The hard thing about this approach is that possibilities are endless and selecting criteria that would be describing and satisfying enough for all cases seems undoable.

The other divide is called the 'conventional' approach. In this case art is art or artists are artists when the social conventions say so. This definition has some grey areas as well, as not everyone will agree. My cousin calls himself an artist, but he has Down Syndrome, so the social convention might be that he's just 'nuts'. On the other hand, his work was displayed at the Boijmans van Beuningen, one of the most prestigious museums in The Netherlands. Does that tip the scale in his favor?

Christian Barrère and Walter Santagata thought of a third category, that of semiotic goods. In this case the relationship between the work and the maker is considered. This approach binds all the former approaches together, however would be still inconclusive when used independently. Some other criteria are mentioned by Barrère and Santagata, such as intent, but all have the same 'fifty shades of grey' kind of problem.

On the whole it can be stated that a conclusive theory has not been found yet. However, if we'd put the institutional, essentialist, conventional and semiotic approach together, it should be possible to place pretty much all works and people. And if not? Don't worry, it's an ongoing debate, so you can form your own opinion.

If we link the art or craft question to puppetry, we're entering one of the many grey zone's. Puppeteers are mentioned by Towse as performing artists, but makers are crafts people by her definition, and the ones who came up with the idea of the puppet are creative artists. In puppetry however, these roles can be fulfilled by one single person just as easily as by a large team of many

⁸ It's worth mentioning here that Towse mentions puppeteers explicitly in the list of performing artists.

different specialists. Puppets make use of traditions, so checklists on good puppetry could be made, but these would not suffice for puppets that use mixed forms or for new forms of puppetry. The use of puppetry can be a standalone art form according to the social conventions of the ones involved, but puppeteers are also often asked to come into a production that has already started, simply to solve a problem, which makes them more craftsmen than artists. I'll return to the art versus craft argument later on. First, let's continue with the division between the two.

God and Men

The debate on who is an artist and who is not is an academic debate, or a colloquial one, but usually not one in the field. The division between jobs, responsibilities and hierarchy is often quite clear, especially in art forms where many people with multiple backgrounds work on the end product (such as the performing arts). Pecking orders are easily found within a production (for example: the director has the last call and outranks other creative inputs), but a similar ranking is also found between the different disciplines of the field (opera is higher up the food chain than musical and overall performers are ranked higher than technicians). These kind of orders are found in salaries as well as interactions amongst creative and humdrum workers (Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell).

One of the most defining divisions in the theater field is that between arts and crafts. This division has not only seeped into the field or academic and colloquial discussions, but also in the way we view the world. However, or world view is a relatively new view.

What do you know about Leonardo Da Vinci? It sounds like a random quiz question, but it's actually one of the most given examples in how our worldview changed. After all, Da Vinci did not only create the Mona Lisa, but also weapons and aircrafts. Physics and art were not separated fields, but they complemented each other.

Celebrated opera director Floris Visser was asked to take on a special challenge: cultural professorship at the Technical University Delft (TU Delft). He brought the alfa and the beta, arts and technique/craft together again in an illustrious version of George Bizet's Carmen. His lectures during his time of cultural professorship at the TU Delft were about the *Deus ex Machina*. I had the chance to interview him a couple of months after his successful professorship about his viewpoint (Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser).

Deus ex Machina

Deus ex Machina is a trope used in (theatrical) storytelling. It's often seen as an admission of weakness, as it's used as a solution for a problem. The God comes down to earth and tells the protagonist what to do. Or he simply strikes all the protagonists' enemies down. Although it's argued that the *Deus ex Machina* is a threat to human ingenuity (because it's the 'easy way out'), it's also

said that it's an example of human ingenuity to imagine the divine intervention. No matter which one you prefer, the *Deus ex Machina* in the theater always consists of two elements.

The first element of the *Deus ex Machina* is the *Deus*, the God. It's a supernatural solution for earthly problems. The second element is the *Machina*, the machine. It's the technical execution of descending the God to the earth. And the God might (or might not) be a storytelling weakness, the machine asks for quite a lot of human ingenuity, to get the God safe from the top of the theater to the floor. *Deus ex Machina* literally means the God from the machine.

Another view on the *Deus ex Machina* however is that the technique brings you closer to the divine. This view is controversial, but gained quite a couple of followers after Dan Brown's *Angels & Demons*. This novel tells of a religious scientist who figured that science and discoveries only led you closer to God's genius and that religion and science can go hand in hand.

Floris Visser opts another view on the *Deus ex Machina*. In his view, it's not the machine that brings you to the God, but the God that brings you to the machine; the idea is divine – the inspiration to create the machine. Without the idea you would be nowhere.

However, Visser also stretches that having an idea is not enough. You can have million dollar thoughts, but as long as you don't execute them they are worthless. Execution of ideas is crucial, which means that you can not only have the idea but you also need to have some know how. Visser is all for the *homo ludens*, the man as a player. Not the colloquial player of a man with many different sexual encounters, but it actually means play as in child's play.

Homo ludens was thought off by Dutch historic Johan Huizinga in 1938. According to Huizinga the playfulness in men is an important part of transferring and progressing our culture. It also plays an important role in our politics and everyday lives. Visser emphasizes how the *homo ludens* discovers new possibilities through play and how he does not get hindered through non-existing borders between fields.

Visser traces the division of fields back to the industrialization, when jobs, academic fields, and religions got segregated. The long-lived idea of broad spectrum education, which can be traced back to ancient Greece and the *Ἀκαδημία* by Plato now proceeded into the idea of specialization. This specialization continued well into our century, but nowadays University Colleges pop up all around the globe to give broad spectrum education again.

Although Visser is all for the *homo ludens*, he is not per se against specialization. He does find it important that people are well trained and educated in their fields. If you've got multiple talents he claims they will surface nonetheless. On the other hand, when specializing you should not lose focus of the intersecting fields. Visser is an opera director, which means that he does not only know how to direct, but he has the bird view over the entire production. He won't sow the costumes, design the

lighting, or take the press photo's, but he will know enough of all fields to direct them into his vision. Executing your million dollar ideas does not mean that you have to do it all by yourself.

Introduction into this Thesis Research

So far I gave a relatively brief introduction into the history of puppetry and the academic discourse on the performing arts. I did not just do that to fill the pages, but to create the foundation on which my own research is based. In the design and in the outcomes of the research the information from the previous introductions will return and tie things together, as mentioned before.

In this part of the introductions I will account for my research design, the choices I've made and the strengths and weaknesses of the research. To do that, I will not only introduce the methodology, but also the three cases and my interviewees. But I will start with one more academic theory to elaborate on: Richard Caves' properties of the creative industries.

Seven Properties by Richard Caves

In the general introduction I already mentioned the creative industries Caves' describes. To recap: the creative industries are those industries where 'individual creativity, skill and talent' are certainly inputs in the sector with 'potential for wealth and job creation' (DCMS, 2000). Although there is some controversy on which industries are and which industries aren't part of this definition, the performing arts are never in this grey area. Puppetry as part of the performing arts –according to Ruth Towse (2010) puppeteers are performing artists– is therefore without a doubt part of these industries.

And it are these creative industries that are described by Richard Caves. Even though he recognizes that the daily practices of many of the sectors in the creative industries are very different, he also claims that there are seven properties which are shared by all of them. If puppetry really is part of the creative industries, than these seven properties should be applicable and useable to explain and clarify everyday life in the field. And that information could be useful for others in the field, for other fields, for academics who want to understand processes in puppetry, in the performing arts, and so on.

So, seven properties? Yes, and they've got catchy names too! However, the names are a bit deceitful every now and again, so I'll try to clarify them a bit. For a quick oversight of the properties you can also make use of table 1.

The first property mentioned by Caves is also the odd one out. It's called the Nobody Knows property. This property stretches that demand in the creative industries is uncertain. It's hard to find out beforehand whether the audience will like it or not, because they will have to experience it to pass judgment. Investments are therefore made on good faith, but also on research and testing. Yet research and testing are not able to eliminate all risks, as consumer behavior and tastes are unpredictable. In some cases contracts can be designed so that after every step in the process people

can decide to pull the plug, but that's not possible for all projects. In that case, the expenses are made and you just have to cross your fingers that the audience will value your product.

Table 1: Richard Caves' Seven properties of the Creative Industries.

#	Property	Explanation	Characteristics
1.	Nobody Knows	Nobody Knows is the first and all encompassing property described by Caves. It entails that there is not a simple template for success. Rather than that, what was successful the last time, might fail miserably the next. This property is different from the other six because it doesn't describe the everyday practice of the sector, but an overarching reality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncertainty about consumer's taste and behavior - Consumer value - Research and pretesting - No pre-existing need - Asymmetrical information - Experience good - Sunk costs - Option contracts
2.	Art for Art's Sake	<i>L'art pour l'art</i> is a common quote in and on the cultural sector. It refers to the fact that people are seldom in it for the money, but for the drive to make or facilitate art. Sometimes even to an extent where all other things are put aside. Nobody Knows plays a large part in the success of the output, even if the artist did value his work highly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concern for output - Divert effort from aspects consumers notice - Creative vs. humdrum inputs - Inner necessity - Artist vs. craftsman - 'Income as constraint' - Alternative jobs - Product over income - Less income than ability, skill and education warrant - Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices - Quality of vision and realization are uncertain = Nobody Knows
3.	Motley Crew	Motley Crew refers to the fact that art and culture are very rarely individual enterprises. To create, market, expose, or sell art, a crew of (many) people is needed. Even a singular artist such as a writer needs an editor, publisher, bookbinder, printer, and so on. They've all got their tasks and their influence – similar to the cogs-metaphor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse skilled and specialized workers - Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences - Rank-order mechanism of 'muscle' - Multiplicative production function - Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members
4.	Infinite Variety	Infinite Variety simply means that there are countless possibilities of new and renewed cultural products. Some might be similar, others are innovative, but the possibilities are endless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vertical differentiation - Horizontal differentiation - Universe of possibilities - Not much differentiated - Willingness to pay / donor-support
5.	A List/B List	In the cultural sector there is a divergence between 'stars' and 'the rest'. This has been researched extensively by Sherwin Rosen, who came up with the long tail effect. Caves refers to this as the A- and B-list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skill, talent, originality - Only noticeable by peers/critics/specialists/teachers/the like? - Training and/or practice enough? - Ranking - Differential rent
6.	Time Flies	It might be a bit of a knockdown argument, but the sixth property described by Caves points out that time is of the essence and that this can be a restraint in working a project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability - Temporal coordination - Time's passage on value of a project
7.	Ars Longa	The final property is very closely knitted with the Nobody Knows property. Ars Longa refers to the eternal value of some art works. However, you'll never know whether it will actually be art for the ages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Durability - Copyright - Expected future rents (but Nobody Knows) - Warehousing and retrieval of creative durables

Nobody Knows is odd, because it does not describe the everyday practice in the sector, but is more a sort of sword of Damocles hanging over the sector. This also means that bringing this property back to a set of characteristics loses some of its finesse.

The second property is the Art for Art's Sake (*l'art pour l'art*) property. It entails that people in the creative industries (artists and others) care about their products and not (just) about the money they make. In fact, they can care so much about their products that their focus shifts from the target to details that might not be all that relevant for the outcome. Income is often the latter concern, unless when it prevents to execute their ideas. These ideas seem to come from an inner drive and are therefore sometimes hard to translate into explanations on choices made, which is not helping in the income department either. And the fact that they're often highly skilled and trained is no guarantee for a high salary either. All and all, everything must yield for the art, but they're never certain that their inner need to create something will also fulfill some (unknown or previously non-existing) need of an audience. Nobody Knows surfaces again.

Motley Crew is the third property, based on the English proverb for loosely and roughly organized groups of varying characters. In this case it's not focusing on the lack of organization, but on the many characters that are needed to create an artwork. Even the 'lonely arts', such as writing, sculpting, and painting, often make use of others to bring their work of art to its audience.

The diverse group of people needed to create a work of art brings about its own set of benefits and challenges. All elements, all sectors, all departments need to respect the time schedule's, need to deliver an acceptable quality of work, et cetera, as all departments count on each other. Within that structure conflicts might arise or ranks can be pulled. The final product is only as good as the weakest link, so it's important to sustain teamwork. But if every cog functions, you've got a well oiled machine of very diverse and specialized workers who together bring the creative product to life.

The fourth property Caves describes is called Infinite Variety. This property puts forward that there is a universe of possibilities out there for creative products. Some might differ to great extent, but there is also a large group of not very differentiated products. Sometimes the quality differs, in other cases taste will decide which version is liked best. When products are very alike, consumers might be indifferent for the choice. It's hard to tell which version will prevail, hence Nobody Knows. Those who do want a specific version of something are often willing to pay a high(er) price or support their preference.

The A List/B List property focuses on the divergence between those who are seen as stars and everyone else. Those who are seen as the best are ranked highest, get the highest paycheck, most offers, and so on. Their only limitation is the extra amount people are willing to pay to see the

star instead of the B-lister. However, it's not always clear why they are seen as the A-list, and if this is assignable to their training or not. Again, Nobody Knows is of influence.

The second last property Caves brings up is Time Flies. This one is the most obvious and also the least tied to the creative sector. It simply states that time is of the essence when you work to finish a project. Therefore time could also be of influence on how the organization is shaped, which people and materials are used, and what the quality will be. Besides that, passing time could be of influence on the value of a product. To use a food metaphor: fine wine gets better and more expensive with age, but don't let too much time pass on your fresh veggies.

The final property is Ars Longa. This property is tied with Time Flies, as it's about the durability of creative products and their rents. Durability could be just for the time of a project, for a generation, or forever. In the making-process, the durability might be of influence on the decisions made. However, again Nobody Knows whether it will be durable in terms of audience commitment or not. In retrospect the sector also organizes ways to take care of lasting products, such as with copyright and museums.

The attentive reader might have noticed that Caves' seven properties describe many of the previously mentioned subjects in the academic discourse. This at least ties the academic field together with the practice as viewed by Caves. But how about the practice as experienced in the field?

Richard Caves (2000) often makes use in his book of anecdotes to describe the everyday practice in the creative industries. More often than not these anecdotes concern what I call decision-making moments. These are situations where the circumstances ask for a direct or indirect decision on how to carry on. An example of this is the Hollywood film production during the last century. Many changes, technological, policy wise, social, intrinsic to the sector or extrinsically forced on to it, et cetera, shaped the way films are produced nowadays. With every change all involved needed to adapt or they'd fail to continue, while in other cases they brought upon their own changes. Caves describes not only the objective circumstances that brought about the changes, but also the personal and everyday situations. It's these situations on which he often uses the seven properties to analyze the lay of the lands or the road-map of the sector.

Three Cases of Modern-Day Contact Puppetry

To analyze the everyday practice of contact puppetry I made use of three cases. The first one is the Dutch musical Disney's The Little Mermaid by Stage Entertainment. Last year I was an intern at the production office there and was involved in the start up as well as the tour. It was my first introduction to contact puppetry thanks to puppet designer and puppet director Toby Olié. The most

prominent puppet in *The Little Mermaid* is Ursula, the wicked sea witch. Other puppets are fish, jellyfish, and rays.

The second case is theater experience *War Horse*. This British National Theater production has been produced all over the world since its start in 2007. The recent American version will be the blue print for other productions worldwide, among which The Netherlands in 2014 by Stage Entertainment. The main character of the show, the 'war horse' Joey, is a horse-puppet. Other important puppets are other horses, a goose, and the cavalry. The puppet design is by the hands of Handspring Puppet Company, one of the pioneering companies in the recent upswing of contact puppetry.

The third and final case is the opera *A Dog's Heart*. This opera was commissioned by the Pierre Audi of the Dutch National Opera. After the successful run in The Netherlands the show was sold to London and this spring they played in Milan. In this opera, the protagonist is a dog and this dog is the only puppet in the show. The design of the puppet was in hands of Blind Summit, one of the most prominent puppet companies in the UK.

These three cases were chosen for various reasons. *The Little Mermaid* was chosen mainly out of practical reasons, as this show ran in The Netherlands during the writing process, and because of my network I had access to information and interviewees. Not in the least Toby Olié who was not only the puppet designer at *The Little Mermaid*, but has also been involved with *War Horse* from the very first workshop, which gave him an unique viewpoint.

That Toby was my first contact at *War Horse* was clearly practical, but not the main reason. Like *The Little Mermaid*, *War Horse* was playing during the writing period in several countries. Besides that, *War Horse* is the eldest of the three shows and is repeatedly commented on as the beginning of the current (contact) puppetry revival. Researching contact puppetry would be incomplete without the inclusion of *War Horse*.

A Dog's Heart was chosen as consequence of the former two cases. With a musical and a play/theater experience, it was preferable to have a third case in another performing art. An opera completed the list. With three different performing arts, three different target audiences, three different usages of the puppets, a broad spectrum of the daily practice in puppetry could be described.

Furthermore, *A Dog's Heart* completed the list in terms of currents playing shows, as it was running in Milan during the research period. This minimizes the chance of discrepancies due to different time periods. And all three shows are internationally produced, so also little chance of national idiosyncrasies.

In the case of *The Little Mermaid* the focus point of this research lies with the Dutch version, because this was the original production and the blueprint for other versions. In case of *War Horse*

the focus is mainly split between the British original version and the American blueprint version. With *A Dog's Heart* the focus lies with the Dutch version, as again this was the original and blueprint version. Nonetheless, the international difference do have their effects on the shows, the daily practice, and thus on my interviews.

If you are unfamiliar with one or more of the three cases I do recommend some YouTube-ing (however un-academic that might sound). And you can also check boxes 1, 2, and 3 with more information in the shows and the puppetry in them.

Box 1 Disney's *The Little Mermaid* – The Netherlands

Disney's *The Little Mermaid* is a musical on the Disney version of the famous fairytale. On Broadway an attempt at the musical was already made, but without much success. Therefore in the spring of 2012 Disney's *The Little Mermaid* opened in The Netherlands in a whole new version. This new version was to be the blueprint for all other '*Mermaid's*' around the world. By now, this includes Russia (Moscow) and Japan.

The story tells of a mermaid, Ariel, who is daughter of King Triton, but feels misplaced under the sea. She dreams of a life in the above water world as a human being. When she falls in love with a human prince, Prince Erik, she turns to her aunt, the sea witch Ursula to give her legs. The price is her voice – and her soul if she doesn't manage to get kissed by him within three days. But how do you win his heart without being able to speak to him and with very little knowledge of how the above water world, or your own new pair of legs for that matter, works?

In the musical, most of the first act takes place in an underwater world, while the second act is mostly above water. The design by Bob Crowley separates the two by a dramatically different use of style and color. The above water world looks like a fairytale and is characterized by a storybook to form the set. All is pinkish and dreamy, because this world represents Ariel's most desired dream. The underwater world is blue and more realistic in design, inhabitants and movement.

To achieve this realistic feeling, director Glenn Casale introduced a flight element to the show, so it looks like the sea people are actually swimming in the theater frame. And to add to the diversity of the underwater world, designer Bob Crowley thought of many different costumes and movement options. Next to flying/swimming there is a character on a skateboard, there are two eels on roller-skates, two seahorses on segways, and so on.

But these are all people in costumes. Bob Crowley wanted more and hired puppet designer Toby Olié to fill in the rest of the underwater world. The human characters are accompanied by different sort of fish and sea life, such as anemones, jellyfish, clownfish, and of course the monstrous creation of sea witch Ursula, who is upper half human actress, and lower half an enormous puppet with six puppeteers – one per tentacle, and together they also move her around, as the actress stand on top of a cart.

Ursula is the only actual puppet character in the show, while the other puppets are nameless sea filling. Her six puppeteers are visible, but dressed in the same color purple as she, so they somehow seem to melt into the background; soon you will forget that you're watching seven actors and believe the illusion of the octopus Ursula.

Box 2 War Horse

War Horse is a play or, more accurately described, a theater experience. The first production of the National Theatre in the UK was in 2007. After the successful first run it's been produced numerous times all around the world. The American tour version finally became the blue print for all new productions, including a Dutch production in 2014, produced by Stage Entertainment.

War Horse is based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo and tells the story of Joey the horse and Albert, a boy who turns into a man during the First World War. Albert has to give up his horse for the war and during the war Joey changes hands a couple of times. Some of his owners treat him horribly, others love him. The love of the frail Emilie is comparable to the love Albert felt to his horse. Will they ever meet again?

Joey the horse is the central character in the show and almost the entire show on stage. To portray him, Handspring Puppet Company designed a life size puppet. It takes three puppeteers to operate the horse. There are two puppeteers inside the puppet, operating the legs and tail. The third puppeteer stands next to the horse and operates its head. All three puppeteers are visible, since the horse is slightly see-through.

Joey is not the only puppet in the show. We're talking horses, a goose, cavalrists and in the earliest version even the little girl Emilie was a puppet. Since Emilie is played by an actress, the division between puppets and humans is clear cut into those who can and cannot speak. All emotions and thoughts by Joey are portrayed through his body language, mostly his ears and tail and the noises he makes. This is also the case for the other puppets.

The visibility of the puppeteers is part of the *bunraku* puppetry tradition. It's not experienced as a hindrance, since the audience is able to zone them out and emotionally engage with the character. The success of War Horse is often named as the start of the recent puppetry, and especially the *bunraku* style puppetry.

Box 3 A Dog's Heart

In 2010 the *Nederlandse Opera* (Dutch national opera) and the British Complicite coproduced A Dog's Heart, an opera by Alexander Raskatov, based on the 1925 novel Heart of a Dog by Michail Boelgakov. The combined work of these two Russian *avant-garde* artists turned into one of the most successful contemporary opera's of the last decade. However, this cannot only be attributed the Russians.

Simon McBurney, actor and director, made his opera debut with A Dog's Heart. The opera tells the story of a professor who experiments with organ transfers to make people younger. He then implants a human part of a brain in a dog and so builds a humanoid kind of man-beast who is very uncivil, but strives to be human. In his failed attempt he tries to rape a woman and the professor feels responsible. In the end, the professor operates one more time and his creation turns back into a dog.

The story is a metaphor for the Russian post revolutionary power struggles between intellectuals and the Soviet regime. Although the story is satirical, it's not portrayed as a caricature. This helps the audience to emotionally invest and bond with the dog, who in fact is the protagonist of the story.

It's this dog that's a puppet, build by Blind Summit. Three or four (the show was not only produced in Amsterdam, but in London and Milan as well, with some slight differences) puppeteers handle the dog, while the voice of the dog was mostly done by opera singers.

Although the dog is a large life size dog, this is still quite small for the puppeteers. They therefore developed a way of handling the puppet that would be less physically straining for them: they switched places. And they did not just switch once or twice, but they kept moving around a lot around the dog, making the dog the center of attention instead of drawing attention away from him.

The Interviews

To analyze daily practice in the field I chose to interview people from the field through qualitative interviews⁹. Further on I will elaborate on the functions and expertise of the interviewees and I will go into the structure of the interviews.

The interviewees

In searching for interviewees I made use of the snowball effect. Thanks to my internship at The Little Mermaid I had a couple of contacts. Not in the least Toby Olié, puppet designer and puppet director on The Little Mermaid and puppeteer at War Horse. In both cases he was involved from the first workshop¹⁰.

Thanks to Toby I got contacts at Handspring Puppet Company/War Horse and A Dog's Heart. These contacts snowballed on again. In total I held eight in depth interviews. Three of the interviewees were involved in two of the cases, the other five were knowledgeable about one single case. The interview I held with opera director Floris Visser is not part of these eight, since that interview had another intent (the *Deus ex/et Machina*) and he was not directly involved in any of the cases. Given his opera background, he was however knowledgeable about A Dog's Heart and he is added in italic to the list of interviewees. The list of interviewees and their backgrounds is to be found in table 2.

Table 2: Interviewees

Who	Case(s) involved in	Job	Involved since
Adrian Kohler	War Horse	Owner	The very beginning
Derek Blok	The Little Mermaid	Resident Director	The rehearsals
Finn Caldwell	War Horse / A Dog's Heart	Puppeteer & Puppet Director / Puppeteer	First workshop
Josie Daxter	A Dog's Heart	Puppeteer	First workshop
Max Webster	A Dog's Heart	Associate Director	First workshop
Sascha van den Tol	The Little Mermaid / War Horse	Executive Producer	First production work
Toby Olié	The Little Mermaid / War Horse	Puppet Designer & Director / Puppeteer	First workshop
Wendy Dries	The Little Mermaid	Crew Member	The rehearsals
<i>Floris Visser</i>	<i>A Dog's Heart</i>	<i>N.a.in cases (Opera Director)</i>	<i>N.a.in cases</i>

The snowball effect is a respectable scientific way to find interviewees, but it's also a bit dependent on luck. And sometime you just have to admit that you got lucky, which I did. The list of interviewees consists of many influential and knowledgeable people from the cases and the spread is very even. There are puppeteers, puppet designers, puppet directors, 'regular' directors, producers, and a crew member. This ensures that the view on the sector composed out of the interviews will not be

⁹ Quantitative data, such as budgets, is hard to come by as this is not publically available. During the interviews I tried to get some data from the interviewees as well, most of them are unaware of budgets or unwilling to talk about them.

¹⁰ Workshops are sessions of the creative and production team to brainstorm and get the production started.

unilateral or biased. With the exception of course that the view is limited to these three cases and consist only of the production side. But overall, it gives quite a nice ecological validation (Boeije, H. et al., 2009: 154).

Interview Set-Up

The interviews were unscripted, but a general interview set-up was created. The questions are open and broad, so that all the interviewees no matter background or job would be able to interpret and answer them from their own line of work. The risk of this approach is that the questions and answers are too general, or that the questions are interpreted too differently. The advantage is that the interviews are comparable.

The interviewees were not told the exact scope of my research. They knew my research is about puppetry in three cases and some of them were aware of my economic background in the arts. Other than that, everything was kept vague to prohibit leading the interviewees' answers.

I prefer to have interviews face by face, as the interaction helps to understand each other better. Since not all my interviewees are Dutch nor all of them live in the Netherlands, some interviews couldn't be done face to face though. Skype was the perfect solution, as it allowed a similar experience. In all cases the interviews were recorded, so that I could give my full attention to the interviewee and write the interviews down afterwards. All interviews are to be found the appendices.

In general, the interviews lasted for about an hour. Due to circumstances such as a lack of time of the interviewee or limited information on the case(s), some interviews were kept a bit shorter. The general interview set-up is to be found in Appendix B. The separate sections of the interview set-up are discussed hereafter.

Open Questions 1 – Personal Information

The first section of the interview is about personal information, such as education experience, and motivation of the interviewee. Specific on the case(s) they were involved in job function, contract form, and length and depth of the involvement are points of interest. If the information is readily available otherwise, for instance via a website, than this section was skipped.

Open Questions 2 – Three Situational Sketches

The second part is the most important element of the interview set-up. This is the first section of questions on puppetry. By this time, the interviewees still had no clue what my research is about, as all we talked about beforehand was their background. This method kept their answers as neutral and true to themselves as possible.

The answers weren't completely out of the blue though. Because the question is quite complicated, I've contacted almost all interviewees beforehand to give them the chance to think

about it¹¹. In most cases I've send them an e-mail with the confirmation of the interview date. In this message I gave the interviewee a heads-up about this question section and told them that if they wanted they could think about it or prepare for it, but I emphasized that it was not a necessity¹².

The question in this section is: is the interviewee able to describe three decision-making moments concerning the puppetry in a case (one of the three I'm researching) they've worked on. The first moment from the preparation phase of the production, the second moment from the rehearsal phase, and the third moment from the run. The decision had not to have been taken by them, but they needed to be knowledgeable about it, so that they could answer additional questions on the situation. Hearsay therefore wasn't enough. Other than that, there were no limitations on the sort of decision; it could be a small or big decision, something that in the end never happened, something that affected them immediately or not, anything was fine. Not all interviewees were present through all three phases, so in those particular cases they were only asked about the phases they were knowledgeable about¹³. In case someone worked on multiple cases, no more than three situations were asked because of time considerations.

In getting three decision-making moments per interviewee, an overall image of everyday decisions, and thus everyday life, is sketched. I've asked them about decisions to avoid steering their answers or getting socially desirable answers, such as could happen with specific questions. On top of that the decisions can show what is considered important, as that is what they continue to work with.

You could argue that since the interviewees can choose between many decision-making moments, the ones they choose were in some way or another important to them as they stuck with them. Things that stick with you are usually high's and low's, so that would have a negative effect on the 'everyday' element of the research. To prevent this, I've told all interviewees that any example no matter how insignificant or mundane was fine. As will be clear, some of the moments might have been high's or lows, but overall they showed a regular pattern of production work.

After asking the interviewee to sketch the situation for me, I then tried to let them talk about it with follow-up questions. This is based on the theory of Johan van Rekom, Cees B.M. van Riel and Berend Wierenga (2006) that by continuing to asking 'why' you will get to the deeper values of people or organizations. In the situational sketches I therefore stayed close to the interviewee in my line of questioning; I asked them about how they felt, about how they experienced it and why. This simultaneously avoid them for speaking for someone else. During the interview I had a list with

¹¹ Only Max Webster did not get a heads-up, as the interview-date with him was a last minute deal.

¹² Only Finn Caldwell considered this as 'homework', all others responded positively or did not mention it at all.

¹³ Exception is Adrian Kohler, CEO of Handspring Puppet Company, a busy man. I was very fortunate to interview him, but he only had 45 minutes to spare. Therefore I chose to ask for only two moments (preparation phase and run), even though he was involved in all phases of the production.

questions that I, if applicable, wanted answered. This however was not a script, but something for me to remember during the conversation while getting the interviewee to talk as freely and uninfluenced as possible. This list can be read in table 3.

Table 3: Questions to Keep in Mind During Situational Sketches

If applicable to the situation the following questions need to be answered – in almost all cases following up with the ‘why-question’ if the answer is not offered by the interviewee:

- Who were involved/What are the functions of those involved?
- What (do you believe) were their interests in this specific decision?
- Was there a tension in the decision making process? What was it?
- What was the decisive factor of resolving the issue?
- What happened after the decision was made (on a personal level)?
- What were the consequences of the decision?
- Was the decision accepted by everyone or did it cause tensions?
- How do you feel about what has happened?
- What would have been the ideal solution for you, personally?
- Would you approach a similar situation differently next time? – How?

Open questions 3 – Disposition of the Interviewee

To be able to place the answers given above in a broader context and to discover a bit more about the interviewees disposition concerning puppetry, I’ve asked them three open questions on the use of puppetry in the performing arts. Because this part of the interview concerns additional information, this was a bit more swift and superficial than the situational sketches. The three questions asked were: (1) how do you feel about the current use of puppetry in the performing arts in general? (2) how do you feel about the use of puppetry in War Horse/Little Mermaid/Dog’s Heart?, and (3) although puppetry is an ancient art form, it seems that it’s up and coming again (in a more mechanical or technological form). What are your thoughts on the future of puppetry in the performing arts?.

Optional Quantitative Information

This section of the interview was the only part that was not applicable to all interviewees. If the interviewee was likely to have quantitative information such as budgets or other forms of data, this was the moment to ask for it. If the job function of the interviewee made it unlikely that the interviewee was aware of it, or likely that any information from the interviewee would be of hearsay, than this part was skipped.

Salomon’s Choices (Open for Comments)

The last part of the interview consists of Salomon’s choices. Salomon’s choices are choices between two terms, concepts, ideas, et cetera, that are contradicting and hard to choose between. The Interviewee had to choose between the two, but could elaborate the choice. This method is based on the card based game approach.

Card based games are part of semi-structured interview techniques. The cards are a visual representation of a concept that is important to the interview subject. They can have a phrase or a picture on them and are meant to draw the attention of the interviewee and elaborate. The cards can be used in different ways, such as describing the card and the value, sort the cards to importance, or pick between two cards and explain. Using cards structures the interview and helps organizing complex interview structures or concepts.

Because the cards are always the same, the comparability between interviews gets better and the validity of the interviews increases. Next to the benefits for the researcher, the cards also make the interviewee engage and make the interview experience more pleasant for the interviewee. Risks of the card based games are that the concepts on the cards can be interpreted differently of that they research something else than intended.

Since some of the interviews took place face to face and others via Skype card based games such as sorting the cards were out of the question. The idea behind the card based games however was not. Structuring the interview, organizing concepts, increasing the validity, and engaging the interviewee all are positive things to add to an interview. Because of the Skype-limitation, I translated the concept of card based games into Salomon's choices.

Ten choices were presented to the interviewees. All of them are related to Caves' *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). However, earlier we saw that some of the properties overlap, so they can't be a one on one match to the properties. The Salomon's choices therefore are not simply used to check if Caves' theory is applicable to contact puppetry, but they are used to further investigate what the interviewees value.

All ten Salomon's choices can be found in table 4. The last column of the table consists of the properties that are likely applicable to the choice based on the characteristics of the properties. I've also added three choices based on the title of the book: *Contracts Between Art and Commerce*. The one on contract theory can entail elements of many of the properties, among which at least Motley Crew, Time Flies, Ars Longa, and A List/B List. The other two focus on the difference between art and commerce.

Interview Analysis Based on Caves' Properties

With the interview set-up ready to go, eight interviews took place. Although the interview set-up was created to enhance comparability, analysis will always be subject to interpretation. In this paragraph the answers and the way of interpreting them will be elaborated on.

Open Questions 1 – Personal Information

The first section of the interview, with open questions on education and job function is pure contextual information and does not need to be analyzed.

Table 4: Salomon's Choices

#	Option 1	Option 2	Properties
1.	Money	Art	<i>Art and Commerce (Art for Art's Sake)</i>
2.	Risk	Security	<i>Art for Art's Sake (Nobody Knows/Infinite Variety)</i>
3.	Keep what's right	Progress at all expenses	<i>Nobody Knows (Art for Art's Sake/Infinite Variety)</i>
4.	Specialize	Broaden	<i>Infinite Variety (Nobody Knows/Art for Art's Sake)</i>
5.	Permanent team	Fresh input	<i>Motley Crew</i>
6.	Contract	Trust	<i>Contract Theory (Motley Crew/Time Flies/Ars Longa/A List/B List)</i>
7.	A few long term projects	A lot of short term projects	<i>Time Flies</i>
8.	Positive audience	Positive critics	<i>Art and Commerce</i>
9.	Contemporary	For all eternity	<i>Ars Longa</i>
10.	Use budget on star	Use budget on many things	<i>A List/B List</i>

Open Questions 2 – Three Situational Sketches

The situational sketches were given on three different time frames. In table 5 the sketches are organized per interviewee and per time period. All sketches were given a case code: LM for Disney's The Little Mermaid, WH for War Horse, and DH for A Dog's Heart. They also got a descriptive name.

Furthermore, the characteristics of Caves' properties were used to determine which property (or perhaps properties) was (/were) at the heart of the decision made. For instance upper left of table 5: Adrian Kohler during the preparation phase of War Horse. He described how during the workshops they discussed what the horse should look and of what material it should be made. Many options were discussed, such as making a horse out of farm equipment. The description of the situation and the number of options they had clearly is related to the 'universe of possibilities' characteristic of the Infinite Variety property.

Since some of the interviewees worked on the same case, the possibility of two of them discussing the same moment was present. This happened twice. The descriptive titles of these situations are the same, but they have a number attached: 1/2 and 2/2. As you might notice, the properties are not per se the same. Different interviewees might discuss different aspects of a decision or focus on an additional aspect of it.

In some cases the interviewees described a complex decisional moment. This complexity also entails that one property does not suffice. Furthermore we've seen that the properties sometimes overlap a bit. For these cases the situations were given either multiple properties or a key property and one or more additional properties that also played part in the situation.

The interviewees of course had no idea I would be analyzing the interviews in search for Caves' properties. They simply discussed a situation with me and answered some questions about it. This also led to the situation where they were actually discussing two decision moments at once. In Adrian's story on how they found out what the horse should look like, he also told me that during the workshop with the prototype horse they were given the green light for the show. This evidently is

another decision than the decision on the aesthetics of the horse. Therefore the table shows two moments in Adrian's row during the preparation phase.

The bottom two rows of the table show the number of situations per case and the number of properties mentioned. The spread per case is quite even in total. The only difference between the time phrases is that during the rehearsal phase there is no situational description on War Horse, while there a little more War Horse sketches during the run. The spread per property is less even. Infinite Variety was mentioned eight times in total, while A List/B List was never mentioned at all.

As mentioned before, in some cases one key property is counted and some additional properties are added. These are counted in the bottom row as 0,5 times mentioned, but one half cannot be mathematically added to another half, as both are separate moments. Art for Art's Sake for example was mentioned 5 times as key property and two times as an additional property.

Since the interviewees did not know that the interviews were analyzed for properties, they did not only sometimes mention multiple, or mention two separate moments, but they also gave descriptions that had none of the characteristics of the properties. These situational sketches were given the tag 'hard to place' instead of a property; this happened twice.

The elaborate situational sketches can be found in the appendices in the interview transcripts. The descriptive titles from Table 5 are used to easily find the corresponding part of the interviews together with a color coordination to mark the beginning and end of that part of the interview. Short and indicative descriptions of the situational sketches can be found in Box 4, also labeled by the descriptive titles from Table 5.

Open questions 3 – Disposition of the Interviewee

Qualitative interviews have the advantage that you can get a wide range of information. With talkative interviewees, it's likely that they will give you much more (valuable information) than you could have asked for. This section with questions on the disposition of the interviewees concerning puppetry is certainly a section that leaves room for this sort of extra information.

In three cases the interviewee mentioned a specific decisional-moment in this part of the interview. Although this information was not part of the situational sketches, I added these three moments to Table 5 anyway, because I kept the same line of questioning as in the situational sketches section of the interview as soon as I realized they were describing a clear decisional-moment.

One of these extra moments is actually by Floris Visser, who was not interviewed on the cases, but was knowledgeable about a situation during A Dog's Heart. His row is skewed, since it was not one of the eight interviews on the cases and it's a second hand story. However, interviews with

others involved in A Dog's Heart do indicate the relevance of Visser's situation, condoning the entrance in Table 5.

Table 5: Situational Sketches Ordered per Interviewee and Time Period

	Preparations	Rehearsals	Run	Extra	Total
Adrian	<p>WH: It's a horse! Main characteristics: Universe of possibilities, Willingness to pay / donor-support = Infinite Variety</p> <p>WH: Green light on prototype Main characteristics: Research and pretesting, Sunk costs, Uncertainty about consumer's taste and behavior, No pre-existing need = Nobody Knows</p>	-	<p>WH: Glossing up Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices, Universe of possibilities, Not much differentiated = Art for Art's Sake + Infinite Variety</p> <p>WH: Emilie Main characteristics: Horizontal differentiation, Universe of possibilities = Infinite Variety</p>	<p>WH: Extra time due to Coram Boy Main characteristics: Availability, Temporal coordination, Time's passage on value of a project = Time Flies</p>	
Derek	-	<p>LM: Ursula's skirt Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Concern for output = Motley Crew (+ bit of Art for Art's Sake)</p>	<p>LM: Maintenance Puppets 1/2 Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Artist vs. craftsman, Durability, Expected future rents (but Nobody Knows) = Art for Art's Sake (+ bit of Ars Longa)</p>		
Finn	<p>DH: Color of the Dog Main characteristics: Universe of possibilities, Not much differentiated, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice = Infinite Variety (+ bit of Art for Art's Sake)</p>	<p>DH: Who let the dog sing? Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Rank-order mechanism of 'muscle', Multiplicative production function = Motley Crew</p>	<p>WH: Show stop or not? Main characteristics: Concern for output, Creative vs. humdrum inputs, Artist vs. craftsman, Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices = Art for Art's Sake</p>		
Josie	<p>DH: It's a dog! 1/2 Main characteristics: Vertical differentiation, Horizontal differentiation, Universe of possibilities = Infinite Variety</p>	<p>DH: The dog is still Main characteristics: Universe of possibilities, Not much differentiated = Infinite Variety</p>	<p>DH: Vortex around the still dog Main characteristics: Practical problem has creative outcome = Hard to place</p>		
Max	<p>DH: It's a dog! 2/2 Main characteristics: Vertical differentiation, Universe of possibilities, Not much differentiated, Diverse skilled and specialized workers = Infinite Variety (+ bit of Motley Crew)</p>	<p>DH: Wound of the dog Main characteristics: Universe of possibilities = Infinite Variety</p>	<p>DH: What was different? Main characteristics: Asymmetrical information, Experience good = Nobody Knows</p>		
Sascha	<p>LM: Designing after flying Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Multiplicative production function, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley Crew</p>	-	-	<p>LM: Effects of time on Ursula/quality in general Main characteristics: Availability, Temporal coordination, Time's passage on value of a project = Time Flies</p>	

Sascha (CONT)	WH: Stage vs. seats Main characteristics: Expected future rents (but Nobody Knows) = Ars Longa				
Toby	LM: Ursula with strings attached? Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Multiplicative production function, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley Crew	LM: Shadow Puppetry Main characteristics: Uncertainty about consumer's taste and behavior, Research and pretesting, No pre-existing need, Asymmetrical information, Experience good, Sunk costs = Nobody Knows	WH: Back legs Joey broke down Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Creative vs. humdrum inputs, Diverse skilled and specialized workers = Art for Art's Sake (+ bit of Motley Crew)		
Wendy	-	LM: Ursula's feet Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Multiplicative production function, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley Crew	LM: Maintenance Puppets 2/2 Main characteristics: Durability, Expected future rents (but Nobody Knows) = Ars Longa		
Floris				DH: Simon McBurney Main characteristics: Concern for output, Inner necessity, Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices = Art for Art's Sake	
	The Little Mermaid = 2x A Dog's Heart = 2x War Horse = 3x	The Little Mermaid = 3x A Dog's Heart = 3x War Horse = -	The Little Mermaid = 1x A Dog's Heart = 2x War Horse = 4x	The Little Mermaid = 1x A Dog's Heart = 1x War Horse = 1x	The Little Mermaid = 7 moments A Dog's Heart = 8 moments <u>War Horse = 8 moments</u> Total: 23 moments
	Nobody Knows = 1x Art for Art's Sake = 0,5x Motley Crew = 2,5x Infinite Variety = 4x A List/B List = - Time Flies = - Ars Longa = 1 Hard to Place = -	Nobody Knows = 1x Art for Art's Sake = 0,5x Motley Crew = 3x Infinite Variety = 2x A List/B List = - Time Flies = - Ars Longa = - Hard to Place = -	Nobody Knows = 1x Art for Art's Sake = 4x Motley Crew = 0,5 Infinite Variety = 2x A List/B List = - Time Flies = - Ars Longa = 1,5x Hard to Place = 1x	Nobody Knows = - Art for Art's Sake = 1x Motley Crew = - Infinite Variety = - A List/B List = - Time Flies = 2x Ars Longa = - Hard to Place = -	Nobody Knows = 3x Art for Art's Sake = 5+(2*0,5)x Motley Crew 5+(2*0,5)x Infinite Variety = 8x A List/B List = - Time Flies = 2x Ars Longa = 2,5x <u>Hard to Place = 1x</u> Total: 26+(5*0,5) properties

Box 4 Situational Sketches

In this box all situational sketches are described shortly. For the lengthy sketches see the appendices. All situational sketches are marked by their titles.

1. WH: It's a horse! – Adrian Kohler, pre rehearsals

During the workshops of War Horse many options of what the horse should look like were tried out, from a horse build with farming equipment to the current version of Joey.

2. WH: Green light on prototype – Adrian Kohler, pre rehearsals

When Handspring Puppet Company had finished their prototype of Joey, it was shipped to the UK and tested in front of a workshop of forty people. When the horse looked and functioned like an actual horse, they felt this was the moment they were sure the show would actually be produced, with a three-handler horse.

3. WH: Glossing up – Adrian Kohler, run

War Horse has been produced all over the world and in (almost) every production improvements were made. It's time for a blue print version, according to Adrian, so that all versions around the world are alike. The American, more glossy, 'showy' version will be the one.

4. WH: Emilie – Adrian Kohler, run

Next to the horse Joey and the boy Albert, the girl Emilie is one of the leading characters of War Horse. She is a fragile little girl who loves Joey about as much as Albert does. In the first version of War Horse, she was portrayed by a puppet. In the later versions Emilie was portrayed by a human girl or woman.

5. WH: Extra time due to Coram Boy – Adrian Kohler, Extra

The National Theater was working on a series of plays to attract a younger audience while they were workshopping War Horse, the next show in this series. At the time the previous show, Coram Boy, was still playing and a ravishing success. Because of this success the show got prolonged and War Horse got an extra year for research and development.

6. LM: Ursula's skirt – Derek Blok, rehearsals

Little Mermaid's Ursula is basically a cart on wheels dressed as an octopus. Part of this 'outfit' is her 'skirt', the fabric that covers the cart. When the fabric is long enough to cover even the wheels, the same wheel get caught up in the fabric, making it hard to move the cart and even potentially dangerous for the actress in the cart.

7. LM: Maintenance Puppets (1/2, 2/2) – Derek Blok and Wendy Dries, run

Ursula and the other Little Mermaid puppets were initially designed for a non-touring production of six shows a week for about six months. In the end, The Little Mermaid became a partially touring, partially non-touring production with six to nine shows a week for a year and a half. This put a lot of string on the puppets and their maintenance.

8. DH: Color of the dog – Finn Caldwell, pre rehearsals

When designing a puppet, many aspects need to be taken into consideration. Not just shape, size, workability, but also the color. When designing a puppet after a novel, this brings about limitations. Especially when the novel describes the dog to be very dark, the hardest color range for theater lighting.

9. DH: Who let the dog sing? – Finn Caldwell, rehearsals

During A Dog's Heart an opera singer is supposed to 'sing' the dog's barking. When during the Dutch version director Simon McBurney got frustrated with the uncooperative Russian opera singer, he asked puppeteer Finn Caldwell to 'sing' the dog's barks.

10. WH: Show stop or not? – Finn Caldwell, run

Show stops are situations where the play can't continue for a couple of minutes due to (technical) circumstances. These stops are obviously unwanted, since they break the experience of the audience, but they can't always be prevented. Different parties can have different priorities when it comes down to stopping the show and it's always hard to find the best way to deal with situations where a stop might be in order.

11. . DH: It's a dog! (1/2, 2/2) – Josie Daxter and Max Webster, pre rehearsals

Like with War Horse with A Dog's Heart they had to figure out how to portray the dog. They've tried everything from holding up a sign saying 'dog' to the final solution of a life-like dog. Many people are involved in this process of workshopping and decision making, and in the end it comes down to teamwork with a leading director.

12. DH: The dog is still – Josie Daxter, rehearsals

During the rehearsals of A Dog's Heart the dog had taken shape, but now it was up to the puppeteers to bring him to life. One of the discoveries was that the puppet doesn't need to move all the time to be life-like, as a real life dog is still every once in a while as well.

13. DH: Vortex around the still dog – Josie Daxter, run

The challenge with a still dog is that it doesn't draw the audience's attention. Another challenge is that a dog isn't that big, and with three or four puppeteers this is physically straining. A solution for both problems is for the puppeteers to switch places to create a sort of vortex around the dog, getting attention as well as physical relieve.

14. DH: Wound of the dog – Max Webster, rehearsals

The dog gets wounded at the beginning of the show, but how do you show that? There are many options, such as a separate dog with a wound or a removable patch. The decision is influenced by many factors, such as costs and 'look'.

15. DH: What was different? – Max Webster, run

A Dog's Heart was produced in The Netherlands, the UK, and Italy. In all versions some slight changes were made. The UK version was, according to Max Webster, considerably better than the Dutch version, however he can't put a finer on why exactly.

16. LM: Designing after flying – Sascha van den Tol, pre rehearsals

The Little Mermaid puppetry was designed after the director made the decision that some of the sea creatures in the show would be flying. This decision therefore influenced the designing process and the shapes and sizes of the puppets.

17. WH: Stage vs. seats – Sascha van den Tol, pre rehearsals

War Horse will be shown in The Netherlands in 2014. The stage for War Horse is quite large. In the pre rehearsal phase of the Dutch version the producers are trying to figure out what the ideal stage size considering the loss or gain of seating space.

18. LM: Effects of time on Ursula/quality – Sascha van den Tol, rehearsals

The Dutch Little Mermaid was produced in a relatively short period of time. This might have negatively influenced the design of Ursula, but overall producer Sascha van den Tol doesn't believe it to be of influence on the quality of the show.

19. LM: Ursula with strings attached? – Toby Olié, pre rehearsals

Designer Bob Crowley was responsible for the set and costumes of The Little Mermaid, including the 'look and feel' of the puppets. When puppet designer Toby Olié got involved, he soon realized that Bob's idea of an Ursula puppet with strings to move the tentacles was not feasible.

20. LM: Shadow puppetry – Toby Olié, rehearsals

The original idea for *The Little Mermaid* was that some scenes would be played out, elaborated on, or supported with shadow puppetry. This was filmed during an extended weekend, using quite a large crew, but casted out the day after the final shoot due to uncertainty of the quality, script changes, and costs.

21. WH: Back legs Joey broke down – Toby Olié, run

Toby Olié once was the proud hind of Joey the horse in *War Horse*, and the unfortunate victim of a technical difficulty: both back legs of the horse fell off while on stage. In a split second Toby needed to make a decision on how to handle the situation in front of a full house.

22. LM: Ursula's feet – Wendy Dries, rehearsals

To cover the wheels from Ursula's cart in *The Little Mermaid* feet are used. These feet also help with steering and against bumping into the wheels. During the rehearsal phase it became apparent that not all materials would be equally suited for the feet and that sacrifices in comfort and aesthetics needed to be made.

23. DH: Simon McBurney – Floris Visser, Extra

Opera director Floris Visser is acquainted with *A Dog's Heart* director Simon McBurney and know how all-consuming the latter finds his job. His dedication during projects rises to the level where there is no room in his agenda, life, and mind for anything but the project. Visser's claims are further supported by those who have worked with McBurney on *A Dog's Heart*.

Other than the three extra moments, the dispositional questions also did what they were designed for: they gave information on the interviewees disposition on puppetry. This information cannot be entered in Table 5, as this are not situational sketches and more often than not do not involve decision-making moments.

However, the thoughts on puppetry, its everyday practice, its use and disuse, and so on, are not only very interesting, but also add to the complete picture of modern contact puppetry, as situational sketches give a very clear but still somewhat limited view on day to day live. Therefore all other thoughts on puppetry practice offered by the interviewees is also analyzed, labeled, and categorized by Caves' properties. The results of these 'puppetry properties' are compiled in Table 6. In Box 5, like in Box 4 with the situational sketches, are the headers explained shortly. In the appendices the descriptive titles are used to indicate the corresponding elements of the interviews.

Optional Quantitative Information

None of the interviewees were able or willing to give me quantitative information of their cases. The closest came Toby Olié, who had a ball park for the joint budget on puppets and props, but it was a hearsay budget without specificity on the distribution between the puppets and props (Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié). On the whole, this leaves all quantitative data out of the analysis.

Table 6: Puppetry Properties

	Puppetry Properties	Total
Adrian	<p>Cost vs. durability Main characteristics: Durability, Expected future rents (but Nobody Knows) = Ars Longa</p> <p>What does puppetry add? ¼ Main characteristics: Concern for output, Inner necessity, Product over income = Art for Art's Sake</p>	Nobody Knows = 1x Art for Art's Sake = 3x Motley Crew = 5x Infinite Variety = - A List/B List = 4x Time Flies = 1x Ars Longa = 1x Hard to Place = 3x
Derek	<p>No naturalism 1/2 Main characteristics: Imagination = Hard to place</p>	
Finn	<p>Opera? That's crazy! Main characteristics: Uncertainty about consumer's taste and behavior, Research and pretesting, No pre-existing need = Nobody Knows</p> <p>What does puppetry add? 2/4 Main characteristics: Concern for output, Inner necessity, Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices = Art for Art's Sake</p> <p>Craft of the art Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Inner necessity, Artist vs. craftsman = Art for Art's Sake</p> <p>The ones with skill Main characteristics: Skill, talent, originality, Ranking = A List/B List</p> <p>It's in the details Main characteristics: Skill, talent, originality, Only noticeable by peers/critics/specialists/teachers/the like? = A List/B List</p> <p>Hierarchy in opera 1/2 Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Rank-order mechanism of 'muscle', Skill, talent, originality, Ranking = Motley Crew + A List/B List</p> <p>Serious art Main characteristics: Concern for output = Art for Art's Sake</p>	Total: 18 properties
Josie	<p>Hierarchy in opera 2/2 Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members, Skill, talent, originality, Training and/or practice enough? = Motley Crew + A List/B List</p> <p>Cog in the machine Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Multiplicative production function, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley Crew</p> <p>Lecoq school 1/2 Main characteristics: Skill, talent, originality, Only noticeable by peers/critics/specialists/teachers/ the like?, Training and/or practice enough?, Ranking = A List/B List</p> <p>What does puppetry add? 3/4 Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Inner necessity, Artist vs. craftsman, Artists find it difficult to stipulate choices = Art for Art's Sake</p>	
Max	<p>Creative collective creation Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Rank-order mechanism of 'muscle' = Motley Crew</p>	

Max (CONT.)	<p>Invest in a puppet Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Rank-order mechanism of 'muscle', Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley crew</p> <p>Lecoq School 2/2 Main characteristics: Skill, talent, originality, Training and/or practice enough?, Ranking = A List/B List</p> <p>Time vs. Quality Main characteristics: Availability, Temporal coordination, Time's passage on value of a project = Time Flies</p> <p>No naturalism 2/2 Main characteristics: Imagination = Hard to Place</p> <p>Playfulness Main characteristics: Imagination = Hard to place</p>	
Sascha	<p>Communication Main characteristics: Diverse skilled and specialized workers, Potentially conflicting priorities and preferences, Multiplicative production function, Selecting team of inputs / sustaining all team members = Motley crew</p>	
Toby	<p>What's at my disposal? Main characteristics: Informational skewness = Hard to place</p> <p>What does puppetry add? 4/4 Main characteristics: Concern for output, Divert effort from aspects consumers notice, Inner necessity, Artist vs. craftsman, Product over income = Art for Art's Sake</p>	
Wendy	-	
Floris	-	

Box 5 Puppetry Properties

In this box all general puppetry properties as mentioned by the interviewees are described shortly. For the full transcripts of the interviews see the appendices. The descriptive titles used in this box and Table 6 can be used to find the corresponding parts of the interviews.

1. Cost vs. durability – Adrian Kohler

Puppetry is generally rather expensive, not just in personnel, but also in equipment. However, when you invest in a durable puppet, the use can be extended for many years.

2. What does puppetry add? – Adrian Kohler, Finn Caldwell, Josie Daxter & Toby Olié

How is puppetry used and, more importantly, why? It's striking that all puppeteers and puppet designers consider the use and disuse of puppetry, the reasons to use it, the possibilities for the future, and so on.

3. No naturalism – Derek Blok & Max Webster

Both directors think of puppetry as a way to expand the realm of possibilities of what you can depict on stage. Where the puppeteers consider the role of puppetry, the directors view the larger picture and consider naturalism on stage. In outcome they're quite similar to the puppeteers, as both parties no longer see naturalism as the goal to strive for, but imagination.

4. Opera? That's crazy! – Finn Caldwell

During the workshops of A Dog's Heart the team realized that the puppet worked well to tell the

story and they were enthusiastic. However, they also realized that they were trying to introduce puppetry into opera and found that to be quite a stretch.

5. Craft of the art – Finn Caldwell

Finn Caldwell endorses that contact puppetry is an art form, but also that it takes a lot of effort and skill to work with puppets. It's what he calls the craft of the art'.

6. The ones with skill – Finn Caldwell

Contact puppetry like most performing arts is subject to project work. Many of those projects are exclusive. However, when people are very wanted for their skills, employers might be inclined to deal with the schedule challenges of having employees with multiple projects.

7. It's in the details – Finn Caldwell

According to Caldwell the audience is not trained in puppetry enough to spot good or great puppetry. However, they do know what they like. It's the task of the puppeteers to pay attention to the details the audience would miss, because if they're good the audience has a great time, but if they're off, the audience will ascribe their discomfort to a bad show.

8. Hierarchy in opera – Finn Caldwell & Josie Daxter

Opera is a special field in the performing arts, as many different disciplines come together. With this, also a hierarchy comes about, to the extent that in some cases people from one discipline are not allowed to talk to people from the other discipline, even if they're working on the same production.

9. Serious art – Finn Caldwell

As mentioned above, Finn Caldwell endorses that contact puppetry is an art form, one that according to him needs to be taken more seriously, and since a couple of years that's happening.

10. Cog in the machine – Josie Daxter

Working on an opera means that you're part of a usually very large and multi disciplinary team. For puppeteer Josie Daxter this felt like being a cog in the machine, but it also taught her that she really needs to pay attention to the details.

11. Lecoq school – Josie Daxter & Max Webster

Training is very important to become a puppeteer. The school you've been to can give your resume a certain boost. And on top of the school list is the French Lecoq school, mentioned by both Josie Daxter and Max Webster.

12. Creative collective creation – Max Webster

The motley crew property entails that working in a group of people with different skills brings about benefits and challenges. Max Webster speaks of this in terms of the rules that creative collective creation needs to follow.

13. Invest in a puppet – Max Webster

As Adrian Kohler above already mentioned, puppetry is very expensive. Max Webster however does find it very important that if you want to use puppetry, you invest in it.

14. Time vs. Quality – Max Webster

In the performing arts, time is always of the essence, as it's project work. This time constraint is the biggest strain on quality if you ask Max Webster.

15. Playfulness – Max Webster

Puppetry is a form of mimicking life. To be able to do that, a childlike playfulness is necessary. Playfulness can be taught in school (like the Lecoq school), but it can also be part of the team working in. No matter which, according to Max Webster, it's a key element for good puppetry.

16. Communication – Sascha van den Tol

In large productions, time is not the only thing that is of essence. Good communications between all involved (the motley crew) is also essential to make sure everyone is on the same track. However, sometimes there is not enough time for communication.

17. What's at my disposal? – Toby Olié

With the large motley crews in contact puppetry and the performing arts in general, tasks get very divided and segregated. To the extent that in contact puppetry it's very normal for the puppet designer to not know what kind of budget he has to work with.

Salomon's Choices (Open for Comments)

The Salomon's choices led to two different results. First, this was also a moment where thoughts were offered freely. So from this part of the interview some information is found in Table 6 as well.

The second result is a list with the Salomon's choices made. These answers can be found in table 7. Although the interviewees were urged to choose between two concepts, in some cases the decision was considered too hard and they went with 'both' anyway. 'Neither' never was an answer.

Now What?

Thus far we've had some information on puppetry, on academic debates that are related to puppetry and the performing arts, and on the interviews I've held with eight puppetry or performing arts professionals. Although all of it is clearly related, so far it does not correlate or give the answer to the question if Caves' properties are applicable to everyday practice in contact puppetry and what then can be said from a cultural economic view point on the economic and artistic reasons to use contact puppetry nowadays.

The following chapter will be the 'missing' chapter in Caves', so to speak. In this more anecdotal part of the thesis, all previous elements will be tied together to sketch the everyday practice of contact puppetry and answer the questions this thesis aims at. The chapter will be standalone, so some information will be repeated. In most circumstances however the previous will be the academic background information for an deeper, or at least more academic, understanding of the field.

Besides the background information, the previous is also a source of references. As the next chapter is more like Caves', it won't have the academic referencing in place. In his book he is often not very clear on his sources, which also makes it hard to check the facts. Although this chapter will be based on Caves' and shaped similarly, I will respect the academic safety nets: footnotes will be used for proper referencing and to prevent any and all suspicions on plagiarism.

Table 7: Salomon's Choices Made by the Interviewees

	Money or Art?	Risk or security?	Keep what's right or progress at all expenses?	Broaden or specialize?	Permanent team or fresh input?	Trust or contract?	A few long term projects or a lot of long term projects?	Positive audience or positive critics?	Contemporary or for all eternity?	Use budget on a star or use budget on many other things?
Adrian	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Both	Permanent Team	Trust	A few long term projects	Both	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Derek	Art	Risk	Progress at all expenses	Broaden	Fresh Input	Contract	A few long term projects	Positive Audience	For all eternity	Use budget on many other things
Finn	Art	Risk	Both	Specialize	Permanent Team	Trust	A few long term projects	Positive Audience	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Josie	Art	Risk	Progress at all expenses	Broaden	Fresh Input	Trust	A few long term projects	Positive Audience	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Max	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Specialize	Permanent Team	Contract	A few long term projects	Positive Audience	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Sascha	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Broaden	Fresh Input	Both	A lot of short term projects	Positive Audience	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Toby	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Specialize	Permanent Team	Contract	A few long term projects	Positive Audience	For all eternity	Use budget on many other things
Wendy	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Both	Fresh Input	Trust	A lot of short term projects	Positive Audience	Contemporary	Use budget on many other things
Floris	Art	Risk	Keep what's Right	Specialize	Fresh Input	Contract	A few long term projects	Both	For all eternity	Use budget on many other things

Contact Puppetry in Practice; Supplying Complex Creative Goods

‘Ssst! You’ve got to be quiet mommy; she’s asleep!’ ‘Who’s asleep dear?’ ‘Well, Molly of course mom. I just brought her to bed and told her a story. She was tired from playing in the sandbox.’ ‘Was she now? Are you a bit tired as well?’ ‘Nooo, it was Molly.’ ‘I see, but maybe we should bring you to your bed as well. I’ll tell you a story too, and then when you wake up, Molly will be ready to play again, how about that?’ The little girl yawns and gives in, too tired to come up with an excuse.

Sounds familiar? Little children do not only play with their dolls, they use them as deflecting shields sometimes as well. To do that, the doll cannot be a mere object; it has to have life. Although there seems to be no difference between dolls and puppets, as in many languages the word for one or the other is the same, one of the divisions between them is this form of life: dolls live without the need to be touched, while puppets need handlers.

The one thing both have got in common, is that they mimic live through play. Finn Caldwell, world famous puppeteer, calls this ‘finding the epic in the domestic, or the miraculous in the normal’¹⁴. It will never be special when an actor breathes, drinks, smiles, but have you ever seen a puppet do those things? It’s extraordinary! However, the theatricality of puppetry isn’t enough to get millions of people worldwide to the theater.

How many grownups do you know who still play with dolls and puppets? Sometimes it seems that playfulness is reserved to children and that the *homo ludens* is extinct¹⁵. Luckily, in theater schooling it’s actually a requirement. Puppets do not simply come to life because you pull a few strings or stick your hand up their ass, they come to life because they embody an idea¹⁶.

When it’s a little girl’s doll, the idea is simply hers. It can be her best friend, her worst enemy, and everything in between. When we’re talking puppetry in the theater, the puppets embody several ideas. The playwright, the director, the puppet designer; the entire team has input in the final product: the show.

Puppetry in the theater can consist of many forms. You’ve got shadow puppetry, ventriloquism, marionettes, and so on. In all cases, we’re speaking of a complex creative good in the performing arts. Complex creative goods are creative goods that are composited by teams of multiple creative and humdrum skills. These teams bring about their own advantages and challenges and the way of working together shapes the daily practice in the field.

¹⁴ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell.

¹⁵ *Homo ludens*: the playing man.

¹⁶ Based on the idea of playfulness by Max Webster, Appendix G, the Lecoq Theater School, Appendices F and G – Interviews Josie Daxter and Max Webster, the notion of the devine idea by Floris Visser, Appendix A, and The Scientist is an Artist: Floris Visser. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh4T23vN2Fg>.

In this chapter an overview of the day to day life in contemporary contact puppetry will be given. Contact puppetry is a term by Finn Caldwell and describes a form of puppetry that is western in origin, but based among others on the Japanese *bunraku* puppetry. In this form multiple handlers, puppeteers, are in close contact to the puppet they operate. The puppets are very detailed and take a lot of expertise to build. The form of puppetry is very transparent, as the puppeteers are not hidden - they blend into the puppet thanks to their costumes, acting skills, and their puppeteering qualities.

In the past decade or so, contact puppetry has become a booming business. In 1998 the musical *The Lion King* received a Tony Award, paving the way for puppetry on a large scale. Theater experience *War Horse* in the UK gave the final push. This show, with a contact puppet horse in the lead part has been successful worldwide and is still going strong. Examples of countries where the production played are Australia, America and Canada. Among others, Germany and The Netherlands will follow soon.

As *War Horse* was at the start of the contact puppetry, it's one of the three cases in this chapter to describe the common practice of puppetry. The other two cases are Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, a musical that uses puppetry to depict sea life, and *A Dog's Heart*, an opera with a puppet protagonist. Together they sketch a broad spectrum of contact puppetry in different disciplines of the performing arts.

Contact puppetry being a complex creative good –the people working in the field have various backgrounds and responsibilities– asks for a multiple layered approach. To discover how life in puppetry is experienced, it wouldn't suffice to interview only puppeteers. Therefore you'll find fragments of nine interviews with professionals from the field: crew to creative, humdrum to executing. All giving you an exclusive view in the world of contact puppetry.

These experiences are categorized by seven properties and an 'all other' category: Nobody Knows, Art for Art's Sake, Motley Crew, Infinite Variety, A List/B List, Time Flies, *Ars Longa*, and Hard to Place. The seven properties were thought off by Richard Caves, in his influential book *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). All seven properties describe certain aspects in the creative industries, such as the performing arts, together supposedly giving the total picture. In practice, some elements seem to fall under none of the seven properties. These Hard to Place characteristics as well as the seven properties will be explained along the way.

Although these properties, describe the creative industries, this chapter is not organized per property. It's organized in four categories, based on different elements of the everyday practice, such as teamwork, uncertainty and the market. But first we'll look into the motivation of those in the field.

Work Without Love is Slavery

The above quote is supposedly from Mother Teresa – and right she was. It comes close to the quote of another mother, namely my own, saying that if you love your job, you'll never have to work a day in your life. And even though contact puppetry is an occupation of long hours and hard work, the passion amongst the people in the field is unmistakable.

Motivation

Actor, filmmaker and director Simon McBurney is considered to be one of the great theater minds of our times. Among others he received the prestigious Tony and Olivier Awards. As the director of *A Dog's Heart*, he was responsible for what Floris Visser calls one of the best opera's in the past decades – and it only was his first attempt¹⁷.

With a rep like that, there is also much at stake. However, it's not the reputation per se that matters, but what it represents: the quality of the work. And that's something Simon McBurney apparently won't play games with.

In fact, it's not only the work that has a reputation, McBurney himself has one too¹⁸. He is completely dedicated to his work. He does not only make long hours, he simply forgets everything else; all that matters is his art. This is called the Art for Art's Sake property, as people working in the creative industries tend to love their work and care about the output to the extent that other things are considered less important.

Simon McBurney is the living, breathing example of Art for Art's Sake gone too far. Examples of him yelling during rehearsals are plenty, as are the stories of him working overtime or dedicating all his time, including time usually spent on a social life (or personal hygiene), to his work. And he expects the same sort of dedication from his coworkers and employees¹⁹.

With this kind of dedication, you would at least expect something in return. However, the creative industries aren't going to make you rich. McBurney's associate director Max Webster says he has a good degree, if he were in it for the money, he would be working at a bank or something similar. And of all the nine interviews with performing arts professionals, none picked money over art when given the choice.

Although art trumps money, art is not only seen as a nice luxury –which it is– but also as a necessity to make art²⁰. All of the interviewees take risk over security any day, which is typical for cultural professionals. However they also admit that they do need a personal sense of security. The lack of money, and the insecurity that comes along with it, is considered by many as detrimental to

¹⁷ Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser: Simon McBurney.

¹⁸ Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser: Simon McBurney.

¹⁹ Appendices A, E, and F – Interviews Floris Visser, Finn Caldwell and Josie Daxter.

²⁰ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell

making art, making puppetry²¹. Money might not be their sole maximand, but at the very least it's a constraint.

Contracts

Although making puppetry is the maximand, making money is still a necessity to live. Since a lot of time and effort goes into the puppetry, it needs to be at the very least maintainable. In the words of Toby Olié: 'I'm not in theater to get rich, but you certainly want to make sure that your contribution is respected and you're earning what you should be earning'.

To make sure everyone gets what they deserve or holds up their end of the deal, contracts are always helpful. In puppetry option contracts are common, where the rights of a story are bought and per step of the project new people are hauled in for their contribution. For these people there are usually no fixed contracts with a company, but project based contracts for the duration of the part they are involved in.

This contract system is well-tried in many cultural fields and the most (cost) efficient and safe, as it gives the producers after every step the chance to pull out. But since Nobody Knows whether a product will be successful or not, this decision is rather hard. We'll continue on this problem later on.

Contracts might form a safety net, they also have quite a couple of holes in them; you simply cannot cover all possible events in a contract. This is also the reason why trust is an important commodity in the field of (contact) puppetry specifically and the performing arts in general. Especially those on the production end of the field emphasize that the work could never be done without trust, as contracts do not cover everything or drafting them can simply progress slower than life²². Overall it's safe to say that both trust and contract are equally as important.

There is No "I" in Team, But There is a "U" in Suck

A complex creative good can only be produced when many departments, many specialties work together. This means different backgrounds, different viewpoints, and different interests. When all comes together, something amazing can form, but when something goes wrong, it could also cause a domino effect of misfortune. In this paragraph we'll take a closer look at the teamwork within the contact puppetry field.

Motley Crews

The term Motley Crew is an English verb entailing groups of unorganized and weak-tied people striving at somewhat the same goal(s). Pirates are a common example of a typical motley crew. Most creative industry professionals do not roam around their workplace with an eye patch and a parrot

²¹ Appendix C, E, and I – Interviews Adrian Kohler, Finn Caldwell, and Toby Olié.

²² Appendices C and H – Interview with Adrian Kohler and Sascha van den Tol.

on their shoulder though. What's meant with the Motley Crew property is that complex creative goods are made by many different individuals with different skill sets, roles, and goals. Humdrum inputs, of those without creative input, are just as necessary to bring the project to an (excellent) end as the creative inputs.

This can make people in larger complex creative productions, such as opera, feel very insignificant, but the cog in the machine metaphor is more prominent here²³. People might only have a small task in the bigger picture, but they have to take it and make the most of it. Characteristically for Motley Crews is that everyone is dependent on each other, so every little thing matters.

Puppeteer Toby Olié noticed this importance during a performance of *War Horse*, where he was playing lead character horse Joey his hind²⁴. The puppet broke down during a scene and both back legs, the legs that he was operating and also the legs that cover him a bit, fell off. He had to make a split second decision on what to do next. Since Toby's own legs were now very visible, he chose to keep on playing. He could still move the tail and used his own legs to mimic the horses. With his decision, he gave focus to the story instead of the misfortune of the puppet and he kept the story going (Art for Art's Sake). After the scene stage management took the horse off stage 'to the vet' and Joey could be repaired again.

Having (many) people around with multiple skills can thus be considered a blessing but it could also become a threat. Opera's are probably the most complex creative productions, as they often encompass many different disciplines and dozens to hundreds of people are involved. Besides that, opera also has quite the hierarchy, which can make it hard for people from different disciplines to work together – or in some cases to even talk together (A List/B List, the property that focuses on rankings, hierarchy, and the value of education)²⁵.

During the opera *A Dog's Heart*, the dog is a large puppet operated by three or four puppeteers²⁶. Although the dog was like a party piece, it was also viewed with contempt. The singers did not want the dog to be in front of them –it might block their view– and working with the puppeteers was for some of the singers also very hard. Hard to the extent that in the Dutch version of *A Dog's Heart* one of the puppeteers, Finn Caldwell, ended up 'barking' a part of the score, because the singer simply refused²⁷. The director punished him by giving the lower ranked puppeteer the task. This was degrading for the Russian opera singer, as puppeteers are lower on the 'opera food

²³ Appendix F – Interview Josie Daxter: Cog in the machine.

²⁴ Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié: Back legs Joey broke down.

²⁵ Appendices E and F – Interviews Finn Caldwell and Josie Daxter: Hierarchy in opera.

²⁶ Depending on the version, as there was a difference in the number of puppeteers between The Netherlands, London, and Milan.

²⁷ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Who let the dog sing?

chain' than soloist. This was a direct play on the hierarchy in opera, and made working relations quite difficult.

Max Webster, associate director on *A Dog's Heart*, recognizes that people seem to miss the point of creative collective creation²⁸. Yes, everybody works together and all different skills have their input, but in end the director has the final say. In that sense *Motley Crew* does not mean democracy. Failing to miss this, cost the opera singer at least part of his score.

Not a democracy does not mean that valid input is not appreciated though. The director of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, Glenn Casale, realized early in the preparation process that he wanted the underwater creatures to have very different forms of mobility, and one of those forms needed to be flying across the stage²⁹. However sea witch Ursula was not supposed to fly. Designer Bob Crowley used these thoughts by Glenn to design the witch's costume and came up with the idea to use puppetry. Both men figured that hiding three men with strings or control rod's under Ursula's skirt would be the way to make her six tentacles move³⁰.

When puppet designer Toby Olié heard of the plan's, he realized that this would not be the ideal solution puppetry wise. He proposed to use contact puppetry and have six men outside of Ursula's skirt to move the tentacles. Although this would improve the accuracy of the tentacles, it would form a logistical problem, as all the male ensemble men were now occupied with puppeteering Ursula. In one scene, this was not manageable. The solution? For that one scene only, Ursula flies to make up for the lack of puppeteers.

In all three examples given, the end result is based on the input of people with different skills. This means that you have to be able to trust the solutions they come up with, and trust that people will be able to handle unexpected situations, even during a live performance, and no matter if the decision is made out of artistic considerations or from a practical point of view. Permanent teams are therefore considered important, as they convey trust and knowledge. Nonetheless, a little over half of all interviewees values fresh input more highly – as fresh input will help in making fresh art (Art for Art's Sake).

Art Versus Craft

As making fresh art is the goal, why puppetry? What does puppetry add? In current day contact puppetry unfortunately not that much³¹. In many cases the puppeteer is called in at the last moment

²⁸ Appendix G – Interview Max Webster: Creative collective creation.

²⁹ Appendix H – Interview Sascha van den Tol: Designing after flying.

³⁰ Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié: Ursula with strings attached?

³¹ Appendices C, E, F, and I – Interviews Adrian Kohler, Finn Caldwell, Josie Daxter, Toby Olié: What does puppetry add?

to help solve a problem. And if the puppeteer is contacted in advance, it's very often for the part of a fairy or an animal. And if the puppetry is not a problem solver, than its seen as a special effect³².

Professionals in the field see it as much more; they consider puppetry to be a separate art form, with its own merits³³. The most important is that puppetry can mirror life, but because it's a puppet and not a human, the impact is much larger: representing life in an epic way.

But all of the above simply assumes that contact puppetry is an art form, while the 'problem solving' element actually puts it closer to a craft. As part of the performing arts, contact puppetry is definitely part of the creative industries, but is it art? The discussion whether something is art or not has been widespread and has many grey areas. Great minds have put thoughts into the dilemma of what is or isn't art and came up with some nice, but not completely comprehensive ideas.

Sociologist Howard S. Becker thought of art worlds: fields of arts that are in some way or another organized³⁴. This left room for a lot of grey areas, because Becker actually wanted to sociologically describe all art forms, even the very exclusive ones. Nonetheless Becker did come up with a distinction among the artists in the field: integrated professionals, mavericks, naive artists and folk artists.

If we apply Becker's thoughts to contact puppetry, it's clear that it's a separate art field, with its own conventions and several ties to other fields, such as other forms of puppetry and performing arts, actors, props, et cetera. And given this need organization, the professionals in the field could be considered integrated professionals, the group of artists who make and sell art within organized fields.

Although Becker gives the general outline, it's still not very specific. Ruth Towse therefore has the practical distinction between creative artists, those who come up with an idea, performing artist, those who execute the idea, and cultural workers, all others involved within the field, such as makers, designers, and humdrum workers³⁵. For contact puppetry this distinction is quite odd, as the creative artists can just as easily be the performing artists and makers as well, while in other cases the three are separated.

To be entirely sure some other divisions could be checked as well. The essentialist approach looks at certain qualities of a work, such as comparability to other art works. In the case of contact puppetry this could be a comparison to *bunraku* puppetry, and if applicable for instance also to the novel a show was based on. The semiotic good approach combines the workings of the field with the

³² What is remarkable by the way is that although puppetry moves between different disciplines, the disciplines all seem to have more or less the same disposition toward it – even opera was not completely disapproving, as they often are of other disciplines.

³³ Appendix Interview Josie Daxter: Serious art

³⁴ Becker, H.S. 1984. *Art Worlds*. California: University of California Press.

³⁵ Towse, R. 2010. *A Textbook of Cultural Economics*. Cambridge: University Press.

characteristics of the maker and some other elements, such as intent. The conventional approach focuses more on the social conventions: if it's seen as an art form, it is.

As we've noticed, the field itself is clearly convinced that contact puppetry is art, the intent is to make art, and many professionals call themselves artists, so even though art might be hard to define, and even if puppetry is not always taken (completely) seriously by other fields who mainly see it as a problem solver, by all academic and social intents and purposes, contact puppetry can be considered art. Only, it is a special kind of art.

Contact puppetry is special because it's not just an art, but a craft as well. It takes a lot of specialized technical skill to design and make a puppet, as does it to perform with it. This is what Finn Caldwell calls the craft of the art³⁶.

This craft is very apparent when we consider the rehearsal period of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. During this phase the actors and others involved got to work with Ursula for the very first time. Ursula is part musical actress and part puppet, as her lower half with six tentacles is a contact puppet and the upper body is an actress. The puppet part of Ursula is a cart on wheels, covered with a 'skirt' and the tentacles. The six tentacle puppeteers are also responsible for moving the cart around the stage, as the actress has no control of the puppet part whatsoever.

Ursula's mobility therefore is a bit fragile, since it's dependent on the puppeteers who are also working the tentacles. During the rehearsals, some problems with the puppet were encountered that needed to be fixed. One of them was the length of Ursula's 'skirt': the fabric used to over the cart³⁷.

In the beginning, the skirt was long enough to cover the wheels of the cart, so it was suggested that Ursula was floating across the stage. But with this skirt length, the fabric often got caught in between the wheels of the cart, preventing mobility and even creating dangerous situations (if the cart were to fall over, the actress would be launched across the stage). Many alternatives were tried, which entails the Infinite Variety property. Although the designer and some of the other creatives were not happy with it (Art for Art's Sake), the skirt was shortened to the relief of the Ursula actress and the six tentacle puppeteers.

The wheels were covered with 'feet', to make them as invisible as possible³⁸. However, the soft feet also got caught in the wheels and caused the same problem. The hard feet that were the second option, limited some of the mobility, which wasn't a problem on stage, but could form problems off stage, as the backstage area's are often too small for the huge Ursula puppet (Infinite Variety). It took the (maintenance) crew quite some convincing, but in the end the feet became

³⁶ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Craft of the art.

³⁷ Appendix D – Interview Derek Blok: Ursula's skirt.

³⁸ Appendix J – Interview Wendy Dries: Ursula's feet.

removable, so that in small theaters, Ursula would be feetless, but more mobile. The disadvantage of this approach is that the wheels are uncovered and visible to the audience. Another problem with the uncovered wheels is that there is no protection between them and the shins of the tentacle puppeteers, who ended up with quite a few bruises.

The original design in this case was not suited for the practice with the puppet. The crew and the creatives pulled together to make it work as best as they could and to everyone's satisfaction (Motley Crew). As with any good compromise, in the end nobody was happy about it. Again we see that resolutions can come from above as aesthetic choices, or from below as practical solutions; art and craft are very close.

Deus ET Machina

As (contact) puppetry, the trope *Deus ex Machina* is often used as a problem solver as well. The difference is that puppetry is an expression of the story, where the *Deus ex Machina* influences the story itself. When the writer is completely stuck, he simply let's a God come down from the heavens and solve the hero's problem. To come down from the heavens in theater, a mechanical solution like a flying chariot is often used.

These two elements make the *Deus ex Machina*: the God and the machine, as it literally translates into the God from the machine. And although flying chariot's are fun to watch, the trope is often seen as a weakness of the author – as he's no able to solve a problem without divine intervention.

But the trope is not the only way of using *Deus ex Machina*, as it's also been used as a metaphor by opera director Floris Visser. *Deus ex Machina* in his opinion is that the machine comes from the God, the 'divine' inspiration to create something worthwhile. And to be able to do that, the one with the idea should also have at least a basic understanding of the possibilities of the machine. This broad vision can then be complemented with specific knowledge, also referred to by Visser as *Deus et Machina*, the God and the machine.

Floris Visser emphasizes that working in the theater is not a solo job³⁹. Especially his field, opera, consists of dozens of people per performance. And except for the fact that they make working in this field quite expensive, it also means that you have to get everyone facing the same direction. It's said that you're only as strong as your weakest link, which means that all department and everyone in them should be working in the same direction, on the same schedule, and on the same level.

Although Visser's *Deus et Machina* is seen as an utopia for most fields, this is exactly how (contact) puppetry is organized. Creative artists can be makers and performing artists as well, but

³⁹ Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser.

there also are specialists in the craft of making puppets, in performing with puppets, and so on (Motley Crew). It's therefore not surprising specialization and broadening are considered equally as important amongst contact puppet professionals. It's not the craft (technics) that makes contact puppetry special, it's the organization of this art world.

The Only Certainty is That Nothing is Certain

Although contact puppetry is a special art form, success is never guaranteed. Uncertainty is part of everyday life in the arts. This however does not mean that everyone just rolls over and plays dead, surrendering to the inevitable randomness of it all. Within the performing arts and within contact puppetry schemes are developed to counteract (bits of) the uncertainty. In this paragraph some of these techniques are portrayed, but first let's take a closer look at why it's so important to have some clarity.

High Fixed Costs

One of the characteristics of the performing arts is that they are experience goods. This means that you'll never know whether you like something until you've tried it. This makes it hard for the audience to choose, but even harder for the producers to figure out what to make (Nobody Knows). Since we already established that people aren't in it for the money, they could in theory simply make whatever they like. But pretty much anything you make will cost something, so you will need to invest and try to earn that investment back.

This comes down to one of the toughest problems in the arts in general, namely that you've got high fixed costs at the start of the project, without any form of security of money coming in. And those high fixed costs, are even higher in (contact) puppetry.

Somehow, the colloquial idea exists that puppetry is a cheap art form⁴⁰. However the opposite is true. Although the exact numbers are hard to get by, contact puppet professionals confirm that making a puppets asks for large investments⁴¹. An estimation of the puppetry in The Little Mermaid is approximately £ 40.000 to £ 60.000 – and this for a musical where the puppetry only has a supportive function⁴².

These investments do not only consist of money, but also of time and effort, as the puppets are not just expensive, but also require a lot of different skills and training (Motley Crew). The advantage is that, if you do it properly, puppets can be long lived and have a high durability⁴³. The South African Handspring Puppet Company still has a show that they've started back in 1991. And although the labor costs are quite expensive, they've easily got their money's worth on the

⁴⁰ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler.

⁴¹ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Invest in a puppet.

⁴² Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié.

⁴³ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler: Cost vs. durability.

investments in the puppets back in the nineties. This is called *Ars Longa*, the property that focuses on the durability as well as the future rents of art.

When a puppet investment breaks even or starts to earn money is hard to say. Not just for outsiders, who are unaware of the budgets, but also for the insiders. Budgets are not just company secrets, they're top level company secrets. Puppeteers and even puppet designers very rarely know what kind of budget is at their disposal⁴⁴. Handling that is not easy, as the budgets do effect the execution and possibilities of a design. Toby Olié says that he just keeps dreaming big and simply cuts back when he's been told to do so.

This tactic can however lead to a lot of effort and work that doesn't pay off. During the rehearsal process of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* Toby and a film crew took an entire weekend to record shadow puppetry for the show⁴⁵. Shadow puppetry, as the name indicates, is a form of puppetry where cut out shapes are used to make shadows. This can either be projected live or from film, as was the choice with *The Little Mermaid* (and in the later versions of *War Horse*). The Monday after the shadow puppetry film weekend, the director and the creative team unfortunately realized that the shadow puppetry could not be used, because the equipment wasn't present. Projecting the puppetry couldn't been done on the gauze set, which meant that a new projector for back projecting was necessary. Renting or buying the equipment would have been extremely costly and by that time nobody had seen what the result would look like in the theater set either. Other than that, some scenes of the show were rearranged, cutting out what would have been some key moments of the shadow puppetry and thus making the remaining bit of shadow puppetry obsolete.

Although Toby was happy with the decision, as he loves his art so much that he only wants to use it when it actually makes things better (*Art for Art's Sake*), the production team had invested a lot of time and money in this part of the project that would never be used – adding to the high fixed costs.

Workshopping

Another approach was that of Adrian Kohler, who build a prototype for *War Horse* with only two puppeteers. He knew that three puppeteers would make the horse more lifelike, but he economized on his own accord to help the National Theatre, who were thinking of producing the show. When they saw how well Adrian's prototype worked, they gave the show a green light and approved of the three-puppeteer-horse as well⁴⁶. It all comes back again to the fact that when working in this field, Nobody Knows upfront what will or will not work, but they handle every situation to their best abilities.

⁴⁴ Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié: What's at my disposal?

⁴⁵ Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié: Shadow puppetry.

⁴⁶ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler: Green light on prototype.

Not knowing might be an everyday reality in the creative industries, it's not something they will settle with. The prototype by Adrian was created to see if they could pull the production off in a phase prior to the green light on the show. In puppetry, as in other forms of theater, workshopping is a strategy to deal with insecurity. Workshops are held with the creative and production team long before the rehearsals, and often even before the castings or the green light of the show. Those with input in the creative process (either creatively or organizational) come together and work through the story, the script and their ideas; brainstorming on the Infinite Variety of possibilities.

In (contact) puppetry this phase is very important, as together they will discover what the puppet should look like, how it should function, what its limitations are, and where the advantages lie⁴⁷. The possibilities are endless, which is called the Infinite Variety property, so multiple workshops can be necessary.

For both *War Horse* and *A Dog's Heart* multiple workshops were necessary to figure out what the leading character would look like. 'A horse is a horse, of course, of course' is simply not the case, as there is an Infinite Variety of possibilities to portray it, and the same with a dog. Options vary from local materials (Moscow street clutter for the dog, farm equipment for the horse) to simply holding up a sign saying 'I'm a dog/horse' and everything in between.

And when the group of creatives agrees on the form, so many other choices can be made additionally. What will be the color of the puppet? Which lighting goes best with it? What should the puppeteers wear? How do you portray a certain emotion? Or a situation? Or a change in appearance? When does the puppet move or stand still? And even when all the questions are answered to everyone's satisfaction, the uncertainty prevails.

During the workshops of *A Dog's Heart* people started to realize that the dog had a right shape and size and could actually be used to tell the story, the common consensus was that it could actually work, accept for the fact that they were talking about using puppetry in a brand new opera, so they figured it was against all conventions and all odd's; it was crazy⁴⁸.

Nonetheless, *A Dog's Heart* was very successful in three countries already (*Nobody Knows*). Between the first performances in Amsterdam and the second tour in London, some slight changes were made⁴⁹. Actually nothing major, as associate director Max Webster doesn't even remember what the differences were while he was part of the process of making the adjustments. What did stick with him, was the quality difference, as he found the second tour to be much better. But even

⁴⁷ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler: It's a horse! Appendices E and F – Interviews Finn Caldwell and Josie Daxter: It's a dog! Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Color of the dog. Appendix G – Interview Max Webster: Wound of the dog. Appendix F – Interview Josie Daxter: The dog is still.

⁴⁸ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Opera? That's crazy!

⁴⁹ Appendix G – Interview Max Webster: What was different?

though he's the associate director, he can't put a finger on why this version is so much better – Nobody Knows to the extreme.

Take Your Time

Except for workshopping, some other techniques can be used as well to try and defeat the uncertainty. One of them is time management, but ironically enough, there isn't always time for it (Time Flies). Time is seen as one of the largest constraints on quality, as most production processes are situated in a set number of weeks⁵⁰.

This is also why most contact puppetry professionals prefer long term projects, to give them more time for research and development. Out of the nine interviewed professionals, the only two who preferred short term projects are the ones with the least direct creative input, namely the executive producer and the crewmember. Other than that, all chose for more time.

In the case of War Horse, a longer time frame came up naturally⁵¹. War Horse was part of a series of plays by the British National Theatre with a broader audience reach. The play before War Horse, Choram Boy, was doing so well that it got prolonged giving War Horse an extra season on research and development – with the known successful result.

In Disney's The Little Mermaid the opposite was actually true, since they had a very short production period⁵². It even ended up with Ursula being the prototype, which led to a very low durability, a lot of maintenance, and even replacement of the tentacles⁵³. The prototype looked gorgeous and fitted the look of the show completely (Art for Art's Sake), but she was not build to withstand nine shows a week and transport across the entire country (Ars Longa: durability). Among those involved opinions differ on if more time would have mattered for the quality of Ursula, but there is a consensus that more communication between departments always makes things easier and probably better (Motley Crew).

But it takes time to get everyone together and sit down to talk, and time is almost always a luxury that's lacking. For The Little Mermaid it would have probably saved maintenance efforts and costs, but then again, The Little Mermaid was prolonged as well and the puppets were build on the initial show length⁵⁴.

Contact puppetry professionals mostly care for contemporary work, so endless durability is not their main goal. In some cases, durability could increase rents, as a show can be prolonged

⁵⁰ Appendix G – Interview Max Webster: Time Flies.

⁵¹ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler: Extra time due to Choram Boy.

⁵² Appendix H – Interview Sascha van den Tol.

⁵³ Appendices D and J – Interviews Derek Blok and Wendy Dries: Maintenance puppets. Appendix H – Interview Sascha van den Tol: Effects of time on Ursula/Quality in general and Communication.

⁵⁴ Which in Ursula's case was too long for the prototype, as it started to decay in a couple of months, but for the other puppets would have been doable.

(indefinitely), but in many cases the duration of a show is set and afterwards the puppets are no longer necessary. And it would be bad time management to spend a lot of time and thoughts on unnecessary durability.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

After workshops, research and development, brainstorm sessions, and final designs, it's time for the actual show to take shape. In this part of the process performers are cast and the marketing strategy is put into place. Within that marketing strategy it could come in handy to have a form of bait; something that will get the audience to the theater. This could be in the form of a nice show title, but also with a famous leading character.

When asked, none of the contact puppetry professionals chose a star over using that part of the budget on many other things (as stars are quite expensive). With such a definitive 'no' you would start to think that there are no stars in puppetry, but that's definitely not the case.

As said before, most contracts in contact puppetry are project based. In most cases this entails that the professional is full time contracted and is not allowed to work other jobs in the mean time. However, the puppeteers who are in great demand, the ones with the most skill, are able to negotiate other arrangements for themselves⁵⁵. They can get days off to work other jobs, get other rehearsal hours to puzzle jobs together, and/or get higher salaries.

Adrian Kohler of Handspring Puppet Company is no fan of differentiated salaries. He too chose for using the budget on other thing than a star and tries to get everyone the same salary. But although he is a bit reluctant to admit to it, he has paid some people more than others because he per se wanted them to do a show.

The same contradiction is found in Max Webster, who is no fan of hiring stars. The everyday fact however is that without a star it's hard to fill the theaters: without a well-known show title and a star he tells me, only thirty percent of the halls get filled, while most shows need seventy percent to break even.

Why then, if having stars is not only common, but also necessary don't the professionals in the field want to admit to it? Many arguments are possible. It could be simply because they'd rather spend the money on something else (Art for Art's Sake), but just can't due to facts of life. It could also be that having a star has a negative connotation due to some stars who were only in it for their name and not for their abilities⁵⁶. Or that it diminishes the qualities and efforts of all others. Or maybe it's something entirely else, but it's clear that ranking in contact puppetry is taboo (do it, don't say it).

⁵⁵ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: The ones with skill.

⁵⁶ Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser

Anything but That!

Not talking about something is one thing, but not doing it is another. Yet there are things that, even though they might limit the uncertainty, are simply not done. Earlier I mentioned that all interviewed professionals chose risk over security because they want to take their art to the next level. What they do not want to do however is choose progress at all expenses over keeping what's right. Progress, or innovation, is what they strive for, but not at the cost of everything. None of them wants to stand still and contemporary work is preferred, but that doesn't mean they want to forget about the long history of puppetry.

The line between progress and traditions is a fine line however. In the American version of War Horse some of the shadow puppetry was glossed up with high tech video effects⁵⁷. Furthermore, the production was 'Americanized' by means of translating all German and French into English. It's this version that will be the master for all other versions around the world.

The story is better paced and more theatrical, but still for the original creatives at Handspring Puppet Company, this version took out some of the originality, the handmade feel, the magic from the original British version and they were very sorry to see some elements go (Art for Art's Sake). However that doesn't compete with the feeling of joy of having a brilliant show that will now be shown all across the world. Progress can come at a price, just not at any price.

Judgment Day

That War Horse will be shown all around the world is not just for the sake of producing it: they do it to reach an audience. After all their creative thoughts, love, and effort went into the production, the show goes to the market and it's open season for shooting opinions. Three elements are of importance here on the production side of contact puppetry: the weight of the market during the decision making process, the audience, and peers and gatekeepers.

The Weight of the Market

Art for Art's Sake will only get you so far. In the end contact puppetry asks for a lot of money to produce. Contact puppetry can be part of subsidized as well as commercial productions, but in both cases the fact remains that the money needs to come from somewhere and that budgets don't tend to stretch, only shrink. Nobody Knows for certain whether something will work, but the market for the contact puppetry production (whether a commercial audience, private donors, or subsidizers) has to be in the back of their minds while producing – even when you're producing for the art instead of the revenue.

⁵⁷ Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler: Glossing up.

We've already seen that budgets are top secret, but the producers keep a close eye on them. And they will tell creatives when and how much they need to economize. This means that in such a designing process the money can have quite an impact on the product.

Other than on the product, it can also have its influence on how and where a production is showed. War Horse will come to The Netherlands in 2014. At the moment they're working on what the stage should look like⁵⁸. Not just aesthetically, but also how far it can come into the hall. Every meter will cost seats that otherwise could have been sold. The optimum stage size is dependent on more than the show itself, but also on expected future rents from the hall (Ars Longa).

And even after the preparation phase, the weight of the market can still have its influence. During shows something can go wrong – that's always a risk with live productions. With contact puppetry this brings about a bit larger problem. Audiences really need to invest in believing that a puppet is real; contact puppetry asks a lot of imagination from the audience. When something goes wrong with a puppet, the illusion is broken and the audience will no longer be able to believe, to emote.

For puppeteers this is a reason to immediately stop the show, as they feel the story can no longer be heard by the audience when a puppet breaks (Art for Art's Sake)⁵⁹. Stage management is often determined (and in some cases also instructed) to try to avoid show stops at all costs. Show stops are not taken lightly and will be always be reported to directors, producers, marketing managers, and the like, with the name of the person responsible for the stop on the show report.

Show cancels, when the show can't be carried on further, are furthermore very expensive, as the show needs to be rescheduled at hardly any extra income but regular show costs. The trouble lies in getting everyone on the same page on when to or not to stop or cancel a show. With humans, it's quite easy to establish that when someone has an injury, he cannot carry on, but the puppet won't speak its mind.

Audiences

In my experience as a humdrum production worker in the performing arts, the audience never minds a show stop. It actually often increases their appreciation, as they feel they experience something unique as well as that they realize even more that they're experiencing a live performance. It's the fear that they might not enjoy themselves, appreciate the performance, or understand the risks of live theater that makes the production side weary of show stops.

⁵⁸ Appendix H – Interview Sascha van den Tol: Stage vs. Seats.

⁵⁹ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: Show stop or not?

Fortunately, on an artistic level creatives often have much more confidence in their audience. Even to the extent that they take it too far. They can focus on the details of a puppet or a show that are only noticeable by them (Art for Art's Sake) or for their peers or some connoisseurs (A List/B List).

But although the audience might not notice the details consciously, they will notice them subconsciously⁶⁰. Especially with contact puppetry, the audience is generally not trained to assess whether it's good, not so good, or bad puppeteering, but they will have an opinion afterwards. That opinion is not only formed by what they consciously noticed, but also by their overall feeling. And if the puppetry just wasn't that good, a feeling of unease will negatively influence the opinion, while brilliant puppetry will positively affect the audience's opinion afterwards, even when it's a laymen's audience.

This is also why one of the leading characters in War Horse no longer is a puppet (Infinite Variety)⁶¹. During the second act, a little girl named Emilie appears⁶². She is fragile, small and sick, but loves leading horse Joey and is loved by him in return. In the first version of War Horse Emilie was a small contact puppet, operated by one puppeteer on her knees behind it.

Of the characters in War Horse Emilie was the only human puppet⁶³. Given that she doesn't appear until the second act and that she is the only human puppet character, it was a bit of a stretch anyway, but the largest 'problem' with Emilie being a puppet was that she couldn't get the audience in the perfect emotional state. After all, a puppet girl stroking a puppet horse gives quite another sensation than a human girl stroking a puppet horse, and a puppet girl 'running' away by means of a human on her knees is a lot slower and less impressive than an actual person fleeing across the stage.

Even if the audience is not able to put their finger on the details that make a performance great, the puppeteer does it for them to give them (subconsciously) the best experience possible. And if they succeed, the audience will spread the word and haul in a new audience.

Peers and Gatekeepers

Audiences are generally not trained to define contact puppetry, but peers and gatekeepers such as critics are. This does not make them more important though. Almost all of the interviewed contact puppetry professionals value the opinion of the audience higher than that of the critics. Critics are single persons with their own opinion, and they do not value one opinion higher than that of the combined opinion of the audience.

⁶⁰ Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell: It's in the details.

⁶¹ Appendices C and I – Interviews Adrian Kohler and Toby Olié: Emilie.

⁶² Millar, M. 2011. *The Horse's Mouth*. How Handspring and the National Theatre made War Horse. London: Oberon Books Ltd. (2nd reprint, 1st original edition 2007).

⁶³ There are other human puppets, but those are for filling and effect, not as characters.

Furthermore, the rise of internet 2.0 makes everyone a critic nowadays, and those opinions are more accessible and visible than those of the critics⁶⁴. Reviews by critics are in papers and magazine you need to buy to access them, while web 2.0 brings the opinion of the audience to you through RSS feeds, via Twitter, on your Facebook wall, et cetera. The voices of the many have become louder and more prominent. And it's not the critics the contact puppetry professionals are working for; they make their art for themselves and to reach an audience, not to satisfy one single critic⁶⁵.

Yet that doesn't mean the opinion of the critics is seen as completely worthless by all in the field. Two of the interviewees, Adrian Kohler and Floris Visser, couldn't pick between the audience and the critics. Noteworthy here is that both have received very good reviews from critics that brought grist to their mills. None of the interviewees chose the critics over the audience though, which does show a tendency of a declining value of the critic.

Peers have only been mentioned a couple of times during the interviews. The role of the peers is mostly personal; it's nice to have someone with a profound understanding of the field notice something that you did. But in none of the interviews it was indicated that anything is done to gain that professional recognition; contact puppetry is about the art, about fun, playing around, the experience of the audience, and love for the field. It's not about worldly rewards such as recognition or money.

Hard to Place

Richard Caves' book *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000) was very popular and influential. Not just because it's written in a comprehensible manner with theory and practice combined, but also because it actually gave us something new. The seven properties Caves uses are able to describe many elements, decisions, situations, and changes in the creative industries. And due to the fact that the properties are quite wide and have numerous characteristics, all creative industries can be described and explained with them.

There have been some critiques on Caves as well, as the wideness of the properties also makes them lack specificity; the properties are applicable to fields outside the creative industries as well. The examples in his book are not always properly referenced, which makes them hard to validate. And the seven properties seem to be on different analytical levels, as Nobody Knows is overarching and influencing almost all other properties.

A critique rising from the current study is that not all situations can be fully explained and clarified by the seven properties, no matter how wide-ranging they are. The most striking example is

⁶⁴ Appendix Interview Toby Olié.

⁶⁵ 'Fuck the critics!' (Max Webster). Not to mention the common viewpoint that critics are bitter and jealous because they used to be aspiring artists but never made it – this doesn't give them much credibility in the field.

given by actress and puppeteer Josie Dexter⁶⁶. She was one of the puppeteers on *A Dog's Heart* and was present for all the workshops and shows.

During the workshops the puppeteers soon discovered that operating the same position of the dog for the entire show would be painful, so they worked out a system of swapping places. To prevent the audience from noticing the swapping of puppeteers too much, they actually swapped positions more often than necessary. Through this way, it was much less clear who was operating the puppet at a given moment. Apart from that, there was also a lot of moving and switching on stage, so the movement around the dog made the dog fit in with the rest of the scenic image and made him the center of attention. The bolder the puppeteers were in swapping places, the more positive reactions they received from audience and peers.

The swapping of puppeteers was a solution to a non-artistic problem, but with a highly artistic outcome. Although the artistic outcome was welcomed happily, it was secondary to the solution of the puppeteers' health issues. If the artistic output had been intentional the vortex around the dog could have fallen (with some imagination and a lot of goodwill) under the *Nobody Knows* or the *Art for Art's Sake* properties, but this was not the case.

In the case of Derek Blok and Max Webster, who both argue that realism or naturalism should have no place in the theater, and Adrian Kohler and Toby Olié, who claim that films should handle realism, and theater is the place for theatricality, *Caves'* properties fall short as well⁶⁷. The fact that the puppeteers are visible in contact puppetry and that's it so clearly 'fake' is actually considered the reason why puppetry is becoming more and more popular. Special effects in films took a flight and even the science fiction films seem to be naturalistic; audiences no longer need to use their imagination, as everything is presented to them on a silver platter.

Max Webster compares it to the change in painting during the rise of photography. There no longer was a need to paint realistically, so the painters could focus on something else: not the image, but the meaning. Nowadays films are the equivalent of photography; films can handle realism to the detail. Theater is now the Picasso, or the Monet: it gives a theatrical impression or expression of stories that don't need to be told to the tee, but that convey an idea.

Floris Visser would probably agree with Max Webster, as the former too sees that we're at a tipping point in time⁶⁸. In the Dutch art field, as well as in art fields across the globe, there is some turmoil going on. The governmental cutbacks are fundamental, in total almost half of the subsidies are cut. And although this amount is of huge impact in the field, it's relatively small in comparison to

⁶⁶ Appendix F – Interview Josie Dexter: Vortex around the still dog.

⁶⁷ Appendices D and E – Interviews Derek Blok and Finn Caldwell: No naturalism. Appendices C and I – Interviews Adrian Kohler and Toby Olié.

⁶⁸ Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser.

the total amount of governmental cuts. It wasn't to do about the money, if you ask Floris Visser, it just was easy money because the arts were vulnerable.

We're at the turning point of the generations. The older generations are waving down, while the younger generations are up and coming. But that is not a clear cut and does not pass without a figurative fight. View- and standpoints are adverse and the way of practicing are contrary. It's a battle field.

Sounds like a strong way of putting things, right? But not totally coincidental. Walter Benjamin (1968) wrote about art in the age of mechanical reproduction, so mostly film and photographs. He uses the metaphor of war to argue that great change doesn't happen unnoticed and easy. The metaphor is not only applicable to mechanic reproduction, but to the theater field as well.

One generation ago, back in the seventies, a 'war' in the theater field took place as well. It's known as the *Actie Tomaat*. The old generation literally was thrown out of the theater, by means of (rotten) tomato's and eggs. Fortunately the current theater war seems more civil, as many of the victims of *Actie Tomaat* got depressed and some even committed suicide, but it's a 'war' nonetheless. Visser looks forward to this war, as change brings about new chances. Chances for the *homo ludens*: playing, specialist with a bird's view, working (and playing) well with others.

The last Hard to Place example to address here has already been mentioned: puppet designers hardly ever know what kind of budget is at their disposal⁶⁹. Budgets are kept secret for even the highest ranking creatives, so A List/B List is not at stake. Nobody Knows is the case, but then literally and not as the property (as the characteristics of Nobody Knows focus on the success of the creative output, not on the knowledgeableness of the creatives involved).

The three Hard to Place examples above –the vortex around the dog, the aversion of naturalism, and the lack of budgetary awareness– and the connecting thoughts by Visser and Benjamin all seem to have one thing in common: they are only indirectly related to the creative output. It seems that Caves' properties do not completely cover events and visions in the creative industries that do not directly focus on the product, but that are involved with other workings in the field such as social situations, technical progress, political (internal to the organization or external considering local, regional or national politics) turmoil, health care, et cetera. Nevertheless, contact puppetry does follow the 'rules' of the creative industries by and large and can thus be considered for further analysis by cultural economists and other social scientists interested in the creative industries.

⁶⁹ Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié: What's at my disposal?

To Conclude with Some Further Thoughts

Contact puppetry is a western interpretation of the ancient Japanese *bunraku* puppetry, mixed with influences from other puppetry forms and modern techniques. It got its general public fame through the UK theater experience *War Horse*, in which the leading character is a horse-puppet. In the last decade or so, the usage seems to have grown exponentially. Although this is quite common in hypes, the rise of puppetry raises some eyebrows. After all, contact puppetry is quite an expensive art form and we've been in a worldwide recession during contact puppetry's peak.

Even though contact puppetry gained in popularity the past couple of years, the academic field is lagging behind in researching it. This is a shame, as for cultural economist it's an interesting new field where old theories can be put to the test (again) and new ones can be formed. The rise of a new sector makes for a very interesting natural experiment. Apart from the academic benefits, the actual contact puppetry field could also benefit greatly from research. It could raise awareness of problems, prevent pitfalls, bring about (new) solutions, et cetera. But to do all this, a lay of the lands of modern-day contact puppetry is necessary.

As part of the performing arts, contact puppetry is a creative industry. These industries are characterized by seven properties, according to Richard Caves in his book *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). These seven properties, Nobody Knows, Art for Art's Sake, Motley Crew, Infinite Variety, A List/B List, Time Flies, and *Ars Longa*, according to Caves describe and explain the workings in all creative industries.

Within the scope of this thesis the aim was to identify if everyday practice in contact puppetry follows the creative industry 'rules' as portrayed by Caves' properties. And if so, what can be (preliminary) said from a cultural economic point of view about the economic and artistic reasons to use contact puppetry?

To be able to answer these questions several steps needed to be taken. The first was an introduction in the history of contact puppetry, to get a better understanding of the workings of the field. The second step was an introduction into the academic discourse concerning puppetry and the performing arts, to gain insights on the theories behind the workings of the field.

The third step was an introduction in the current research, based on three cases: Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, *War Horse*, and *A Dog's Heart*. This musical, play/theater experience, and opera all make use of contact puppetry in for one or more leading characters, were all produced in several countries, are all successful, but also describe very different performing art forms and organizational structures. To gain insights in the everyday workings of the field, eight qualitative and lengthy interviews were held with professionals ranging from crew members to CEO's, puppeteers to directors. All were asked to describe decision-making moments during different phases of the

production(s) they worked on, to get an understanding of which factors matter in the decision making process and thus in the field.

In the following chapter all three introductions were combined in a 'Caves-like' chapter. In an anecdotic manner stories, practices, experiences, and thoughts are combined with Caves' seven properties and other academic theories to give a clear picture of the roadmap of modern-day contact puppetry.

In the course of the three chapters, some common themes frequently returned, such as the costs of puppetry, the importance of tradition, arts and/vs. crafts, and the complexity of production. Academic theories on the relevant subjects are better to explain these certain elements in depth, but Richard Caves' properties do cover almost all of the everyday practices revealed through the case studies. However, some notes need to be made here.

It's apparent that most decisional-moments do not consist of a fully artistic or economic choice, since we have seen many situations where the practice (including the economic practice) influenced the artistic and the other way around. Part of the title of Caves' book, 'between art and commerce', is very apt, as everyday practice in the cultural industries, or at the very least in contact puppetry, lies somewhere in between. As long as the decisions and the practice concern the creative output, Caves' properties are very well suited to give a lay of the lands of the industry and to help sketch a road map of contact puppetry.

The only gap in Caves' properties appears to be with the situations furthest removed from the creative product itself, such as concerned with organizational/company policy and health care issues – during this thesis positioned in the Har to Place 'property'. However, these subjects are not reserved to contact puppetry only and therefore the lay of the lands and the roadmap to contact puppetry given here will not be negatively influenced by this small lack of property coverage compared to other industries or sectors analyzed with Caves' properties.

Overall it can thus be said that contact puppetry nowadays clearly is part of the creative industries and thus by-and-large follows the properties by Caves. Economic reasons to use puppetry are currently plenty, since the business is booming. The high fixed start up costs and the Nobody Knows factor do make it a risky business though, which is not per se a problem in the creative industries where people seem to lack risk aversive behavior, but is something to keep in mind. Artistic reasons are more intrinsic and traditional by nature. Both the economic and artistic reasons for using puppetry are definitely worth it to be developed further.

This thesis sketched the knowledge-gap concerning the relatively new sector of contact puppetry. It also made clear that it's ready to be analyzed from a cultural economic point of view and where the specialities of the sector lie. With that I tried not only to give a roadmap to the sector, but also a map to the points of interest of academics as well as practitioners. Bringing theory into

practice or theorize from the field isn't easy, but let's follow Berend Jan Langenberg's thoughts mentioned in the introduction by bridging worlds. Hopefully a lay of the lands was sketched to open the doors for more cultural economic and social research into this interesting and fun field. At the very least it was a feeding ground for some further thoughts on the field of contact puppetry in the performing arts as well as the possibilities for future research.

Further Thoughts on the Field of Modern-Day Contact Puppetry

Contact puppetry is the term used by Finn Caldwell to describe this modern form of puppetry in the *bunraku* tradition. I've gladly used the term, because it describes the practice so well. Not only are the puppeteers in very close contact to the puppets, 'contact' stands for much more. To establish this form of puppetry, multiple skills are necessary, who need to work in close relations (contact) with each other. And the puppetry is used in many different art forms, thus bridging gaps between disciplines and professionals who work outside their comfort zone (contact).

It are also these multiple forms of contact that allow for the special organization of the field: contact puppetry is one of the few performing art fields where arts and craft, *Deus* and *machina* are not just living peacefully side by side, but are often not separated at all. Given the recent societal change into more interest in the broader education, the broader approach of (societal, environmental, scientific, and so on) problems, this could indicate that the organizational form of puppetry is the future for many performing arts. It might be wise for other (performing) arts organizations to keep their eyes open and directed this way.

That does not mean that there are no faults to be found in the field of contact puppetry though. During the situational sketches nobody mentioned anything even remotely similar to the A List/B List property and even when directly asked, ranking stars was not a subject for lengthy conversations. However when the subject was approach with a detour, it appeared well present in the field, just very much tabooed.

One of the many possible explanations of the taboo on stars could be that most professionals simply aren't in it for the money, but for their art. But at the same time the necessity and the luxury of money are not denied. During a time of economic turmoil, with such an expensive art form, this is quite remarkable. The answer could lie in the lack of naturalism that is at the core of contact puppetry: it takes people to an illusional world. If this really is the case, which should be further researched, the contact puppetry world would do well to realize that with an economic rise, their popularity might fall, so that countermeasures could be taken in advance.

Prolonging the durability of puppets could be one of those countermeasures, as a longer run would cover the high fixed start up costs. But that would mean that there has to be enough interest to be able to prolong the show – and the answer there too could be very tabooed. However, these

are just two possibilities out of an infinite variety, but an infinite variety that could be sensible to investigate before the current rise of puppetry appears to be the crest of a wave.

Further Thoughts on Future Research

In the general introduction I mentioned that contact puppetry has never been researched from a cultural economic viewpoint, and that this thesis would hopefully be the start of a new body of work that could increase our insights in the workings of this field. The plus side of being the first is that you have a blank canvas to work on, the down side is that the canvas is way too big for one person to fill.

Within the limited scope of this thesis I've tried to sketch the outlines of the everyday practice in the current field of contact puppetry in the performing arts. Three cases of different performing arts give a wide, but not incredibly deep understanding of the field. A single but more elaborate case study on a contact puppetry production could reveal more of the everyday life thoughts, problems, challenges, and highs and lows. While a larger comparison between more contact puppetry cases could increase the generalizability of the findings.

Another improvement in our knowledge could be made with a research on quantitative aspects of contact puppetry. Budgets, but also visitor numbers, audience characteristics, fluctuations over time, cross national comparisons, et cetera. At the moment, none of this all is available.

Since the multidisciplinary organization of puppetry could be the future, it could be worthwhile diving a bit deeper into this aspect of the field as well. What also could be very interesting is the taboo on the use of stars, from economic but also a sociologic perspective.

Also, this thesis focused completely on the production side of contact puppetry, while the distribution and reception ends of the scope were completely left out. This of course had practical reasons, but it would be very interesting to gain insights in how puppetry is viewed through the eyes of those with less specific knowledge, training, and passion when it comes to contact puppetry.

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Appendix A – Interview Floris Visser – 06-03-2013

Section titles

Interview transcript

Start-up

Mandy: Nou, we hebben het eigenlijk al gehad over wat ik ga doen, qua onderzoek.

Floris: Hm, hm.

Mandy: Het idee van dit interview is dat ik je eerst een paar stellingen voor ga leggen.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Hele gemene waar je gewoon moet kiezen tussen twee uitersten. Ja, heel naar. En daar mag je ook even geen uitleg op geven. Daarna ga ik je gewoon een paar open vragen stellen en dan mag je praten zoveel je wilt en uitweiden welke kant je dan ook op wilt. Ik zal wel een heel klein beetje proberen te sturen....

Floris: Ik wou net zeggen, draai je me af en toe een beetje terug naar waar het over gaat.

Mandy: ...daarin krijg je alle ruimte..

Floris: Dat we het niet opeens over de dood van Hugo Chavez hebben opeens.

Mandy: Nou ja, je weet maar nooit hoe relevant iets kan zijn.

Floris: Wat ik een hele positieve ontwikkeling vind voor het wereldtoneel.

Mandy: Op dit moment zijn ze daar zelf niet van overtuigd, denk ik.

Floris: Neuh, komen ze nog wel achter.

Mandy: En uiteindelijk kom ik weer terug bij diezelfde stellingen.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Ga ik ze nog een keer aan je voorleggen.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: En dan mag je er wel over uitweiden waarom je iets kiest of niet.

Floris: Helder, heel goed.

Salomon's Choices

Mandy: Ik ga beginnen met de stellingen. De eerste is geld of kunst?

Floris: Kunst.

Mandy: Risico of zekerheid?

Floris: Risico.

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Floris: Behouden wat goed is.

Mandy: Specialiseren of verbreden?

Floris: Specialiseren.

Mandy: Vast team of frisse input?

Floris: Vast team.

Mandy: Contract of vertrouwensrelatie?

Floris: Contract.

Mandy: Enkele lange termijnprojecten of meer korte termijnprojecten?

Floris: Ohhh, die's echt moeilijk. Lange termijn.

Mandy: Positief publiek of positieve recensenten?

Floris: Hmm haha, wie is er intelligenter? Eh, haha.

Mandy: Ik zei dat ze gemeen waren, ik heb gewaarschuwd.

Floris: Intelligent publiek, intelligente recensenten? Ja Jezus. Nee, intelligente recensenten, want die brengen ook een intelligent publiek, haha.

Mandy: Hedendaags of voor de eeuwigheid?

Floris: Voor de eeuwigheid.

Mandy: Een grote naam of een ster of het budget aan andere zaken besteden?

Floris: Oh, budget aan andere zaken besteden.

Mandy: Goed.

Floris: Moest even nadenken, denk' he?!

Mandy: Nou mag je deze even loslaten.

Floris: Ja.

Deus et Machina

Mandy: En dan wil ik eigenlijk gelijk beginnen met het *Deus ex Machina* verhaal..

Floris: Hm.

Mandy: ...jij hebt dat natuurlijk ontwikkeld tijdens je cultureel professorschap aan de TU Delft.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: ...en dat toegepast op theater, maar ik wil eigenlijk beginnen bij het begin en dat is *Deus ex*

Machina als stijlfiguur.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Waar jij natuurlijk ook mee te maken hebt gehad in je werk.

Floris: Hm hm.

Mandy: En ik vroeg mij af hoe dat voor jou uit het oogpunt van regisseur is om mee te werken

Floris: Nou kijk, als je inhoudelijk kijkt naar wat een *Deus ex Machina* nu eigenlijk is, je zegt gewoon letterlijk de god uit de machine, kan het voor het verhaal inhoudelijk soms een enorm zwaktebod zijn. Laten we wel wezen, ik bedoel zowel Aristoteles als bijvoorbeeld Nietzsche hadden een bloedhekel aan de *Deus ex Machina*, omdat het een soort goedkoop... eigenlijk is het op het moment dat de schrijver vast zit, omdat zijn verhaal niet goed in mekaar zit, flikkeren we er een *Deus ex Machina* tegenaan. Alleen in de opera, zeker hedendaags, als je gewoon omarmt dat het een kutfiguur is de *Deus ex Machina*, want dat is het, is het heel erg leuk om te gebruiken omdat het ook gewoon lucht en humor aan je stuk, snap je? Dat je echt denkt, ja maar die Juno die uit de hemel komt, wat moeten we daarmee? Heel erg laten zien hoe dom het is en dan lachen met zijn allen. Het brengt bij mij, bij mij vaak, brengt de *Deus ex Machina* bij mij een, echt een glimlach op mijn gezicht. Maar als jij in een echt goed doorwrocht stuk zit, een echt goed tragedie, weet ik veel, een Antigone, een Hamlet, een Macbeth, over een centerwerk, wat ik briljant vind is zoiets als *Les Entractes Dangereux*, dan zit daar geen *Deus ex Machina* in. Waarom niet? Omdat dat werk heel goed is, het heeft het niet nodig. En bovendien houd ik meer, Truze Lodder zei het laatst heel mooi. We hadden vorige week vrijdag.. je weet wie Truze Lodder is? De voormalige directrice van de Nederlandse Opera. Die zei na *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*, van Prokofiev, ging in première afgelopen vrijdag bij de Nederlandse Opera en toen spraken we elkaar even en toen zei ze: ik houd toch meer van tragiek dan van luim. En dat is ook zo. Ze zei ik vond jouw Owen Wingrave toch fijner dan een sprookje over drie sinaasappelen. Ik denk ja, dat heb ik ook. Ik houd ook meer van de duisternis en de lelijkheid, en van het leven en van de mens in al zijn.. en dan is het fijner om geen *Deus ex Machina* te hebben. Want wat je in feite doet met een *Deus ex Machina* is vaak de engel uit het stuk halen.

Mandy: Ja, het wordt ook gezien als een bedreiging van het menselijk vernuft, een makkelijke uitweg. Maar tegelijkertijd is het ook wel een stukje menselijk vernuft om...

Floris: Ik wou net zeggen. Kijk, snap je, het is maar net. Ga jij maar eens met de theatertechnici praten die dat ding moeten ontwikkelen of decorateliërs, die vinden dat, die vinden dat juist leuk. Dus daar zit een enorme dubbelheid in. Maar dat zeg ik, als je hem gebruikt, als je hem gebruikt, als hij in een opera zit, laat ik dan even vanuit mijn vakgebied, vanuit de opera kijken, dan.. gebruik hem dan ook vol. Bouw dan ook echt een Jupiter met zijn vier paarden die met zijn sterrenwagen naar beneden komt en een bliksem naar beneden fliktert en ingrijpt in het verhaal. Prima, prima.

Mandy: Maar hij moet wel luchtig gebruikt worden; niet serieus?

Floris: Nou ja, luchtig, ik bedoel. Kijk er is bijvoorbeeld een uitzondering die echt briljant is, dat is die in Don Giovanni...

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dat vind ik echt de uitzondering op de *Deus ex Machina*. Die heb ik in mijn intreedrede nooit genoemd, omdat ik anders mijn eigen verhaal zou ontkrachten, maar ik vind de terugkomst van de *commendatore*, het standbeeld, echt prachtig. Omdat het de fout is van Don Giovanni om die man neer te steken en die man verbeeld eigenlijk gewoon de neergang van Casanova die het spelletje niet meer kan. Want als je goed naar Don Giovanni kijkt, dat krijgt iedereen altijd fout, hij neukt niet een keer in dat stuk, hij kan het niet meer, hij krijgt die vrouwen niet meer mee.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Het gaat continu fout. En...en dat is zo cruciaal – vind ik. Aan dat stuk en daarom is het, dus dat vind ik een uitzondering omdat het eerst een levende figuur is geweest in het stuk, de *Deus ex Machina*, een *commendatore*, hij sterft, de vader van Don Anna, en dan komt hij terug als zijn eigen standbeeld. Dat vind ik nog een narratieve, inhoudelijke kwaliteit. Dat hij gaat ook een verhaal vertellen nog. Een *Deus ex Machina* is een zwaktebod als het een persoon is die nog nooit is voorgekomen en het verhaal opeens binnenkomt. Kijk naar de Homerus, kijk naar de Ilias.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Daar grijpen goden ook in, alleen ze zijn onderdeel van het verhaal, want we horen ze vergaderen op de Olympus, we horen ze praten over die oorlog. En het leuke is, daar zijn zoveel *Deus ex Machina*, mist die opkomt, de zee die zich ermee bemoeit, waarom, omdat die goden onderling ook ruzie heeft, dus bijna, snap je, ik heb het daar niet het gevoel dat het een *Deus* is, dat zijn mensen onder de mensen.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: En daarom kan een *Deus ex Machina* vooral in die barokke stukken vooral ook erg grappig zijn,

omdat ook die goden zijn mensen. Jupiter die het met alle vrouwen van deze wereld doet en zijn vrouw Juno die daar achteraan schiet uit pure jaloezie, dan moet ik daar om lachen, dat vind ik komedie. Dan denk ik ja, dat zijn de goden, net zo menselijk.... Niets menselijks is den goden vreemd denk ik dan, dat is daar dan ook zo. Alleen, er zijn, kijk, omdat het bestaat uit twee dingen. Letterlijk de god: is de god nodig in dat stuk, en de machine. En de machine is een heel ander verhaal. De machine gaat over techniek, de machine gaat over nieuwe techniek. De machine gaat over wat kunnen we erop loslaten. Ga maar naar een lasershow met een machine doen, loopt er een, weet ik veel, radio-bestuurbare, wet ik veel, vier radio-bestuurbare paarden, omdat Jupiter 4 paarden voor zijn wagen nodig heeft. Dat zijn hele andere vraagstukken. Alleen dat heeft in feite helemaal niets te maken met de inhoud.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Dat gaat over techniek. Hoe geef je het vorm. En dat is mooi. Vormgeving kan prachtig zijn. Kan teveel zijn, kan te weinig zijn, kan mooi zijn, kan lelijk zijn, en kan goed gedaan, kan afgrijselijk slecht gedaan zijn. Dat je soms denkt idee 10, uitvoering 6-je. Kijk en in mijn geval van het professoraat ging het over iets heel anders, daar ging het over de ontmoeting tussen de alfa en de bèta mens, waarbij de alfamens als de meer creatieve, analytische, beschouwende en de filosofische mens hè, de scheppende godheid zag en de inderdaad de bèta als de *Machina*, de ja, hoe zeg ik dat, de technicus, de techneut, de nerd, waar zogenaamd nooit creativiteit in zit, alleen maar hele ingewikkelde formules, en dat wat natuurlijk allemaal zwaar gelul is. Vroeger was de kunstenaar ook de techneut, ook de ingenieur, letterlijk. En dat is in de 19^e eeuw van elkaar gescheiden. En dat vind ik een fascinerend gegeven, dat de vakmatigheid van wat wij doen als kunstenaars opeens los hebben gelaten, we hebben geroepen het gaat eigenlijk alleen maar over de idee. Als een soort neoplatonisten die opeens roepen de schepping is de idee. Dat ik denk dat is gelul, de schepping is wat we doen en wat we maken. Alleen maar een idee, ja dat is prachtig.

Mandy: Het idee is noodzakelijk, is een begin, niet eens misschien noodzakelijk.

Floris: Nee, de idee is noodzakelijk en de uitvoering is noodzakelijk en dat is wat mensen vaak fout doen, alsof we die twee kunnen scheiden. Dat gaat toch niet. Ik zeg het vaak ook tegen mijn studenten hier in het conservatorium, die zeggen dan wel eens ja, ik heb er wel over nagedacht, ik zeg: 'ja, *I dont give a fuck whether you thought about it. Did you do it? No*'. Ik zeg: 'nou dan, dan zijn we klaar met dit gesprek'. Het is niet op deze wereld, ze zeggen in het Engels *it's not what we think in life that defines us, it is what we do in life that defines us*. Want datgeen wat we doen, de voetstap die we zetten op deze aardbodem, daar blijft een *footprint* van over en jij zei op een gegeven moment eeuwigheidswaarde, daar ga ik liever voor dan hier nu in het moment interessant met jou te lullen en te zeggen, maar ik ga het eigenlijk allemaal gewoon niet doen. Het staat leuk op papier, maar we doen het niet. Daar zijn we in Nederland heel erg goed in trouwens. Dat is echt de ziekte ook van onze politiek en ons hele economisch systeem. We lullen over dingen, we hebben prachtige theorieën, maar we doen ze niet. Dat is als een student die zegt 'ja, ik ga mijn stem echt veranderen, ja, ik ga echt hard studeren, ja, ik ben van plan', en die dat gewoon 4 jaar niet doet, zijn diploma krijgt en nog steeds niet kan zingen. En dan gaat zeiken dat ie geen goed onderwijs heeft gehad op het conservatorium, doen ze allemaal. En dan, ja, dan word ik witheet, dan denk ik, waarom gaan mijn, ik zeg wel eens waarom betaal ik belasting voor jou? Ik zeg: '*you're a waste of space*'. *It is what we do in life that defines us* en daarom moet de kunstenaar een goed uitvoeren vakman zijn en v.v. want een techneut die niet een idee heeft, heeft niets te ontwikkelen, niets, *niente, nada*, dat is uiteindelijk een veredeld, ja, lasser. Maar dan op wat hoger niveau. Maar als die geen ideeën heeft, dan is het uiteindelijk alleen maar degene die de tekening leest en het in mekaar flanst, ja zo werkt het spelletje ook weer niet. Dus het moet aan twee kanten elkaar aansteken. En dat hebben we in de 19^e eeuw met de komst van de zogeheten, wat grappig is want dat woord klopt van geen kanten, vakwetenschap. Opeens kwam er een economie...

Mandy: Altijd de economen...

Floris: ...maar die kon niet meer bankieren. Dat is raar. Wat doet ie dan? De hele dag achter zijn bureau zitten en nadenken over de economie. En als je nu met economen gaat praten op hoog niveau, ze snappen nog steeds niet hoe het werkt. Dus ze hebben eigenlijk de afgelopen eeuw, nou laten we zeggen begin 19^e eeuw is het onderscheid hè, dankzij de industriële revolutie, heeft het mee te maken want we hadden steeds minder letterlijk mensen die met hun klauwen werkten, dus meer kantoorbanen en meer machines in de fabrieken, daar heeft het letterlijk mee te maken. En dus zijn we die werelden gaan scheiden. Je stond niet meer met je poten in de modder, ook als creatieveling.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Als je een briljant wetenschapper was of een briljant denker, of een briljant kunstenaar, dan liet je het op een gegeven moment anderen doen en dat klopt niet. En, want je verliest denk ik door dingen niet

te doen, niet uit te oefenen je vak, verlies je je contact met de werkelijkheid. Alles wordt theorie. En dat is fijn aan theater maken. Je moet op een gegeven moment toch die studio in met die zangers of die acteurs en moet je je idee gaan vormgeven als regisseur. Want je kan niet zeggen, nou schrijf maar een recensie recensent of koop maar een kaartje voor mijn publiek.

Mandy: Nee, alleen een idee is niet genoeg.

Floris: En dat is uniek aan theater, want in heel veel vakgebieden gebeurt dat wel. We schrijven het op, wat nou we schrijven het op. Wordt de economie beter van je boek, ga je het uitoefenen? Dat is aan anderen. Dat vind ik gelul. Dat vind ik echt, dat vind ik. Ik moest laats ongelooflijk lachen over een conference van Brigitte Kaandorp, die dist daar, zoals ze zelf dat zegt, zet volkomen te kakken de babyboomgeneratie. Die het wat haar betreft helemaal vernageld heeft voor haar generatie en alles wat erna komt en dat klopt ook nog, want het zijn vreselijke ... maar dan zegt ze inderdaad op een gegeven moment en ja en alle adviesbureaus die opeens als paddenstoelen uit de grond kwamen groeien en dat is nou een typisch voorbeeld van waar de *Deus ex Machina* dus het principe van zowel de creatieve, de godheid, en de machine, die elkaar dus, je hebt de machine nodig om de godheid vorm te geven, je hebt het ambacht van iets kunnen maken of het nou een decorstuk is, een beeldhouwwerk, of een computer, of een chip, of weet ik veel, dat ambacht, daar moet een brein achter zitten. En die zegt op een gegeven moment prachtig die adviesbureaus die schoten opeens als paddenstoelen uit de grond en dat is in de politiek ook zo. Ga in Den Haag eens kijken, en in überhaupt alle regeringssteden, hoe parlementariërs zich voor miljoenen euro's, ponden of dollars zich ieder jaar laten adviseren met rapporten, omdat ze zelf niet meer weten waar hun vakgebied over gaat.

Mandy: Ze hebben niet eens meer een vakgebied in de politiek, ze wisselen gewoon.

Floris: Ze wisselen continu, nee, maar dan nog veel erger, er zijn er nog maar een paar die verstand hebben, ook ministers, van het ministerie waar ze op zitten. En dus inderdaad die babyboomgeneratie, dat tuig zou ik bijna willen zeggen, want daardoor zitten we in een kredietcrisis, die zijn allemaal met pensioen en onze pensioenen worden verlaagd, terwijl zij nog steeds vol vreten. Denk daar maar eens over na.

Mandy: Ja, maar ik moet heel eerlijk toegeven dat ik, cultureel econoom ben, hè, dus ik ben economisch opgeleid, en je ziet natuurlijk er zijn twee verschillende ontwikkelingen. Je hebt de nationale ontwikkeling en de internationale ontwikkeling en de internationale ontwikkeling is inderdaad de babyboomgeneratie die wel inderdaad heel veel, nou, laten we zeggen, verneukt heeft,

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: De nationale ontwikkeling zie je vooral dat de verzuiling een enorme rol heeft gespeeld in het vormen van het huidige bestel. Waarbij natuurlijk ook een scheiding werd gemaakt.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Tussen dingen die niet gescheiden hadden moeten worden.

Floris: Aan de andere kant vind ik de tijd, de verzuiling ook wel een hele prettige, heldere tijd. Je had je clubje en daar bleef je bij. Je had meteen je krant, je had je televisiestation, je had je radiostation, je wist dat je een priester of een dominee had. Tegenwoordig hebben we niets meer.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: En dat is een ander punt wat ik op een gegeven moment had herinner ik me nou opeens in mijn intreedrede. Dat is inderdaad het gebrek aan religie, het gebrek aan een droom. Dat we in deze cynische tijd, dat is echt, echt een probleem voor de creatieve geest in deze tijd. Dat alles, alles relatief is. En we dus alles met een soort relativiteitstheorie van de hand kunnen doen en we dus eigenlijk voor niets meer hoeven te vechten. Maar als kunst iets nodig heeft, is het dat je je dood vecht op de troepen voor je idee. En, maar als jij van alles kan zeggen van ja, ja, ja, maar God bestaat niet, ja maar ik wil graag een stuk over God maken. Ja, maar hij bestaat niet, dus dat kunnen we beter niet doen. Dat hebben we toch aangetoond. Ja, maar wat als ik het nou geloof? Ja, geloven, geloven, het is allemaal relatief. En dat moet je je afvragen, hebben wij met het badwater het kind niet weggegooid. En dan bedoel ik letterlijk het kind. Het creatieve kind. Om creatief te zijn of artistiek te zijn of om te dromen moet je ook als volwassen mens weer een kind zijn. En wij zijn natuurlijk er heel goed in het opvoeden van onze kinderen, zo, die, nou je krijgt max. 12 jaar tot 14 jaar met een kind, daarna is het een puber en ben je echt de lul als ouder, dan gaat ie het zelf doen. Ja, dat is zo. Mensen zeggen ja, je hebt ze de eerste 18 jaar, gelul.

Mandy: Nou ze zijn er nog wel, je bent er nog wel verantwoordelijk voor en je betaalt ervoor...

Floris: Gelul. Tot en met hun 12^e, 13^e kan je er nog wat instoppen en op een gegeven moment gaan de luiken dicht. En dan gaan ze door heel veel foute dingen te doen gaan ze zelf allemaal op hun bek. En dan komen ze alleen nog maar naar je toe als ouder op het moment dat ze het helemaal verpest hebben, en dan ben je alleen nog maar de ambulance, de eerste hulp ben je dan bij ongelukken.

Mandy: En de portemonnee.

Floris: En de portemonnee. Maar in die eerste 12 jaar doen we er alles aan om die kinderen dat kind eruit te rammen en ze verantwoordelijkheidsbesef te geven en ze te zeggen dat doe je niet zo dat doe je zo. En niet uit het raam staren, niet zo dromen, doe je huiswerk, weet je, dat soort dingen. Terwijl ik wel eens denk laat me lekker dromen. Ik zei vroeger altijd tegen mijn moeder ik zeg mamma ik wil nooit volwassen worden, ik wil niet groot worden en dan kroop ik als vijfjarig kind weer bovenop de nek van mijn moeder en dan dacht ik want hier is het veel leuker, snap je. Hier is het gewoon leuker. Hier kan ik nog dromen, mag ik nog spelen en later moet ik ook met een koffertje net als mijn vader moet ik naar kantoor, dat lijkt me echt verschrikkelijk.

Mandy: Is dat ook niet waar de techniek misschien de andere kant van *Deus ex Machina* laat zien, waarbij je met de techniek dichterbij het goddelijke komt, waarbij je mag spelen, mag uitvinden.

Floris: Nee, het idee is het goddelijke. De techniek is juist het aardse.

Mandy: Andersom wordt ook beweerd.

Floris: Dat vind ik echt gelul. Een idee, het dromen kan je je nog echt, in mijn dromen kan ik alles. Ik heb nog steeds regelmatig de vliegdroom. Vind ik heerlijk. Ik wordt vrolijk wakker als ik weer 's nachts gevlogen heb. En ik weet tegenwoordig, ik heb ze regel, ik ben een gezegend mens, want het schijnt een enorm positief ding te zijn, vlieg dromen, volgens alle freudianen, maar.. ik weet ook in mijn dromen inderdaad dat ik droom, van ik vlieg, kan helemaal niet, maar ik vind het wel leuk. Dat, dat, dat, laat de droom nog maar een uurtje langer duren denk ik dan vaak. Maar, nee, maar, snap je, dus dat, dat is waar je je God waant. Techniek, ik snap best dat een technicus zich God kan wanen omdat hij het kan bouwen, maar waar waant hij zich God, in zijn verbeelding, dat is dus weer die droom. Dat hij die droom ook af en toe ook nog heeft, of die verbeelding terwijl hij aan het knutselen is, is hartstikke leuk voor die techneut, maar ik heb die droom ook en daar hoef ik niet voor te knutselen op dat moment. Vraag is wel, snap ik wat die techneut doet, want als ik niet snap, ook niet het ambacht beheers van te weten wat hij doet en mee te kunnen helpen als regisseur, dan krijgen we dus weer dat probleem van die vakwetenschappen. Kan er wel over lullen, maar kan het trucje niet maken.

Mandy: Je kan er niets mee

Floris: Je kan er niets mee. En. Nee, maar dus, uiteindelijk, ja, de idee, misschien wel erg het platonistische idee, de beelden die we hebben, ieder beeld hier op aarde heeft ook een goddelijk beeld, een goddelijk idee als uitgangspunt. Dat klopt wel, maar dan moet je het ook wel nog kunnen maken. Want heb je een god die geen enkele energie heeft, of niets kan, die kan wel roepen en er was licht, maar dan komt er echt geen licht. Er zij licht, dat is te makkelijk.

Mandy: Alleen roepen is niet genoeg.

Floris: Nee, dat is dus wat ik zeg. Die scheiding in de 19^e eeuw waar dus de natuurkundige en de econoom en de weet ik veel, de industriële vormgever opeens kwamen.. geef mij maar de middeleeuwse architect die een kathedraal bouwt. Die en de draagkracht van een koepel of steunberen of, of kan berekenen. Maar vervolgens ook wel even een *fucking* mooie Notre Dame neerpleurt.

Mandy: Het idee van Gaudi.

Floris: Ja! Daar geloof ik in.

Mandy: Ik Walter Benjamin er even bijhalen.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Ik weet niet of je hem kent. Hij heeft geschreven over het tijdperk van de mechanische reproductie, dus met name foto's films en dat soort dingen.

Floris: Hm, hm.

Mandy: En hij schrijft ook over de politiek van kunst en hij gebruikt daarin de metafoor dat alleen een oorlog in staat is om verandering op grote schaal teweeg te brengen.

Floris: Haha, hij heeft gelijk. Hij heeft gelijk. Ja. Ja, dat is, dat is, er is een oorlog, of op zijn minst een revolutie. Dat kan ook een goeie burgeroorlog zijn. Daar heeft hij wel gelijk in, tenminste, ja, kan het anders? Geen idee. Ik zou niet weten hoe, de geschiedenis wijst het uit. En ik ben ook een heilig voorstander van de idee dat de geschiedenis zich herhaalt, maar daar wil ik een ding aan toevoegen: de geschiedenis herhaalt zich cumulatief. Kijk naar de 20^e eeuw. Hebben we niet 1 *grande guerre* gehad, we hebben er twee gedaan. En ik ben bang dat de komende 100 jaar, dat we er gewoon vier doen. Snap je?

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dus, dus, dus, dat is echt, de godsdienstwaan die we nu hebben die verslaat behoorlijk de godsdienstwaan tussen de protestanten en de katholieken, want we hebben nu niet 1 probleem...

Mandy: De kruistochten..?

Floris: Ja. Weet je, toen hadden we een paar 100 jaar de kruistochten, toen hadden we problemen met protestanten en katholieken... nu hebben we alles tegelijkertijd. Dus we zijn er heel goed in om ons

cumulatief, hè. Vonden we in het begin van de 20^e eeuw nog een tank en wat mosterdgas en wat prikkeldraad uit, we hadden nog geen 40 jaar nodig om vervolgens ook een atoombom, de meest krankzinnige vliegtuigen, nog grotere moordwapens, vliegdekschepen en godverdomme ook nog een neutronenbom uit te vinden met zijn allen. En nog meer gas. Dus we zijn er heel goed in en dat is ook beangstigend. We zijn cumulatieve wezens. En op, kijk maar naar het aantal revoluties, ook het aantal sociale omwentelingen, ook in ons land in de 20^e eeuw, die zijn groot geweest. En lang niet allemaal negatief, dat wil ik helemaal niet zeggen. Feminisme, geweldig ding, op een gegeven moment zijn alleen alle manen hun identiteit kwijt geraakt, maar goed, dat zijn we nu weer een beetje aan het rechte trekken.

Mandy: Wat zeg je dat netjes.

Floris: Ja. Al die mannen zijn een soort metroseksuelen geworden, een soort halve homofielen, die op een gegeven moment ook roze gingen dragen en konden afstoffen. Maar die hadden dus niet meer door dat een vrouw het soms ook heel fijn vindt om door gewoon een soort oermens naar de grot ontvoerd te worden en daar gewoon..

Mandy: Aan d'r haren gewoon meegesleurd.

Floris: ... En daar gewoon spetterende seks te hebben, weet je. Ja maar, dat willen jullie toch niet, jullie zijn toch feministen?! Ja, maar dat willen we ook! He? Ja, we willen graag een oud rolpatroon, maar ook een nieuw rolpatroon. Ja, maar wat wil je nou?

Mandy: Deur openhouden en meesleuren naar die grot.

Floris: Ja, maar dat is het, dat is het, weet je. Je mag wel mijn jas aandoen, maar ik betaal de rekening weet je, dat soort dingen. Dat is hoogst verwarrend. Maar dat zijn kleine, dat zijn eigenlijk, nee dat zijn geen kleine omwentelingen, dat zijn sociale omwentelingen. Er zijn natuurlijk ook nog grote politieke omwentelingen die ook wel op het, alleen maar op het sociale vlak horen, maar dat is groter, dat is macropolitiek bij wijze van spreken.

Mandy: Je hebt in de theaterwereld ook "oorlogen" gehad in de zin van bijvoorbeeld een actie toemaat.

Floris: Ja, daar hebben we dat.. die is goed geweest. Aan de andere kant zijn er ook vreselijke dingen gebeurt.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Ik bedoel er zijn acteurs echt depressief thuis gekomen, zelfmoord gepleegd, omdat ze de wereld niet meer begrepen waarin ze speelden. Hun vak was opeens anders geworden, daar konden ze niets mee, het was een oude generatie.

Mandy: Het was heel ingrijpend.

Floris: Ja, het was heel ingrijpend, maar ja, dat, kijk, als je dat dus wilt zeggen, als ik het begrip oorlog naar het begrip revolutie mag trekken, dan ja, dan heb je dat soms nodig. Een omwenteling gaat zelden geleidelijk, want dan verzandt het in polderoverleggen.

Mandy: In alleen het idee en niet het doen.

Floris: Ja, dat is het probleem.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Ik denk dat je soms om het te doen, ja wat ik zeg, je moet, je moet het, ik zeg het wel eens tegen studenten ook: doe het nou gewoon. Zeggen ze ja maar het is niet gewoon. Ik zeg nee, het is ook niet gewoon, maar je moet het doen. Anders, dat denk ik ook wel eens over grote kunst, als je het nou over die eeuwigheidswaarde hebt, die je in het begin stelde. Je weet niet of iets wat je doet eeuwigheidswaarde heeft, dat kan je alleen maar nadat je dood bent en mensen er 500 jaar later nog over lullen, dan heb je een goede eeuwigheidswaarde.

Mandy: Ja, dat maak je zelf niet meer me, maar...

Floris: Nee, dat maak je zelf niks van mee, dan ben je toch echt wel van de status van een Rembrandt een Van Gogh een Caravaggio een Michelangelo, een Dante.. maar dat maak je niet mee, dat weet je niet. Alleen ik ben ervan overtuigd dat die gasten wel allemaal gewoon het lef hebben gehad om te zeggen ik heb een goed idee, ik ga het gewoon doen. Misschien ga ik vol op mijn bek, maar ik ga het gewoon doen. Dat is, dat is...

Mandy: En die houding heb jij ook. Het cultureel-professorschap aan de TU Delft was niets vanzelfsprekend en misschien zelfs wel een eerste stapje in die "oorlog" of die revolutie die tussen theater en techniek op dit moment aan het plaatsvinden is.

Floris: Ja, nou kijk, ik, ik, ik.. als ik heel eerlijk ben heb ik me over die samenwerking nooit zo'n zorgen gemaakt tussen theater en techniek. Want het is uiteindelijk heel simpel, omdat ik de man van de ideeën ben, beslis ik ook welke technieken ik daarvoor wil gebruiken, want uiteindelijk, wat ik zeg, ik doe het.

Mandy: Ja, maar er is wel veel kritiek op een opera versterkt spelen wordt niet altijd gewaardeerd.

Floris: nee, maar dat hangt van de muziek af. Uiteindelijk ook daar weer dat heeft met de inhoud te

maken. Verdi, waag het niet te versterken. Vind ik echt gelul, waarom zou je. Het is geschreven om het niet te doen. Dan ga je aan de kern van het stuk zitten. Dan ga je denken dat wij het beter weten dan een briljante geest als Verdi die Don Carlo schrijft op een van de mooiste toneelstukken van Friedrich Schiller.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dat is toch, weet je, we gaan de Sixtijnse Kapel even overnieuw schilderen. Nou echt niet, dat doe je dus niet, daar blijf je met je poten vanaf. Dan schrijf je maar je eigen stuk en dat is dus wat ik wil zeggen. Je eigen stuk, nieuwe composities, waarin in onze tijd versterking misschien een prachtige rol kan spelen. Maar schrijf dan een nieuw stuk.

Mandy: Ja, maar ook daar wordt het niet altijd gewaardeerd op dit moment. Techniek is het theater is sowieso een eh..

Floris: Ja, maar dat is een soort.. dat is een soort. Kijk, ik ben conservatief, maar ik ben niet orthodox. Dus ik heb een conservatieve smaak, maar ik ben geen orthodox dogmaticus.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Ik houd van opera, maar dat er ook nieuwe stukken geschreven kunnen worden die dan naast de canon kunnen bestaan, dat is, dat is het vraagstuk niet. Dat is prima. En ik vind die discussie ook, weet je, dan gaat het er weer over, dan krijg je die achterlijke dogmatici, dat noem ik altijd zelfmoordterroristen in ons vak, want dat gaat nergens.. ja, maar, dat zijn mensen die, die dus dan, dat is zoiets, neem nou in de filmgeschiedenis, hadden we ineens Lars von Trier met zijn hele dogmaprincipe, dat ie dacht dat je alleen maar geluid moest hebben van dat wat je ziet op de Bühne, dat is gelul! Ik zit hier nu toch, zit achter mij toch geluid, dat zie ik toch niet. Snap je, dat soort onzin. Dat is jezelf klem zetten in theorieën en in wederom theoretisch gewauwel wat met het doen het uitoefenen van het vak te weinig raakvlakken heeft. Het komt niet samen. Het is leuk op papier en hetzelfde is dus, die mensen die zeggen opera mag nooit versterkt worden. Dat ik denk *never say never*. Waarom niet? Wie zegt dat. Ja, dan wordt het musical.

Onzin! Dus iedereen die in een microfoon een liedje zingt is opens een musicalartiest? Wat is dit voor een..

Mandy: Dat is een uitbreiding van één sector, een vrij ruime uitbreiding van een sector, maar..

Floris: Ja, maar ik vind het... nou goed, ja, wat ik zeg, ik kan conservatief zijn, maar ik ben geen dogmaticus en ik vind veranderingen altijd wel lekker ook. Nieuwe dingen zien. Ik heb vaak juist bij briljant, kijk, heel veel probeerseltjes en dingetjes, ook met techniek en theater, zeker bij de jonge generatie die dan op de toneelacademie komt en denkt god ik ga eens een beamer gebruiken, dat ik denk, ja maar dat hadden we 20 jaar geleden ook al. Dus zo nieuw ben je niet. Dat is het gevaar een beetje van techniek. Het moet niet over techniek gaan, van mij. Wij hadden altijd les van Peter Misottem, die veel werkte met Ro Theater, Guy Cassiers, volgens mij, dat die wilde dat ons stuk over de techniek 'amai het is toch prachtig he' en dan zeg ik: 'maar ja, Peter we zitten naar een beeldscherm te kijken. Wat vertelt dat beeldscherm?' 'Dat vertelt over de techniek'. Ik zeg: 'ja maar dat klopt niet. Dat is wel bier wat over bier vertelt'. Ik zeg: 'dat gaat niet, want bier heeft geen stem en heeft geen idee. Techniek zit uiteindelijk in ons digitale tijdperk gewoon eentjes en nulletjes, die jij en ik met een goed idee gewoon mooi programmeren. Wat ik daarmee wil zeggen is dat er dus geen verhaal verteld wordt. Het verhaal gaat dan over de techniek, vind ik niet interessant. Want dan kan ik net zo goed de gebruiksaanwijzing van een flatscreen lezen. Dan weet ik meer achteraf'. Het moet ten dienste staan van datgene wat je wilt vertellen, techniek.

Mandy: De vorm mag nooit boven de content gaan.

Floris: Vind ik niet, nee, vind ik niet. De vorm kan dwingend zijn, de vorm kan naar zijn, de vorm kan almachtig zijn, maar het moet wel iets verbeelden. Het mag niet alleen maar beeld zijn, het moet, beeld moet verbeelden. Anders krijg je weer 't andere probleem, dan hebben we geen idee.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Dan hebben we dus alleen maar techniek. En dat is dus wat ik zeg, het is *Deus*. En ik zei niet, op een gegeven moment ook in mijn professoraat zei ik het is niet *Deus ex Machina*, het is *Deus ET Machina*. Het moest naast mekaar bestaan, de alfa heeft de bèta nodig, de machine heeft de godheid nodig, het idee heeft de uitvoering nodig, etc. etc. maar scheidt die twee werelden niet.

Mandy: Nee, het is een wisselwerking. Ik denk dat dit een mooie overgang is op *A Dog's Heart*, wat natuurlijk de case is die ik wil behandelen en die het meeste raakvlak heeft met jouw vakgebied. Want de hond daarin spreekt wel degelijk tot de verbeelding.

Floris: Oh ja. De hond is geniaal. Het is een van de beste moderne opera's die ik de afgelopen 10 jaar gezien heb, het is misschien wel de beste. *A Dog's Heart* was een geniale voorstelling. Een soort, ja, is het absurdisme, surrealisme, typisch Russisch, qua verhaal. Typisch. Ik weet niet of je een beetje die avant garde schrijvers kent van begin 20^e eeuw, maar dat is echt, ja, *that's it*. Daar staat het, dat is de vorm. Zegt iets over de maatschappij, zegt iets over ons als mensen, zegt iets over de systemen waar we in leven. Over sociale omwenteling gesproken, bij *A Dog's Heart*.

Mandy: Ja, ja mij deed het vooral aan Kafka denken; ik had een Kafka-associatie.

Floris: Ja, Ja, maar Kafka, Kafka gaat alleen maar over systemen en de absurditeit ervan wat mij betreft. De onmogelijkheid om in een overgeorganiseerd systeem, dat je echt denkt hè, en daardoor drijft de mens tot waanzin. Dit ging, dit was nog menselijker dan Kafka.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Qua metafoor.

Mandy: Ja, dat wel.

Floris: De metafoor was zo goed gekozen.

Mandy: Maar de vorm ook.

Floris: De vorm was geniaal. De vorm was, vind ik, omdat het juist een onrealistisch *slash* vervreemdende vorm is, want je gaat opeens met poppen werken, iets wat niet bestaat, iets wat geen ziel heeft, en dat is wat kunst vermag door goed idee en drie spelers naast die loodzware hond weten we opeens een ding van staal en ijzer tot leven te wekken wat niets is.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Tot we opeens die drie mannen met adem, bloed, en vooral hersenen een goed idee, maar ook die het heel goed kunnen, het heel goed doen, naast die hond zet. En dan wordt een van de oudste trucjes, waar kinderen mee spelen, namelijk poppetjes, wordt opeens grote kunst. En als mensen mij nou vragen waarom werkt het daar wel en ergens anders niet, vakmanschap! Die jongens doen hun hele leven niets anders dan poppenspelen. Simon McBurney is een fucking goede acteur en nog een betere regisseur wat mij betreft. Die om de een of andere reden opeens in de opera terecht is gekomen en dit soort stukken doet.

Mandy: En heel goed.

Floris: Zoals de Zauberflöte. En heel goed. Omdat dat een raar, stinkend, ongewassen, ongeleid projectiel en kind is. Want ik weet niet of je hem wel eens hebt ontmoet..

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Maar, laat ik het zo zeggen, als Simon niet met een productie bezig is, dan is hij nog best te hachelen, is hij met een productie bezig, dan is hij net zo als ik. Dan focust hij zich er alleen maar op. Dan slaapt hij niet meer, dan drinkt ie waarschijnlijk teveel en douchet niet meer.

Mandy: Oh wat erg.

Floris: Simon stinkt als een rotte bunzing, dat is echt niet te doen.

Mandy: Oh wat erg.

Floris: Maar dat brein houdt niet op met denken en creatief te zijn.

Mandy: Zo erg dat het eigenlijk de rest gewoon buitensluit.

Floris: Ja, ik ken dat zo goed. Waarom denk je dat al die regisseurs single zijn, omdat er gewoon geen ruimte is in dat hoofd voor iets anders dan dat wat ze willen maken – de groten, de groten van.. ja, waanzinnig.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dus dat is het, dus als je wilt vragen, wat is het succes van Dog's Heart. Vakmanschap, een briljant idee, van een boek Raskatov die geweldig heeft geschreven, Simon McBurney die een briljant brein heeft en natuurlijk die jongens van die, van die, van die, dat, dat poppentheater, die dat gewoon goed kunnen. Dus daar hebben gewoon, ja gewoon, ja eigenlijk, ja eigenlijk, is dat, dat is nou gewoon.

Mandy: Gewoon doen.

Floris: Gewoon doen en goed doen. En je vak kennen.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: En zorgen dat alleen maar, natuurlijk hebben we allemaal grote, maar zorg dat dat ego niet tussen jou en hetgeen dat je moet doen staan. Niet zeggen ja maar ik ben regisseur, ik ga zelf die poppen doen, nee, want oké, ik heb een pop nodig, dat kan ik niet. Weet je wat ik ga doen, ik ga de beste poppenspelers van de wereld inhuren. Dat vind ik een slimme beslissing.

Mandy: Ja, heel slim.

Floris: Snap je, dat dat...

Mandy: Misschien hoef je niet altijd alles ook inderdaad echt te kunnen, maar moet je dan wel toegeven dat je het niet kunt

Floris: Ja, maar dat is wijsheid. Nee, maar ook dat is voor mij gewoon doen, namelijk dan vraag je een ander om het te doen.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Maar die coach je wel, die begeleid je wel, je zegt ja maar ik wil het zo, nee ik wil het zo. Wij hadden gisteren een fotoshoot voor de nieuwe campagne beeld van de nieuwe voorstelling. Ben ik een fotograaf?

Nee, maar ik weet wel hoe die foto eruit moet komen te zien. Dus ik ben er de hele dag bij en roep af en toe wat tegen die fotograaf en dan ga ik weer weg en dan gaat hij of zij gaat weer door met fotograferen, want dat doet zij. Maar ik doe die dag ook iets, namelijk op zijn minst duidelijk maken wat ik wel.

Mandy: Conclusie is gewoon samen doen.

Floris: Ja! Gewoon samen doen. Jij met die zanger, jij met die ..

Mandy: *Deus et Machina*.

Floris: *Deus ET Machina*, dat is wat het moet zijn.

Mandy: Tot slot, je toekomstvisie over theater, techniek, de ontwikkeling, de scheiding, of juist het weer samenkomen van die twee.

Floris: Nou ik denk dat als het ergens gek genoeg altijd samen is geweest is het theater geweest. Is natuurlijk in de jaren zeventig wel een enorme, omdat ze daar alle theaterwetten *im frage* wilden stellen

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Hebben ze op een gegeven moment dingen losgelaten, of versimpeld of gezegd nou dit wel dit niet, etc. blijkbaar, mar dat is meer een soort reactie op oude wetten en het is goed om daar af en toe een vraagteken bij te stellen en waarom doen we wat we doen, maar...

Mandy: En daarna is er een bui tegenin gekomen, waarin alles kon en alles mocht. En nu zie je een

Floris: En nu zie je een ...

Mandy: Tweedeling, bijna.

Floris: Nee, nou nee, je ziet nu een soort ervaring van de oude theaterwetten. Het meest in de nieuwe generatie, waar ik mezelf toereken die nu langzaam een beetje he de oude generatie gaat toch gewoon met pensioen, of daar worden hun toneelgezelschapjes opeens van ze afgenomen. Wat soms heel tragisch is en soms heel goed is. Dat ik denk ja, stop maar eens even. Je bent nu 65, ja maar ik wil nog 20 jaar door, ja maar er moeten ook nieuwe mensen komen. En ik vind dat de nieuwe generatie, mijn generatie, zie ik meer vakmensen. Toen de grote kaalslag kwam in het culturele landschap, toen was ik natuurlijk ook witheet en bedroefd en weet ik het allemaal, maar het enige dat ik toen heb gezegd ik zeg laten we in godsnaam hopen dat de humbug wederom het lullen maar niet kunnen.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dat is het ook vaak. Dat is zoals critici of recensenten. Die kunnen erover schrijven.

Mandy: Omdat ze zelf niets kunnen doen.

Floris: Maar dat zijn zelf gefrustreerde theatermakers, vaak. Echt waar, als je naar hun CV's gaat kijken. Oh, maar dus jij hebt ook de kleinkunstacademie gedaan maar je was niet goed genoeg. Ze hebben jou eruit getrapt en toen dacht je dan ga ik maar is over al die andere etters schrijven.

Mandy: Dan ga ik de rest afkraken.

Floris: En ze fileren in de volkskrant. Dus nee, ik, ik, ik, er is nog wel wat gelul, of sommige mensen die echt gewoon hun vak niet verstaan, maar .. en die onderhand tegen alle theaterwetten die toch hun absolute bestaansrecht en kwaliteit bewezen hebben nog steeds aan het schoppen zijn, omdat hen dat ooit geleerd is in de jaren 70. Of erger nog, de kinderen van de mensen in de jaren 70 die dat vonden. Dat is helemaal verschrikkelijk. Die dus op de toneelschool in aanraking zijn geweest met iemand van het Werktheater en vinden dat ze nu nog steeds het Werktheater moeten voortzetten. Dat is ook absoluut quatsch. Maar dat vind ik hetzelfde als bij de te truttige orthodoxe die zulke tenenkrommende clichés nog maken dat je denkt ja, maar dat is het ook niet. Dus het is een mengelmoes denk ik. Het moet een goede mix zijn. We hebben verworvenheden gezien en, en behouden vanuit de jaren 70 en daar moeten nu weer de scherpe kantjes en de onzin moet eruit gefilterd worden en dat moeten we weer combineren met de oude theater, met de echte, de grote oude theaterwetten. En dat is mijn toekomstvisie. Mijn toekomstvisie is denk ik dat dat terecht alleen nog maar over kwaliteit gaat. Dus niet alleen maar heb je een leuk idee, maar ook kan je het uitvoeren tot en met klopt je marketing en je publieksbereik. Wil niet zeggen dat alles op publieksbereik afgemeten moet worden. Er moet altijd toch een experimenteren of een experimentele fase zijn, er moet een, zowel in het onderwijs van kunstenaars als in de uitoefening van hun vak, als ze dingen willen uitvinden, nieuwe dingen willen uitvinden moet daar ruimte voor zijn, maar het mag niet meer 20% van het werkveld beslaan. Die andere 80% moet naar de vakmensen gaan die het wel kunnen of die het al kunnen. Dat moet geen, daar moet geen onbalans in zijn.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Als we meer bezig zijn om mensen te laten experimenteren en op te leiden, dan dat ze daadwerkelijk bezig zijn met kunst te maken, dat kan niet. Dan is, dan sla je het fundament onder je eigen validiteit, de validiteitsvraag, sla je weg. Ja maar waarom bestaat u dan? Ja maar wij doen allemaal onderzoek. Ja maar wat doet u dan? Nou, nog niets, want dat moeten de onderzoeken nog uitwijzen wat zijn gaan doen. Dat kan niet.

Mandy: Nu beschrijf je de gehele universitaire wereld hè?!

Floris: Ja. Ja, maar dat heb ik, ik heb in Delft met verbijstering rondgelopen. Ik zeg ik ken geen opleiding waar zoveel geld naar toe gaat en waar nul, die zo weinig rendement heeft.

Mandy: Niet doen

Floris: Nee, maar dat is het. Het onderzoek moet voortkomen uit vakgeest en tijdsgeest. Niet *l'art pour l'art*, onderzoek voor het onderzoek. Want ik ben niet geïnteresseerd voor het welzijn van deze wereld naar de grote van de schaamlippen van een zeepaardje. *I don't giva a fuck*. Echt niet, niemand. Maar dat soort onderzoeken worden er wel gedaan. Dat soort onderzoeken worden er wel gedaan, sterker nog, er worden, de ene na de ander onderzoeken hebben we gezien verzonnen..

Mandy: Ja, omdat we moeten publiceren.

Floris: Omdat we, wij zullen als wetenschap, omdat wij moeten publiceren. Ja, rot op.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Je publiceert maar pas op het moment dat het iets waard is. Jongens, kunnen jullie dat even uitzetten, we zijn met een interview bezig. Je publiceert maar wat op het moment dat je een valide onderzoek hebt. En dat gaat dus niet alleen maar, is het onderzoek, is het een goed onderzoek, nee het gaat er ook om waarom doe je in godsnaam dat onderzoek. Wat is het rendement dat je wilt behalen?

Mandy: Is dat met kunst ook zo? Of is daar *l'art pour l'art* wel een gegronde reden?

Floris: Ja, maar dan nog steeds, *l'art pour l'art* zijn ook gradaties in.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: In kwaliteit. Kijk, dat kunst gaat over jou en mij, de samenleving, menselijke verhoudingen, een spiegel voorhouden, dat kunst zijn waarde heft in het gezond houden van een maatschappij, het gif uit onze aderen en onze hoofden filteren, dat het ons weer opnieuw laat spelen, wat aangetoond is, wat wij nodig hebben, want anders gaan we kapot als mensen, want dat, dat is, mensen vragen 'yo, wat is nou het nu van kunst? Kan ik het eten?' Ik zeg: 'nee, het houdt jou geestelijk gezond. En ook lichamelijk gezond. En als ze dat niet aantonen, zeg ik zullen we het experiment eens doen?' 20 jaar geen kunst in dit land. We flikkeren alles dicht. De televisie gaat eruit.

Mandy: Uiteraard.

Floris: De bioscopen gaan dicht, de theaters gaan dicht, de musea gaan dicht, dat nationale monumenten schaffen we af.

Mandy: Radio.

Floris: Nemo, radio gaat uit, geen boeken meer, geen literatuur, gaan we eens 20 jaar met zijn allen zo heel veel rendement leveren door wel eh..

Mandy: Door te werken.

Floris: Door te werken, maar dan wil ik ook eigenlijk, want je zult nog zien dat bijvoorbeeld zoiets als onderzoek, wetenschappelijk onderzoek, het ontwikkelen van nieuw, dat dat meteen tot stilstand komt. Want, datgeen waar de mens die kerntaak waar de mens waarlijk, waarlijk creatief is, namelijk kunst, is weg. Dus je motor van de, de *Deus*, want de andere motor van de *Deus* hebben we met zijn allen hartgrondig afgebroken, namelijk religie.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Want we geloven in niets meer. En de kerken worden tegenwoordig tot hotels omgebouwd, omdat het rendement moet hebben. Ik denk dat je motor van je samenleving, die tweede motor die je hebt is dat spelende kind.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: De homo ludens, de spelende mens is weg. Alleen, wederom, het moet niet zo zijn dat je in een samenleving komt waar meer kunst gemaakt wordt dan dat er een normale economie is. Dat gaat niet, snap je, het is een motor de rest van de auto moet ook rijden.

Mandy: Dat is wel handig.

Floris: Dat is wel handig, anders functioneert het zaakje echt niet. Twee, het moet gaan over vakmatigheid en creativiteit, niet alleen maar over een van beiden. Het moet gaan over het idee en de uitvoering. En het moet op kwaliteitsniveau. Dan is de grote vraag wie bepalen de kwaliteit. Jij en ik.

Mandy: Of de recensenten.

Floris: Afhankelijk van welke recensent het is ja, maar dat is hetzelfde met die vakman of vakvrouw. Maar dat bepalen jij en ik. Jij als publiek en ik als, als, als vakman. Dat bepaal ik hier dagelijks. Wie ik vind dat die de opera in mag.

Mandy: Wie kwaliteit heeft.

Floris: Wie kwaliteit heeft en wie niet. En als mensen zeggen dan zeggen dat is arrogant dan zeg ik nee. Dat is niet arrogant, dat is zeggen dit is wat ik denk en dit is wat ik doe. Dit is mijn vak, ik vind dat ik hier goed

in ben. Vind je dat niet, dan kunnen we er een discussie over hebben, maar ik vind en een hoop andere mensen vinden dat ik in dit vak thuishoor en dat goed doe. Maar wederom ik zeg het goed DOE, niet goed denk. En daarom wil ik ook de toekomst van dit vak bepalen. En daar mag best af en toe een goeie burgeroorlog over worden uitgevochten, zoals je zelf terecht zei, heeft een revolutie nodig. Heb je wel, ja, dat is treurig maar waar. Ik vergeet nooit meer een jongen op de toneelacademie, tsja op een gegeven moment in de les, toen hadden we nog geen Irak oorlog nog niets, dus die glimlachte op een gegeven moment en die zei tegen een dramaturgiedocent die zei weet je, dat was het, die docent vroeg aan hem, god, wat, wat zou jij nou echt willen, wat is jou droom, waar heb je zin in. En toen zei die het wordt weer eens tijd voor een goede oorlog. En dat was echt, maar echt uit het niets. Echt het wordt gewoon weer eens tijd voor een goeie oorlog. En ik keek hem aan en ik dacht jij bent ziek en tegelijkertijd dacht ik...

Mandy: Maar je hebt wel gelijk.

Floris: Maar je hebt wel gelijk. Het wordt weer eens tijd voor een goeie oorlog. En als je toch over de toekomst, daar wil ik trouwens nog een ding aan toevoegen over de toekomst, wat we nu gaan zien, de eerste burgeroorlog die in dit land gevoerd gaat worden gaat over de generaties. Dat heb ik altijd aangekondigd.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Ik weet dat ik het tien jaar geleden al zei, ik zeg, dat ik ook tegen mijn ouders zei, wij gaan ruzie hebben over de puinhoop die jullie ervan gemaakt hebben.

Mandy: Ja, absoluut.

Floris: En toen zeiden ze dus, nou dan verander je er nu dus zelf aan wat. Ik zeg nee, want jullie zitten nog steeds met je reet op dat pluuche. Dus ik kan er wel wat aan willen veranderen, maar het enige dat ik kan doen, maar hè, dat zijn wat milieudingingen, ik kan het kartonnetje van mijn theezakje er aftrekken en dat bij het oud papier leggen en dat noem ik altijd als voorbeeld. Ik zeg maar de oorlog gaat tussen de generaties. De hypotheekcrisis, de kredietcrisis, de economische, de bankencrisis, de sociaal, ook de sociale crisis, ook de crisis in de kunst, want waarom werden wij als eerste gepakt bij de bezuinigingsronde? Omdat ze wisten dat we op ons gat lagen, inhoudelijk. Omdat er verdeeldheid was en dat ging ook over generaties.

Mandy: Ja, het ging niet om het geld wat hier te halen viel.

Floris: Nee, niet veel, ik bedoel per jaar was, was, was het nog niet, nog geen 1% van wat ze moesten bezuinigen. Het was een ideologische kwestie. Het was de PVV en de VVD onder leiding van...

Mandy: Absoluut.

Floris: Ivo Opstelten achter de schermen, het is nooit Rutte geweest, Opstelten.

Mandy: Maar Rutte is veel socialer dan...

Floris: Nee, maar het is Opstelten. Opstelten heeft de bezuiniging, de eerste bezuinigingsronde opgesteld.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: En die heeft een bloedhekel aan kunst.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Die gaat, die is nog nooit van zijn leven naar een concert geweest.

Mandy: Maar dat is ook de meest kleurloze man die er is.

Floris: Ja, is het ook [*doet hem na met een keelgeluidje*] ik noem hem altijd de dikke pad. Dat is voor mij echt een pad, een pad in een *double breasted suit*. Maar daar ging het over, dat was een, een, een, een, economisch conflict, maar we werden, maar we waren zo kwetsbaar omdat er ook in de kunsten is er een generatiewisseling bezig. Een aantoonbare generatiewisseling. Er gaan binnenkort een paar grote namen, en dat is grappig, we zitten in de overgang nu en dat is logisch want we hebben net het jaar 2010 gehad, we zitten in de overgang van de ene generatie naar de andere. Kijk naar wat er allemaal aftreed, overlijdt, weet ik het allemaal.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Het hele politieke, de revolutie, is ook in de Arabische lente, is ook een generatieding. Mubarak was te oud, hij had de boel niet meer onder controle. En er is een nieuwe generatie opgestaan.

Mandy: Ja, maar die hele Arabische lente is ontstaan door de jeugd op het internet.

Floris: Precies.

Mandy: Dat is een generatie.

Floris: Het is een, het is een, probleem is alleen nu dat die generatie nog steeds niet heerst.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: En daarom gaat Morsi er ook weer uit.

Mandy: Uiteindelijk wel.

Floris: Maar ook daarin ziet iets heel treurigs. Het is heel ideologisch hè dat wisselen van die generaties, maar er zit ook iets heel treurigs in, want de nieuwe Mubarak zit ook al in hun generatie, want de

geschiedenis zoals ik zei is cumulatief.

Mandy: Zoveel verandert er niet.

Floris: Nee, maar het, iedere keer denken we met nieuw jong bloed, wij zijn de toekomst.

Mandy: We hebben hoop.

Floris: We hebben hoop.

Mandy: We houden hoop.

Floris: En over 40 jaar zijn wij de pluchezitters. Dan zit ik met mijn reet aan mijn universitaire leerstoel vast. Of mijn intendantschap bij de Nederlandse opera of weet ik veel waar ik terecht kom en dan zit ik daar lekker vastgeroest te zitten. En, en, en..

Mandy: En niet meer weg te krijgen.

Floris: En heb ik mijn, mijn, mijn, weet ik veel, mijn gouden handdruk goed geregeld omdat ik de directeur ben en mijn eigen contract onderteken, etc. etc. etc.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dat soort dingen.

Mandy: De verandering is misschien lang niet zo groot als dat we altijd hopen, maar er is wel altijd hoop.

Floris: Nee, dat is de teleurstelling. Dat is de teleurstelling na de revolutie. Na de revolutie kijkt iedereen om zich heen en zegt..

Mandy: Wat is er nou veranderd?

Floris: Maar ik had toch verwacht dat dat land in plaats van groen helemaal blauw zou worden. Toch is de lucht nog steeds blauw, maar dat land groen. Wat raar. Nee. Uiteindelijk zijn wij, ja, een zandkorrel in die woestijn van de hele tijd. Gewoon de tijd zelf. Allen wat jij zegt, ja hoop, ja dat is het enige dat we hebben. Hoop is de grootste motor van wat wij doen hier op aarde. Dat hebben mensen niet door.

Mandy: Het is de nieuwe religie.

Floris: Hm?

Mandy: Het is de nieuwe religie.

Floris: Hoop? Nee, hoop is altijd de religie geweest. Hoop op een beter leven, hoop dat als we bidden tot een boom, een godheid of een steen, of onze iPad, dat we, dat we, dat het morgen of straks beter zal zijn.

Mandy: Het was hoop dat het in het hiernamaals beter zou worden en de hoop begint zich nu meer te keren naar het nu.

Floris: Nee, dat sterker nog, dat was een soort angst voor de dood, voor de natuurwetten die we niet begrepen, maar de hoop, in eerste instantie ging altijd over hier. Hopen dat we onze sociale status kunnen verbeteren, hopen dat we gezond blijven, hopen dat als we ziek zijn gezond worden, hopen dat als we alleen zijn we een ongelofelijk leuk, lekker wijf of vent tegenkomen waarmee we gaan trouwen, etc., etc., etc. hopen dat als we arm zijn dat we rijk worden, nou ja, al die dingen. Al die dingen, daar gaat het over. Dat is wat het is.

Mandy: Maar hopen is denken en niet doen.

Floris: Hm. Hopen, nee, hopen is nog erger, hopen is dromen en het nooit krijgen.. haha. Dus kan je beter gewoon iets goeds bedenken wat te doen is en dat ook gewoon doen.

Mandy: Doen. Ik heb de stellingen nog een keer voor je.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Ik ben benieuwd of er wat veranderd is. Kunst of geld?

Floris: Ja weet je, ik mag nu toelichten hè?

Mandy: Je mag nu toelichten.

Floris: Ik vind het allebei belangrijk, want *l'art pour l'art*...

Mandy: Maar je moet wel kiezen, je mag toelichten maar je moet wel kiezen.

Floris: Ja, dat doe ik ja. Dan kies ik voor kunst hoe dan ook. Maar dan, kijk, ik ben wel zo'n realist dat ik weet dat er gewoon geld moet zijn. Punt. Ik werk in de opera, dat is de duurste kunstvorm die we hebben.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Snap je. En dat zal nooit rendabel worden. Al was het alleen al door het aantal mensen dat eraan meewerkt. Maar ja, ...

Mandy: Toch de kunst boven het geld.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Zekerheid of risico?

Floris: Risico. Snap je, want anders. Het moet niet wanhopig worden, het moet geen wanhopig risico zijn. Zo van de Spartanen in de kloof waarvan we zeker weten dat ze van de perzen gaan verliezen, dat moet het ook weer niet zijn, maar ja, zonder risico, dan ontwikkel je echt niets. Dan ben je stilstaand water.

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Salomon's Choices*

Floris: Behouden wat goed is. Ik vind ja, want dat is juist de discussie die we hebben gehad hè, hoe vaak hebben we niet geroepen het kind met het badwater wegflikkeren, dat vind ik de grootste fout die we vaak hebben gemaakt. Dat gaat over het zogenaamde ons vrijvechten van religie, ja, en nu? Waar geloven we nog in, waar romen we nog over? Ja, maar god bestaat niet. Jawel. Oh, waarom? Omdat ik dat wil geloven. Ja, maar dat is niet waar. Ik zeg wie zegt dat?

Mandy: Lever maar bewijs.

Floris: Ik zeg lever maar bewijs. Laten we het bewijs maar eens omdraaien. Jij zegt tegen mij dat ik aan moet tonen dat hij bestaat, mag ik jou dan vragen als vakwetenschapper om aan te tonen dat hij niet bestaat. Ja, maar dat kan niet. Ik zeg ah!

Mandy: Hé.

Floris: Ah, ah, aha. Ja, maar dat is een droom. Lekker toch?! Kind zijn.

Mandy: Dromen.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Verbreden of specialiseren.

Floris: Ja, specialiseren. Dat, dat, dat is dus wat ik bedoel met ambacht, want verbreden, verbreden doe je eigenlijk op papier. Dat hebben mensen nooit door. Ja, ik ben daar ook in geïnteresseerd, dan gaat ze een cursusje dit doen. Een cursusje? LOI? Het is geen LOI-cursus. Ik heb 8 jaar gestudeerd om te worden wat ik ben. 4 jaar toneelacademie, 4 jaar conservatorium. Met een studieschuld van hier tot half-Tokio. Maar het moest van mezelf, want ik wilde de beste zijn. Maar dat is geen cursusje geweest om onszelf te verbreden! Zorg in dat wat je doet dat je heel goed wordt. Als je multitalent bent komt dat vanzelf wel naar boven. Dat is vaak wat er fout gaat in onderwijs, dat mensen het breed willen hebben. Gelul. Specialiseer je in dat wat je wilt worden en daar waar je goed in bent. Zorg dat je de beste bent en als je een multitalent bent, dat komt echt wel.

Mandy: Dat komt er wel uit.

Floris: Dat komt er wel uit, als dat eruit wil komen komt dat eruit. Maar als we alleen maar gaan verbreden met zijn allen, dan blijven we een beetje met zijn allen.. nou het is heel simpel: als het niet uit de diepte komt, dan komt het dus inderdaad uit de breedte, maar dan gaan we er nooit in. Dan penetreren we het onderwerp niet. Dus dan blijven we met zijn allen over de oppervlakte van de woestijn een beetje... zeggen van ja, dat is zand. Ja dat is zand. Ja, maar wat is er onder het zand? Ja, zand, zand, heuvels, zand, woestijnvos. Ja, lekker breed. Maar ga er nou eens in die aarde.

Mandy: Naar olie boren.

Floris: Ja.

Mandy: Frisse input of een vast team?

Floris: Ja, dat vind ik heel moeilijk. Ik bedoel, ik heb vaak een vast team, maar ik wissel daar wel eens in, bewust. Om er even een nieuw iemand in te brengen. Maar, om kwaliteit te leveren denk ik dat het goed is een vast team te hebben.

Mandy: Een vertrouwensrelatie of een contract?

Floris: Ja, ik riep contract.

Mandy: Je mag veranderen. hè.

Floris: Ja, maar dat komt omdat ik door schade en schande wijzer ben geworden. Laat ik het zo zeggen, als er een contract is, dan is die vertrouwensrelatie er ook. Als er geen contract is kan die vertrouwensrelatie heel gemakkelijk beschadigd worden. Snap je wat ik bedoel?

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Je tekent geen contract met iemand die je geen vertrouwensrelatie hebt, dan moet je die handtekening niet zetten.

Mandy: Nee, maar een contract is wel een zekerheid waarmee je je indekt, terwijl met een vertrouwensrelatie dek je je misschien wat minder in.

Floris: Ja, maar waarom zou je je niet indekken. Het gaat over het zakelijke gedeelte van wat we doen. Vind ik prima. Nee hoor.

Mandy: Enkele lange termijnprojecten of meer korte termijnprojecten?

Floris: Die vond ik zo ingewikkeld, ik moet hem even zien. Ja, enkele lang denk ik, maar dat komt door de natuur van de opera. Dat gaat niet op korte termijn. Voordat je iedereen bij elkaar hebt, ben je twee jaar verder. En dat iedereen kan en geboekt is, snap je, dus ik moet altijd lange termijndenken. Ik moet nadenken wat ik over drie jaar doe.

Mandy: Ja, maar je kan ook zeggen een run is 10 shows of een run is 500 shows.

Floris: Ja, maar een run is bij de opera altijd 10 shows. Ja, haha, het is lullig, het is Joop van den Ende die dat misschien doet, maar de opera is niet te betalen. Kijk de opera is de enige kunstvorm die duurder

wordt naarmate je meer voorstellingen doet, het word niet goedkoper.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Want nog steeds zitten er 80 man in die bak die iedere avond betaald moeten worden en dat is alleen nog maar het orkest. Dan heb je nog 60 man op het toneel rondrennen, dus, nee. Daarom vind ik het niet interessant. En bovendien 500 keer spelen.. ik ben altijd na de première weg, dan wil ik de volgende maken. Ik heb het nu wel gezien, ik ken het nu, volgende. Nee hoor, houden zoals ik zei, enkele lange termijn liever.

Mandy: Positief publiek of positieve recensenten.

Floris: Oh, positief, ik dacht dat je zei intelligent. Oh, oh, dat zei ik. Het ja, weet ik veel. Het is allebei.. meestal als het publiek positief is, is de recensent dat ook.

Mandy: Er zitten azijnpissers tussen.

Floris: Ja, in mijn geval wel. Snap je, ik ben nog nooit de grond in geschreven – aftikken.

Mandy: Houden zo.

Floris: [Blaast] Ja, weet je, het is allebei... het rare is dat als jij een positieve recensent hebt, dan krijg je ook weer meer positief publiek in de zaal. Het is een wisselwerking. Mensen lezen die dingen en daardoor gaat je kaartverkoop omhoog, dat is gewoon aantoonbaar. Dus ik vind het niet echt een ingewikkelde keuze, want ik vind het allebei belangrijk.

Mandy: En dat maakt de keuze misschien juist ingewikkeld.

Floris: Ja, het maakt de keus een beetje vaag. Want het maakt me eigenlijk geen donder uit. Ja weet je, heb ik net gekozen positieve recensenten, doe ik nou positief publiek.

Mandy: Positief publiek. Hedendaags of voor de eeuwigheid.

Floris: Ja, voor de eeuwigheid. Tuurlijk heb ik de wens dat ik ooit iets schep, iets maak wat over 500 jaar nog herinnerd wordt. Dan heb je een goeie *footprint* op deze rotsbodem hier achtergelaten ja.

Mandy: DaVinci, Van Gogh, Verdi, Visser?

Floris: Ja, ja, dat zou wel een illuster rijtje zijn. Denk niet dat het gaat gebeuren, maar... ja, hopen mag. Hopen mag.

Mandy: Dromen mag, toch?!

Floris: Ook.

Mandy: Een budget aan allerlei zaken of aan een grote naam of ster?

Floris: Ja, ik ben, ik heb het gezien bij de Utrechtse spelen onder andere, natuurlijk he, zo-iemand als Benja Bruijn inhuren en dat soort onzin. Of Arthur Japin vier keer het CAO salaris betalen om hem HEEL slecht te laten acteren in, in Much to do about nothing. Echt heel slecht te laten acteren, maar echt heel slecht te laten acteren. Want de man is namelijk geen....

Mandy: ...Acteur.

Floris: ...Acteur! Hij heeft en ander vak geleerd. En dat doet hij wel heel goed, namelijk schrijven. Dat is een andere muze. Dat begrepen de Grieken al; iedereen had zijn eigen muze. 'Stick to your muze' zeg ik altijd, echt waar. Nee, dus daarom, dat heeft dat al aangetoond in de recente geschiedenis, dus dat dus geld uitgeven aan een grote ster gelul is.

Mandy: Het trekt wel publiek.

Floris: Nee, het trekt pers.

Mandy: Dat ook, maar ja..

Floris: Maar als het kut is, zoals aangetoond bij Much To Do About Nothing, dan is je zaal leeg.

Mandy: Ja, maar ze zouden natuurlijk ook goed kunnen zijn. Je zou een goede ster kunnen hebben.

Floris: Ja, maar dat is wat anders. Dan werk je niet omdat het een ster is, dan werk je omdat het gewoon een hele... dan is iemand een ster omdat ie goed is.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Maar...

Mandy: Maar kost ie nog steeds wel 3x zo veel als iemand anders, die misschien ook goed is.

Floris: Ja en nee, want waarom is die andere geen ster dan?

Mandy: De X-factor?

Floris: Mwahaa.

Mandy: Haha, geluk?

Floris: Ja, dat wel. Geluk is een groot deel van wat we doen. Of wat we dus niet kunnen beïnvloeden en dus niet doen.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Maar, dat is wel een ding. Het is wel belangrijk.

Mandy: Het helpt wel.

Finishing Up

Floris: Ach, ja. Ja, soms geloof ik wel dat je geluk een beetje kunt afdwingen en dergelijke dingen, maar..

Mandy: Tot op zekere hoogte.

Floris: Ja, zeker weten, zeker weten. Een ingewikkeld vraagstuk is het geluksvraagstuk. Nee, ja, dus daarom, ik ga dan liever voor dat ik me geld steek in ander goede dingen die nodig zijn, dan de ster of.. Arthur Japin die geen zin normaal uit zijn bek kan laten rollen.

Mandy: Wat toch knap is voor een auteur, dat hij schijnbaar alleen kan schrijven en niet kan praten.

Floris: Hij kan het echt, echt niet.

Mandy: Oh, wat gênant.

Floris: Wat was dat slecht, godsamme.

Mandy: Soms is dat ook heel leuk, iets wat heel slecht is.

Floris: Ja, maar dit was echt.

Mandy: Zo af en toe.

Floris: Dit was echt tenenkrommend. Echt tenenkrommend.

Mandy: Is er nog iets waar je op terug wilt komen wat ik niet behandeld heb waar je wel van denkt dat...

Floris: Neuh.

Mandy: ..Oh dat had je echt nog moeten vragen.

Floris: Nee, eigenlijk helemaal niet.

Mandy: Of daar heb je zoiets overgeslagen.

Floris: Nee, helemaal niet, nee. Het belangrijkste voor mij is dus dat er dus geen scheiding is, tussen die dingen. En dat ik moe wordt van de mensen die dus trachten continu die scheiding aan te praten aan ons. Wat dat zijn dan, dat zijn dus degenen die de scheiding aanpraten zijn de theoretici.

Mandy: Die niets doen?

Floris: Die niets doen. Die praten ons een scheiding aan en die organiseren symposia en congressen waar we met zijn allen daar nog meer over gaan lullen en dat ik af en toe denk..

Mandy: En nog minder gaan doen.

Floris: Ja, ik heb wel eens ooit een keer op een congres dat ging over de ontwikkeling van de jeugd opera. Het was met het jonge opera festival. En ik was daar met Sandy Oliver. De artistiek leider van de opera acadamy en op een gegeven moment zei ik tegen hem *'but I hate youth opera. What the fuck am I doing here?'*

Mandy: Haha.

Floris: Hij moest zo lachen, hij zei *'me too'*. Hij zei *'opera is for adults. It's too complicated and if we make it a light version, fine, but I don't want to make the light version. I don't want the diet coke, I want the coke'*, zei hij tegen me. Dus we moesten ongelofelijk lachen met zijn allen. Toen op een gegeven moment was er ook een hoofdstuk ging het over zingen. En de kwaliteit van de stem, etc. op een gegeven moment hij was briljant, die kleine Schot staat op met zijn 65 jaar vakervaring, staat op *'okay, cut the crap. Listen. It comes down to one basic thing: there is either good singing or there is bad singing. Can we now please stop nagging about it'*.

Mandy: Geweldig.

Floris: *'And we all would recognize very good singing when it's there, and we all recognize very bad singing when it's not. And the sad this is with all the people who are in the middle in the grey area, because they will never make it. They keep on dreaming'*. En dat is waar. Je moet of goed zijn is wat je doet, maar als jij op je 40^e nog steeds denkt volgend jaar wordt ik ontdekt..

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Gaat niet gebeuren. Echt niet. Je wordt ontdekt tussen je 20^e en je 38^e misschien, maar op het moment dat jij zegt ik ben 39 en ik ben nog steeds niet ontdekt, dan wordt het ingewikkeld.

Mandy: Helaas.

Floris: Dan wordt het gewoon echt ingewikkeld.

Mandy: Ja.

Floris: Dat is heel belangrijk. Het, hè, weet je, het heeft ook gewoon echt te maken met realiteitszin. Mensen verzanden in dit vak soms door dan, ja, daar gaan we weer, door alleen maar te dromen en, en, en, te praten over alles wat ze gaan doen. Maar ze doen het niet, ze doen het niet.

Mandy: Nee.

Floris: Ze krijgen het of niet voor mekaar, of ze krijgen de financiering niet rond, of ze weten eigenlijk niet hoe ze het eigenlijk moeten doen, of ze hebben niet de juiste contacten.

Mandy: Of ze zijn te bang om het te doen.

Floris: Ja, mensen zeggen wel eens, ze zeggen ja maar jij bent zo goed in netwerken. Ik zeg nee, ik versta mijn vak. Dus ik weet hoe ik dat voor mekaar moet krijgen. Dat heet doelgerichtheid.

Mandy: Doen.

Floris: DOEN! Argh. Maar ze snappen dat soms, echt, ze snappen dat heel vaak echt niet.

* Floris's interview was the first interview for this thesis and had a slightly different set-up, with two Salomon's Choice moments. This was changed because there is not enough scientific evidence to build the usefulness upon.

Appendix B – General Interview Questions

Start

Some pleasantries will be exchanged and the interviewee will be instructed on the interview (starting with some background info, than situational sketches, open questions, and ending with the Salomon's choices). I will mention as little as possible about the course and subject of the thesis, careful not to influence the answers of the interviewee. If the interviewee has an interest in the thesis, elaboration is possible after the interview has taken place. The interview is semi-structured and thus unscripted.

Open Questions 1 – Personal Information

*I will start with some quick questions about the background and situation of the interviewee – this will differ per interview, but will at least consist of information on the **education, experience, and motivation** of the interviewee, unless the interviewee has a clear website with this sort of information.*

*Specific on the case: **job function, contract form, length and depth of the involvement** in War Horse/Little Mermaid/Dog's Heart.*

Open Questions 2 – Three Decisive Moments

As I've e-mailed you, I would like to ask you about three moments in the course of the production process where a clear decision was made that you were directly or indirectly involved in. The first period is the preparation period, the period before the rehearsals started. Can you think of a decision in this period? Could you please sketch the situation for me?

If applicable to the situation the following questions need to be answered – in almost all cases following up with the 'why-question':

- Who were involved/What are the functions of those involved?
- What (do you believe) were their interests in this specific decision?
- Was there a tension in the decision making process? What was it?
- What was the decisive factor of resolving the issue?
- What happened after the decision was made (on a personal level)?
- What were the consequences of the decision?
- Was the decision accepted by everyone or did it cause tensions?
- How do you feel about what has happened?
- What would have been the ideal solution for you, personally?
- Would you approach a similar situation differently next time? – How?

The second period is the rehearsal period, the third period is the run. The same questions as above apply for all three periods.

Open questions 3 – Disposition of the Interviewee

To be able to analyze the answers given above a bit more within a context, I will ask some additional questions to try and determine the disposition of the interviewee about the use of puppetry in the performing arts. This is done after the three situational sketches to avoid steering the situational sketches toward socially desirable situations based on the sort of questions I'm asking. Since the sketches are (hopefully) quite elaborate, this part needs to be swift.

Thank you for the situational sketches. Now I would like to ask you three questions about puppetry in the performing arts:

- How do you feel about the current use of puppetry in the performing arts in general?
- How do you feel about the use of puppetry in War Horse/Little Mermaid/Dog's Heart?
- Although puppetry is an ancient art form, it seems that it's up and coming again in a more mechanical or technological form. What are your thoughts on the future of puppetry in the performing arts?

Optional Objective Information

If applicable, I will ask the interviewee about some objective information on War Horse/Little Mermaid/Dog's Heart, such as visitor numbers, costs, revenues, etc.

Salomon's Choices (open for comments)

I will end the interview with the Salomon's choices also presented to Floris Visser. The Salomon's choices are a Skype-friendly version of card based games and could be defended as such for scientific use. However, I'm aware that there is a (rather large) possibility that nothing will come from it – than the Salomon's choices will be disregarded for analysis – but perhaps they will add some insights. I won't know for certain until I try...

I'm going to finalize this interview with some Salomon's choices. You will have to choose between two concepts, no matter how hard it might be. However, you can elaborate your choice, if you desire to do so.

11.	Money	Art	<i>Art vs. Commerce / Art for Art's Sake</i>
12.	Risk	Security	<i>Nobody Knows / Art for Art's Sake / Infinite Variety</i>
13.	Keep what's right	Progress at all expenses	<i>Nobody Knows / Art for Art's Sake / Infinite Variety</i>
14.	Specialize	Broaden	<i>Nobody Knows / Art for Art's Sake / Infinite Variety</i>
15.	Permanent team	Fresh input	<i>Motley Crew</i>
16.	Contract	Trust	<i>Contract theory (Motley Crew, Time Flies, Ars Longa, A-list/B-list)</i>
17.	A few long term projects	A lot of short term projects	<i>Time Flies</i>
18.	Positive audience	Positive critics	<i>Audience reach/reputation</i>
19.	Contemporary	For all eternity	<i>Ars Longa</i>
20.	Use budget on star	Use budget on many things	<i>A-list/B-list</i>

Finish

Before I start thanking you for your cooperation, I would like to know if there is anything you want to readdress, or that you want to address because you think I've missed it?

Finishing up with loads of thanks and the question if I may get back to them if my research requires it – to at least keep the option open.

Appendix C – Interview Adrian Kohler – 22-04-2013

Section titles

Start-up

Interview transcript

No recording of first question: 'As I've e-mailed you, I would like to ask you about two moments in the course of the production process where a clear decision was made that you were directly or indirectly involved in. The first period is the preparation period. Can you think of a decision in this period? Could you please sketch the situation for me?'

Situational Sketches

WH: It's a horse!

Adrian: We started with workshops to discover what the horses should look like. during the first workshop for War Horse we used things like torn newspaper and cardboard and they were almost like hats and we wore them and we ran around the theatre to see what the horse would look like in that big space at the Olivia theatre. And then at the next workshop, where we started exploring some text, Tom Morris, the director, wanted to try and make the horses out of found farm implements, if you like, you know, a rake and a spade and a hoe, and a, and all of that sort of thing. And I felt quite strongly that although a horse appearing in front of your eyes and held together by the actors would be a good, just a moment. Something is creaking here, I don't know what it is.

Mandy: No, but I can still hear you.

Adrian: Okay. But I felt it wouldn't have very much staging power, nor emotional range. And so I argued very strongly for a much more constructed figure where you know, which would leave a place for the ears and a place for the tail, the two very emotional indicators of the horse. Plus, you know, the, if you holding something together the whole play, the, the puppet does, it's very hard to sustain it as an image. So I think that was the viewpoint that I fought for. In order to achieve it I first of all build a cardboard model of the kind of horse I wanted to do. Then I made a prototype of that horse in full size and took it over to London. And I think at that prototype workshop there was a moment when everybody agreed this is the right way to go. But the original premise of the, of the held together puppet if you like is still very much there in the form of the foe.

Mandy: Okay.

Adrian: The young horse, none of the legs are attached to the body. The body itself is quite constructed and, you know, but it doesn't have all of the more sophisticated movement build in the tail and the ears. The ears are passively in relation to the movement of the head. And the tail is manipulated by hand, not by remote control. So, and when the horse grows up it's useful to have this, this method of held together puppet, because it basically it explodes and then the big horse comes into the picture and you realize that time has passed and the horse has grown up. It was a very important moment and a very important discovery and we found it in the prototype workshop. So that work was, that's the, that answers the first part of your question.

Mandy: Yeah, definitely. And was everyone in agreement of this change in plans?

Adrian: Yes. Yes and, and it was actually that moment that sort of folds the projects to the executive producer of the national theatre. Up until then they were supporting the development of the piece financially and, you know, with workshop space, but they hadn't yet said it was gonna actually be green lighted into a play. It was, but it was at that workshop and at that moment when we're experimenting with that growing up moment of the puppet that the executive producer tended one of the sessions saw that happened. And I think we all felt that the green light went on at that moment.

Mandy: And did you think that that was the perfect solution or was there a way that the green light could have been given maybe earlier?

Adrian: I think everybody was skeptical, you know. To do a play about horses in the first World War is a risk. And I know certainly the writer of the novel was very skeptical, Michael Morpurgo, when he saw my cardboard model, he thought, you know, this is a very long shot that we all expecting to achieve here. And I think he, he was taken by surprise. I think everybody was taken by surprise, including ourselves. Because we said yes to the job, because it was an ideal job for a puppeteer, a puppet company to undertake, because the horse in our opinion needed to be a puppet, and the great thing was that is, was a central character and it would be on stage for the most of two hours. And it would be our job to make that work. So yeah, I think, I think when we unwrapped the prototype horse, the story behind the prototype horse is that we were building it and we fully intended to test it out in Cape Town, outside out studio in the street, before we sent it away, but it was only finished after midnight and the freighting was leaving the next morning early. So we had to pack it into the box, completely untested. Take it to pieces, pack it in the box, send it to London, then Basil and myself went to London and we were fully expecting to be able to take it out of the box on our own and to test it there, but when we arrived there was a workshop of 40 people

WH: Green light on prototype

waiting as we unscrewed the box.

Mandy: Oops.

Adrian: And so we knew that it just had to work. The main challenge was of course can it be ridden by an actor. Would it, that was really what I was desperate to test before anybody else was watching. We weren't given that opportunity. We had to test with 40 people watching and it was strong enough and it didn't overbalance.

Mandy: Luckily enough.

Adrian: Yeah. I was at that stage trying to economize, because I knew that, from the national theater's point of view, if every horse had to have three manipulators, it was gonna be costly.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: In terms of costs. So I tried, the first prototype I designed to be worked by two people.

Mandy: Okay.

Adrian: The person in the front, in the hart position would be working the front legs and the head was supported on a system of bungee-elastic, so it had some movement as it walked, but you weren't manipulating the head.

Mandy: Okay.

Adrian: As soon as the horse stopped you stopped working the front legs, you could take over the head movement and do that from the inside, had kind of a steering modified system inside the neck of the horse. But we rapidly found that we needed the horse to be as eloquent when it, while it was walking as it was when it was standing still.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: And so we needed to add a third person in. but I think because the horse was proving to be quite successful as a creature, that the cost of three people rather than two was ignored.

Mandy: And did you have a budget while making the prototype? Like that the national theatre said you have this kind of amount for the entire production or did you have no kind of budget at all and did you try it on your own accord to try and make it as economically feasible as possible?

Adrian: I don't know exactly about the budget situation, I do know that we were extremely fortunate. If the following hadn't happened, we would have been in enormous trouble. We we're the third in a series of plays developed by the national theatre for a huge audience. Taking novels aimed at younger people and producing them full scale with all the bells and whistles that the national theatre can achieve in order to bring a younger audience into the national theatre. Particular into the great, big, 1000 seat auditorium, the Olivia Theatre. Because the demographic had shifted to a population, an audience population of 50+, mainly white, mainly women. And, you know, and that tends to be the, women take their husbands to the theatre and hope that they'll be converted. And they mainly the strongest support group for an audience. And they're, would be coming consistently older, so the national theater tried to develop a new audience with these plays. And the first one was his dark materials. Which they did for two seasons. Which was sort of two parts, like a serial piece. The second play, and it was very successful, we managed to see the second half. And then the second project was called Coram Boy, about a hospital for orphaned children in the time of Handl, in London. Cause Handl and I think, Hogarth, the artist was two of the famous patrons of this hospital providing. Handl wrote the messiah, or the royalties of the messiah, so it was this hospital, and it needed financial support. It was a place where pregnant women were able to put their children without too much social scandal. And it was a very beautiful piece with a lot of Handl's music in it. And we were supposed to be the third one. But fortunately Boy did so well at the box office and so we had an extra year to develop the project. Now in terms of the budget, they didn't have a budget for an extra year. We knew that to develop the horses it was gonna, it was starting to look like we would need much more time. Because they were objects we never had to build before. We didn't really know what was required until we started making them. And so there was quite a lot to-ing and fro-ing to make the budget stretch the extra research and development that was needed here in cape town. And it took some convincing on the part of basil, our executive producer here, to convince the national that they needed to invest this money, but they did, and ultimately they're very glad that they did.

Mandy: I can understand that. I would like to go on to the second decision moment, because of time constraints. So during the run, did you have a moment where a clear decision was made. Doesn't matter again if it's big or small, but just please talk about it.

Adrian: Yeah. There, I think there were two things that happened. In the beginning we all felt that to depict the first WW in a naturalistic way would be impossible in the theatre. So we would elude to the war and the projection screen in the sky above the stage would give a lot of information. We developed a

WH: Extra time due to
Coram Boy

WH: Glossing up [Continues
further down]

system where we used a life shadow puppet performance, which was capted on a camera and projected in the same instance onto that screen. It did mean that the actors had to rush from their previous scene to where this camera was positioned on the side of the stage. It was visible in fact to the half of the audience, not the whole audience, but we wanted it to feel like a handmade movie. And in one instance one of the actors rushed so fast to get there, that he bumped his head on the camera stand and was knocked out.

Mandy: Oeh.

Adrian: And so, it felt like if half the audience only saw that this was actually manufactured life, will we gain anything by it being life? When the second season of War Horse came up the following year, when it was revived again, we made a decision to film the shadow puppets. And now the information, the visual information on that screen has become more and more sophisticated, as time passes. Because the video creators, 59, their name is 59, they added a lot more video tricks to the way that movie runs. And the look of it has moved further and further away from shadow puppets. We're not that happy about it and we liked the handmade feel of the shadow puppets, but as the play met a larger market the producers had felt they needed a sophistication of the look of that screen. Particularly when the show opened in New York, the production was given quite a major revamp. Cause they cut out the German and the French that is in the original production in London. Their initial feeling about other languages other than English was that, you know, seeing that this is a story about a horses experience in the war, and experiencing people from both sides, the horse doesn't understand any language.

Mandy: No.

Adrian: So the audience need to start to think like a horse.

Mandy: And do you think that works?

Adrian: Well we got used to the translated version in America, and then we went back to London and, just to keep track of the original play, and it was very happy to see it all again and to see it in its original form. Because the battle charges on the screen are still being filmed with shadow puppets and they feel, the German and the French in the play plus the handmade feel, have given the London production quite a unique stamp. I suppose the productions have gotten more glossy and more sophisticated. The show is still wonderful and still hangs together in the same way, but, you know, those are subtle changes I guess. The other thing that we did change was that the little girl Emilie in the original production was a puppet.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: Because we wanted to see whether we could challenge the fairly obvious divide of all animals and birds are puppets and all people are people. And Emilie in the original is a very frail child, she's sick and she doesn't survive the war, she doesn't survive the loss of her horse.

Mandy: No.

Adrian: And so we thought we could make a, the puppet would add another kind of quality to, you know, we subsequently we always had a live actor, we took actor and let a live actor playing the part. And you have to find an actor who is short enough or young enough to be convincing as a young child, but also be able to play night after night. In the New York production it was a very young looking 11 year old girl who was cast, and she did extremely well. But over the two years of the run there, she certainly grew very tall. They kept remaking her costume. She became 12 and 13 and then she was no longer that cute little young thing. The puppet had advantages in being able to be small, but it's enormous disadvantage was that the character needed to cross a large stage. And it was a full on *bunraku* kind of puppet with three manipulators trailing behind one person working the feet crawling across the stage. She couldn't move fast. And so staging wise it was a limitation. So we agreed to cast a human being in that role.

Mandy: And emotionally, was it an emotional limitation to, there is a large investment of the audience of course to feel something for a puppet and they did so for the horse and for the goose of course, but do they also feel the same way about a girl as a puppet? While all the other actors are men.

Adrian: It's a while and I can't really remember. I think we were sorry that we had to drop the puppet, because we as handspring are constantly trying to challenge what puppets can and can't do.

Mandy: Yeah, of course.

Adrian: But, you know, we had to concede that particularly when she's lost in the bombed out ruins, and is walking about on the stage and there are soldiers all around her, to cross the big space. I think the fragility of the puppet was something that we lost, because a puppet that is, has it's costume ripped, cause hen she appeared she was almost, the puppet was almost naked and you saw the mechanics of it and t was somehow a much more fragile and frightened human being than can be achieved with an actor. Because an actor is always playing that part, whereas a puppet sort of was build to be it. You know, I think that moment I missed from the transition, but, you know, we've had also very good actresses playing that role and I suppose we've got used to it by now.

Mandy: And to return to the shadow puppetry on the screen. I've heard that the American version will be the blueprint for other versions now worldwide, like the one now in Germany and maybe Holland.

Adrian: Yeah.

Mandy: So, isn't that, is that a deliberate choice, that the more slick version is the blueprint, or was there another reason?

Adrian: There, the new version is also better paced. All of the tricky areas of the productions have been ironed out in the American version and I think it's, part of it has been rewritten to accommodate stages that don't have revolves in and a lot of new exciting discoveries were made when we did it last year for the tour in the United States. We thought, everybody thought that you can't do the play without the revolve and we found that actually not relying on a machine that only goes one speed, really discovered that most horses, that our horses, because they have 8 legs instead of four, they can look like they're walking forward, but they can actually be moving sideward. And when they do the work of the revolve a much more theatrical has emerged because we didn't have one. And, you know, there is a moment when the gun is stuck in the mud in the second act and it starts to slip and swing around. Now we couldn't do that on the revolve. We rigged the gun so that it also could move sideways while looking like it's going forward and the scene is so much better now. So there, the time and the enormous thought that went into writing the show for the American version I think is paying off.

Mandy: Good. I would like to ask you some general questions about puppetry. The first one is how do you feel about the current use of puppetry in the performing arts, but in general. So not just in War Horse or in the cases I'm studying, but in all kinds of puppetry, all around.

Adrian: Well, I suppose, you know, we feel extremely positive about it. Because we've been fighting for it for so long.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: When we began in 1981 we began as a children's theatre company, because that was the obvious audience for a puppet company to play for. But we always wanted to work for an adult audience. We knew that a lot of companies particularly in eastern Europe were performing for adults, but in South Africa we had no precedent really for that. And none of us were trained as performers; we were trained in an art-school environment. And so you were learning our acting profession in the hood as it were, performing in schools. And in 1985 I had held a play which I found and wanted to do, and it was a political piece about two gay women joining the anti-apartheids struggle in South Africa. And when we were rehearsing it with two, we subsidized it with our most successful children's play in this theatre. And we were using the same cast from the children's play for the play that we were rehearsing. We were gonna put it on for the last week of our run at the cape town theatre. And during the rehearsals the two actresses who were playing the part became more and more nervous, about the effect of attempting a play for adults in South Africa would have on their careers. They thought it was gonna be an absolute disaster. And I think it was 1985 was the year in which South African government declared a state of emergency. It was, they were finding it more and more difficult to govern a country which was in, the revolution movement was growing in stature. And I think we just put on the play at exactly the right time, for audiences here. Obviously we were playing to people who were sympathetic to what the play was saying.

Mandy: Of course.

Adrian: But it drew an audience that we never, never expected. It opened doors for working with serious theatre directors who we'd admired from a distance. And when we moved to Johannesburg from cape town we were able to exploit that. You know, we began working with a string of directors we'd admired, and with William Kentridge, who was with us for ten years. And during that time, I mean the critics, the newspaper critics were hostile to anything with puppets in them. And when we moved to Johannesburg, the first adult play that we had done had made people sit up and take notice of us. And the Johannesburg critics were much more open to the idea of puppet theatre for adults. We worked a lot with a combination of puppets and humans in the early productions. It was only with William Kentridge that we mounted our first serious play after our own one, with the leading characters were puppets rather than humans. Before that the puppets provided sort of chorus and humans provided the centre of the piece. So, you know, I think the audience acceptance of puppets in the theater was gradual, but in Johannesburg particularly they got used to it very quickly. And then we began touring and, touring through Europe, Germany and France particularly, cause we had a German producer. And there puppets in the theater wasn't a new thing. You know, there, so we began to see what other people were doing. The hardest place was England really. We hardly ever got a gig in England. And we used to meet a lot of English puppeteers in Europe, you know, who said it was very hard to be a puppeteer for adults in England, because it was much more a stigma

attached to puppet theater there. But with productions like the lion king and avenue q the ground was paved in the commercial theater for an acceptance of puppets. And fortunately they've come before us. His dark materials at the national theater also had quite a lot of puppets. So, you know, there had been a steady bolt. And finally with War Horse we found ourselves in the middle of the most prestigious theatre in London.

Mandy: And I've heard a couple of times that War Horse is pretty much the best you can do with puppets, because it's the leading character, it's on stage the entire show, it's about the puppets instead of about the humans, is that really how you feel about that? Is War Horse really top of the bill in terms of puppetry or is there something else possible?

Adrian: You know, I would say it was a lucky chance in a lifetime that they, that the National, Tom Morrison, the director, found that book.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: And that we said yes. And then that all of the research and development paid off. You know, it's not often, I mean it's very rare for such, so many things that are right came together. I hope that the exposure that it has given puppets is gonna make some young theater audience really need to go one step further than War Horse. It may or may not be ourselves. I think, you know, the things that go right for it are that the horses are large animals and they walk on the same ground that the human actors do. And because they're operated by three stepping people, they can cover the space really well, like a dancer. So the fact that the puppet character is a horse means that it has mobility. Quite often with puppets, you have to, if they're smaller than life size, you need to give them like a small aria to play, you know, like a puppet play board, a stage or, something that suits it's construction and makes its performance visible to the audience better. But in this instance we didn't have to do that. We could use the freedom of the open space. And I think that's also part of the lucky thing.

Mandy: And how about the future of puppetry in the performing arts? Is this just the start or is this the top and is it going downhill from now on. Because of course it's an ancient art form, but it has been popular for sometimes and then less popular again, and then less popular again, and then it dropped again. So is this the height and then go downwards again, or is this just the start and are we gonna start with the popularity now?

What does puppetry add?

Adrian: I mean, you know the usefulness of puppets in this contexts is that we can live to an animal. We can show the live of an animal on the stage in a way that, I mean actors can mime a horse, but you see the actor being clever at miming a horse, that's part of the image you see. But with Joey in War Horse you see the horse. And it was an opportunity to really study what people know about the way horses communicate with each other and with people. And we were able to put that into the performance. And so it's really a horse as a horse and not a horse as a anthropomorphic animal standing in front of a human. And I think War Horse is alerted everyone to the fact that that is now a possibility. When they made the movie of the horse they needed 16 Joey's trained to do different things. And you still had a creature who was not performing, you know, he was not, you're not working with changes of thoughts.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: And on the stage, you know, you can do that with a puppet. And so I think it's opened people's minds to that possibility. So the theatre is usually only about people because actors are people. And the fact that in these days we are aware of the way we share the planet with animals and that the animals, the life of animals is taken so much for granted. Now is a time we can start telling those stories. That's the way to an audience. That's the stories, you know, for puppets to continue. But I think in recent years we begun to see how many young actors, young performers out there were interested in using puppets and exploring this territory. So I don't think War Horse is the top. I think, you know, we it took us over 30 years to get enough expertise perhaps to make a horse and we see a lot of young people come into the industry and War Horse just tells them that it can be done.

Mandy: Yeah. For handspring puppet company, what are your plans for the future?

Adrian: Well...

Mandy: Are you gonna go bigger again?

Adrian: We, immediately after we did War Horse, we wanted to do a piece which was a chamber sized piece. And so we worked with Neil Berkeley, who is an English playwright. And we made with him this piece of two men growing old together. To it was, there were two puppet characters and a dog, and young versions of themselves and old versions of themselves. So it was deliberately going in the opposite direction to War Horse.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: Deliberately going to see what level of nuance we could get out of human characters rather than

animals. Seeing that people had bought sort of strongly into the horses. We now just opened a production collaborating with the Bristol Old Vic's Midsummer Night's Dream. Where we explored quite a lot of avenues with puppets and fairy's. We continue to follow threads of ideas. You know, at the moment we've got several projects in the pipeline, but they're not crystallized enough yet for me to talk about them.

Mandy: No, of course.

Adrian: I do believe that bigger is not necessarily better. I think that as long as the vehicle, the production that you're working with enables you to push the boundaries of what puppets can do and be, you're keeping the art form alive with a potential audience.

Mandy: Definitely. One question, I don't know if you're allowed to answer is. The War Horse budget for the original production, do you know how much that approximately was?

Adrian: I'm afraid I don't know, we were not told that figure.

Mandy: No, that's fine, I mean I know that's sensitive information, but I have to ask, right.

Adrian: Yes, sure.

Mandy: I've got a couple of Salomon's Choices for you. And you will have to pick between two concepts, but you can elaborate your choice. So even if they're hard, you have to pick, but you can mention why. The first one is money or art.

Adrian: Oh, art for sure. If you only go for the money, you're gonna look for money making formula's that work,. And they don't work again.

Mandy: Risk or security?

Adrian: Risk. Security is the same thing as, as soon as you start repeating something that worked last time, you end up in trouble.

Mandy: Yeah, it won't work again.

Adrian: Yeah.

Mandy: Keep what's right or progress at all costs?

Adrian: Okay, that one is, that one is slightly more ambiguous, because I do belief in the traditions and the rules of puppetry. I think I very often consult old handbooks and books that people have written on puppetry construction and philosophy and stuff of puppetry. Because there is a lot of wisdom and thought that has been put into puppets over the centuries that is still very, very useful. But then we do say when we are training new puppeteers these are the rules, these are out principals and they're there to be broken if the right, if a productions needs it. So we, you know, we're not rigid about that, but I do belief that the tradition is very useful as a resource.

Mandy: To specialize or to broaden?

Adrian: To specialize or to broaden? Yeah. That's kind of a hard one, it think. I think because we've in handspring and most of our workers felt a little bit too serious and we struggled to make funny theatre. And a lot of puppeteers are really good at that, the form, the art form lends itself to the grotesque and the humorous and the satirical. We've never been able to do that. We tended to make plays that seem a little too serious. Although the midsummer night's dream that we've just done is one of the funniest plays we've ever been involved in, so at least we've broken the mold there a bit. Yeah. I think you have to do both.

Mandy: Both it is. A permanent team or fresh input?

Adrian: Again a sort of both. New blood coming in and offering the performers their new energy is always useful and challenging. But it takes a long time to develop really good puppeteer skills as an actor. And so to be able to work with the same performers again and again, they simply get better as, at working puppets than they were in the beginning. So it's both.

Mandy: Contract or trust?

Adrian: Contract or trust? Yeah. A contract is always a good thing, but in practice you find that just about everything you do is done on trust, case the contract always comes very late. By the time the contract, you've already made the show, so I suppose usually it's a verbal contract. You say this is how much you got and will you do it in this amount of time and then you say yes and then it's a contract. If it's a written contract with all the legal specifications as I said that usually comes to late anyway.

Mandy: A few long term projects or a lot of short term projects?

Adrian: A few long term projects. I do believe that puppet theater needs time to just state. And that's not, it's not, it's something of course that we've learned. But, you know, the John Wright who is the founder of a theatre in London. When we were just starting out he said how long does it take you to make, how long do you think it you need to make a show? I said 3 or 4 months. He said you have to have at least 6, you know, and that's even short. And now I think we prefer two years.

Mandy: That's long term. Positive audience or positive critics?

Salomon's Choices

Adrian: Well, the positive audience is of course what will keep you going. We can't survive without the box office. As I told earlier, the influence of positive critics on our own self-esteem was very huge. You know, we performed our play and in Johannesburg and one of the positive critics compared our work to the work of Athol Fugard, who is a well known South African playwright. They felt it was operating in the same terrain. And that was an enormous boost to our confidence. When we performed that play in a puppet festival in France. Because we were South African, we were the black sheep of the puppet community. It was only one performance, but when the critics found out what it was that we were performing, their attitude towards us changed radically and they wrote very positive about our piece. And we were performing at that festival in 1985, it was before the glasnost, they were, a lot of the very, very top eastern European companies at that festival, doing most amazing work. And we were compared to them in a very favorable way. And that of course encourages you to do more work.

Mandy: Contemporary or for all time?

Adrian: I think that you operate in a parent, in a parent theatre milieu. I think you do, contemporary is always more interesting. I think you do need a contemporary take, even on a classic play, you know. We just did the myth production of Parsifal. They do movies and they send them all over the world. We saw it here. It was done in a very simply modern dress style. So there was no clutter of roman empire costumes. And it gave the piece a fresh, I think it would have lost.

Mandy: The final one. Use the budget or a large part of the budget on a star or use the budget for many, many things.

Adrian: I think we never used the budget for stars, really. I suppose our ideal, we've always paid everybody involved in the production the same. From stage managers to the leading actor. That was our principal and our starting point. Sometimes when you really want the benefit of a star you have to pay more. And occasionally we have done that. As we got older, the, you know, actors in our generation know what, know their worth and they know what they have to ask for to maintain their lifestyle. They've given up their work in the theatre and that's what they need. And if you want them, you have to pay. But we still try as far as possible, everybody's got the same amount of hours, particularly when you're on tour. Being paid the same makes for much easier touring relations between the company and the crew.

Mandy: Yeah. Before I want to start thanking you I just want to ask you if there's anything that you want to readdress or something that you want to address because you think I've missed it?

Adrian: I think we talked about the value of tradition. I, you know, we've, we drew massive inspiration from the traditional puppetry of Marley in West Africa, and the *bunraku* puppeteers of Japan. Those were the two traditional starting points. And I get also the Tsjech stop frame puppetry animation. Those are the, so much thought and development of decades and centuries goes into those traditions, it's very useful to respect them and to draw from them. Because if you understand where the language of puppets, how it was caught in the performance. It's not a naturalistic art form. It's not a Stanislavski type way of acting and I think perhaps the reason why there is a resurgence now is that the naturalism of movies and the fantastical CGI that can be done is so sophisticated that it can leave you cold, because it lacks the heart of the handmade live performance.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: And I think that that's possibly one of the reasons why there is a resurgence. You know, what you see in front of you is what is there. And the metaphorical and the illusory notion of the puppet figure, that is not a real human being, but tries to live as one. And it's part of incurring magic. And I think that's what people are rediscovering now.

Mandy: Thank you...

Adrian: I didn't mean to use the word magic with you, sorry.

Mandy: No, it's good! It is magical. Thank you so much for having this interview with me. I think we did it pretty much in time. If there is anything else, may I get back to you for a question.

Adrian: Yeah, sure.

Mandy: Thank you so much. I'm gonna use your information, I'm gonna analyze it and transcribe it so that I can use it for my thesis. In August I'm supposed to be done with it, so if you want to, I can send you a copy.

Adrian: I'd love to get a copy, yeah! And what is your thesis on?

Mandy: It's, I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, but I didn't want to influence your answers.

Adrian: Okay.

Mandy: But it's on the tension between art and commerce. And then in the cultural industries. Performing arts are part of the cultural industries, so I'm gonna see if puppetry as a performing art is following the laws of the cultural industries as they are written down by Richard Caves, who's one of the most influential researchers on the cultural industries. And he's got 7 properties that describe the tension between art and

Finishing Up

commerce in those industries.

Adrian: Yeah.

Mandy: And I'm gonna try to find out if puppetry follows those properties or not. And if not, and if so, what can be learned from it.

Cost vs. durability

Adrian: Oh, very interesting. No, I'd love to read the thesis. You know, the weird thing is that people might think that it's cheaper to work with puppets.

Mandy: No, it's way more expensive.

Adrian: Yeah, it's way more... because you have to actually build the whole cast. And you have to do it with care and precision. And, but once you build it, then you can tour it. It remains an entity. And if you manage to hit the spot with a particular piece, then you can tour it for ages and make money from it.

Mandy: Yeah.

Adrian: We have a production of Woyzeck on the Highveld which, we made it in 1991 and it is still touring.

Mandy: Oh, that's brilliant! But the problem with puppetry is that once you've got the puppets, you still have to pay puppeteers. And if you look at like War Horse with three puppeteers per horse, that's quite an expensive joke.

Adrian: Yeah. But it's not as expensive as an opera singer.

Mandy: No, opera singers are obviously the most well paid in the performing arts, but then I'm also looking into Dog's Heart, so that's an opera using puppetry, so there we've got the double costs.

Adrian: Yeah, yeah, it's an. No, we saw that in London. It's an amazing production.

Mandy: It's brilliant. I really love puppetry, which is funny, because I'm scared of dolls. So that my quirk.

Adrian: Oh well, than I wish you all the best with your thesis.

Appendix D – Interview Derek Blok – 09-05-2013

Section titles

Start-up

Interview transcript

Mandy: Goed. Ik schrijf mijn scriptie over *puppetry* en dan over de close contact *puppetry*, dus ze wat hier bij Mermaid doen, maar bijvoorbeeld ook wat ze bij War Horse en Dog's Heart doen en dat zijn de cases die ik gebruik, maar het wordt veel vaker toegepast ineens.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Het is eigenlijk heel populair ineens

Derek: Ja, puppetry in het theater dan echt.

Mandy: Ja, echt als onderdeel van de *performing arts*, dus niet het marionettenspel, niet de handpoppen.

Derek: Nee.

Mandy: Alleen deze vorm van, gebruik van poppen in een voorstelling.

Derek: In een voorstelling ja.

Mandy: En als je natuurlijk naar War Horse kijkt dan zijn de poppen veel prominenter aanwezig, dan dat ze bijvoorbeeld in Mermaid zijn, maar ze zijn nog steeds een zeer essentieel onderdeel van de show en het is dezelfde vorm van poppenspel.

Derek: Maar, iemand als Ursula, want dat is natuurlijk een beetje half-half. Het is bijna een soort, het is een karakter, maar het is ook een pop.

Mandy: Het is een pop, ja. Ja, maar dat is...

Derek: Kijk zoals in War Horse zijn de poppen ook karakters, het is een echt paard, maar daar zit dan geen mens in die...

Mandy: Die het paard speelt.

Derek: Het paard spreekt, speelt, niet. Het paard is. En hier is Ursula ook nog een actrice die deels...

Mandy: Hier zit ook nog een mens in, ja.

Derek: Dus de pop.

Mandy: Ja, klopt. En je hebt in Dog's Heart, dat is zeg maar de tussenvorm eigenlijk tussen War Horse en Mermaid, want in Dog's Heart wordt de stem van de pop door 2 operazangers gedaan.

Derek: Oh ja.

Mandy: Dus daar, die spelen niet de hond, die hond is gewoon de hond, maar er is wel een muziklijn die gezongen wordt en dat wordt door 2 operazangers gedaan, dus die zit er eigenlijk een beetje tussenin en daarom geeft dat ook wel een hele mooie verdeling van de vormen van.

Derek: Maar in het kader van deze is Ursula hoort wel bij de puppetry.

Mandy: Ursula hoort absoluut bij de poppen.

Derek: Ja, dat is dan wel een van de belangrijkste natuurlijk in deze show.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Verder hebben we wat vissen en..

Mandy: Het is de meest prominent aanwezige, absoluut.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: En de meest, degene met de meeste mankracht.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Dus die telt er absoluut in mee. Nou wat ik voor dit interview wil is zo meteen beginnen met twee situaties, daarna nog wat gewone vragen over theater en poppen en het gebruik daarvan en tot slot heb ik een paar Salomonskeuzes, dat zijn van die hele leuke dat je moet kiezen.

Derek: [maakt zweepgeluid].

Mandy: Precies, maar je mag uitleg geven, dus dan valt het al, dat verzacht het altijd wel weer een beetje. Ah, het valt wel mee, zo erg zijn ze niet.

Derek: We merken het wel, kom maar op!

Situational Sketches

Mandy: In eerste instantie wil ik graag vragen of je een situatie wilt beschrijven tijdens de repetitieperiode van Mermaid, waarbij een beslissing werd genomen over een pop. Maakt niet uit of het een grote beslissing was, of het een kleine beslissing was, je hoeft hem ook niet zelf genomen te hebben. Als je maar over de situatie genoeg weet om de situatie te kunnen beschrijven en als ik er wat over vraag dat je dan ook gewoon een antwoord weet. Niet van horen zeggen.

LM: Ursula's skirt

Derek: Ja. Nou, het is natuurlijk zo'n, redelijk veel momenten geweest waarin de pop Ursula vooral bijgesteld hebben om vanwege technische redenen. En dat had voornamelijk met haar mobiliteit te maken. En ook in hoeverre vandaar dat het denk ik wel interessant is, in hoeverre dingen gezien mochten worden. Kijk het is natuurlijk gewoon een stalen karretje wat op wieltjes staat wat een beetje leuk

aangekleed is. En om die, en omdat zoveel mogelijk te verhullen zijn er allerlei doeken aangehangen en dingen, maar bleek dus in het repetitieproces dat daardoor de mobiliteit ernstig in gevaar komt. Dat ze af en toe vast komt te zitten, dat er van die stof tussen de wielen kwam, dat hele gedoe. Dus kreeg je op een gegeven moment bijvoorbeeld een hele discussie hoe hoog dat kleedje van de grond moest hangen. Nee, maar..

Mandy: Ja, nee, absoluut.

Derek: Nee, serieus. Want dan zou je wel of niet de wieltjes kunnen zien. Met de aanpalende discussie natuurlijk van ja in hoeverre verstoort dat weet je wel de, nou ja goed, toe bleek ze dus ook nog door een laagje rook te rijden en met een bepaalde belichting en zo en dat op een gegeven moment dus.. maar die discussie heeft absoluut plaatsgevonden en het rokje is dus, ja we noemden dat het rokje, is dus op een gegeven moment verhoogd, waardoor je, ja wel iets kunt zien als je echt heel goed kijkt en misschien op de eerst rij van onderen van het karretje van.. maar ja, ik vond dat zelf ook een beetje zinloze discussie, van je weet dat het niet echt is, weet je wel. Je ziet ook dat dat golfje van hout is, dus denk ik dan ook van waar maak je je dan druk om. Maar uiteindelijk is dus de rok ingekort en kon tante Ursula wat vrijer over het toneel bewegen daardoor.

Mandy: En wie waren er betrokken bij die discussie?

Derek: In dat proces waren dat altijd heel veel mensen. Dat is ten eerste natuurlijk Bob Crowley de ontwerper, de regisseur Glenn, Tom Schumacher, Disney die had overal iets over te zeggen.

Mandy: Uiteraard.

Derek: En die Bob had natuurlijk die assistent Ross en die anderen liepen daar altijd bij. En uiteindelijk dan met input wel van de acteurs die met het karretje moesten rijden en zo. Maar dat was zijdelings heel kort. De uiteindelijk beslissing.. John, de choreograaf.

Mandy: Die had het laatste woord?

Derek: Nou, nee, die had niet het laatste woord. Glenn en, tussen Glenn en m weet je wel. Als die het eens werden, dan.. maar John omdat hij natuurlijk de hele choreografie van de jongens deed en met de tentakels en zo was hij daar ook in betrokken. En dat waren wel de belangrijkste mensen uiteindelijk.

Mandy: En was er duidelijk te merken wie bijvoorbeeld voor het korter maken van de rok waren en wie ertegen waren? Hadden mensen bepaalde belangen daarin?

Derek: Nee, maar ik denk dat dat meer een kwestie van smaak was. Ook van inderdaad in hoeverre wil je de illusie zoveel mogelijk hebben dat zij als het ware bijna zweeft over het toneel. En in hoeverre is iemand heel realistisch en denkt van weet je, zoals ik daar dan een beetje insta, van kom op jongens. Maar dat is, kijk naar dat paar in War Horse, je ziet de persoon in het paard staan en het is de kracht van de acteurs dat je ze op een gegeven moment niet meer ziet.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Dat je naar een paard gaat zitten kijken. Dat is bij Ursula ook zo. Als dat goed gedaan wordt heb ik dat zelfs ook. Ik let ook alleen maar op Ursula en ik die tentakels. Ik weet dat er zes jongens staan, maar hun taak is om zichzelf ook weg te cijferen en een te worden met Ursula. Ook al, als je, tuurlijk als je erop gaat zitten kijken op die details, ja, je ziet ze staan, natuurlijk.

Mandy: Ze staan er tenslotte.

Derek: Maar dat is nou eenmaal theater. Dat, dus...

Mandy: En was er een spanning in, tussen mensen die hem wel of niet korter wilde hebben? Ik kan me voorstellen dat bijvoorbeeld die jongens vrij geïrriteerd raakten op een gegeven moment als die rok steeds vast kwam te zitten en als iemand anders dan steeds zegt nee we willen hem niet korter hebben, dan..

Derek: Ja, nee, maar dan moest er toch eerst weer geprobeerd worden of het op een andere manier niet lukte en zo. Dus dat, daar ging soms best wel een halve dag overheen, over dat soort.. en dan, en dan, ja, Bob Crowley en weet je wel de ontwerper had natuurlijk ook zijn dingen van nou daar wil ik niet aankomen want ik heb het zo en zo ontworpen, weet je wel. Die vond het dan lelijk als je een stuk ijzer en een wieltje zag of zo. Nou ja, ook wel weer begrijpelijk.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Dat is op een gegeven moment ook met die boot, weet je wel. Dan moest er een border omheen voor bepaalde scènes, anders dan zag je ook teveel dat mechaniekje en die wieltjes waar dat op stond en zo. Dus daar, maar uiteindelijk, ja, zijn het toch die mensen die dan bepalen of iets wel of niet doorgaat. Kijk en als natuurlijk echt blijkt van ja er is niet mee te werken anders, ja, dan moet je wel wat verzinnen. En dat was dan ook meestal wel de..

Mandy: Ja, dus het werd vooral uit noodzaak gedreven de beslissingen.

Derek: Nou ja, er is wel zoveel mogelijk bij deze show geprobeerd om het te verhullen, waar mogelijk. In tegenstelling tot ik noem maar weer even War Horse of andere shows die ik gezien heb bij de National.

Waar je, waar gewoon duidelijk voor een soort meer open concept is, van jongens, we weten allemaal dat het nep is..

Mandy: Ja, dat is veel transparanter.

Derek: En, want als je bij een show als dit voor dat realisme, ja je ziet ook de touwtjes waar ze aan hangen.. ja maar...

Mandy: Ja, nee, absoluut.

Derek: En voor kinderen blijft het toch, weet je wel, als die en een man als krab verkleed uit een keukenkastje zien kruipen, gaan ze toch gaan gillen naar hem pas op achter je omdat er iemand met een nep plastic hakmes.. dus..

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Maar wij moeten dat dan zo nodig heel realistisch..

Mandy: Hadden we toch dat keukenkastje iets groter moeten maken, ben ik bang..

Derek: Hij's te groot... Nee, maar, dus, maar dat komt uiteraard allemaal wel weer goed. Maar dat was wel een voorbeeld, denk ik.

Mandy: Nou ja, er heeft vrij veel tijd in zo'n beslissing gezeten. Is dat voor jou de beste oplossing? Of zeg je nee, dat zou beter kunnen.

Derek: Uhhhhmmm, nou, ik, als ik nu, maar dat is ook, ik zat laatst ook weer naar Ursula te kijken dat ik echt dacht ik zou dat en dat toch nog anders gedaan hebben. Ik vind, ik vind over het algemeen, vind ik het lijf van Ursula namelijk vrij stijf. En dan voor een ander materiaal misschien, een soort hard plastic wat wel meebeweegt, i.p.v. een soort stalen constructie. Misschien wel waar je op staat maar zodat dat, zodat er toch meer.. en Marjolijn had op een gegeven moment wel, die ging zo bewegen dat dat, een beetje dat effect weghaalde, dus die, maar dan zie je dus dat dat ook nog een deel van de acteur, maar je moet het wel, je moet er wel toe in staat zijn om.. en omdat we met zeewezens te maken hebben en een inktvis is van nature een soort jelly-achtig wezen.

Mandy: Ja, heel vloeibaar.

Derek: Ja, is dat werkt soms, vin ik dat stijve, dat metalen van dat karretje werkt soms een beetje tegen. Die armen hebben wel de beweeglijkheid die je wilt en Ursula d'r bovenlijf kan het ook. Alleen dat karretje is een beetje de stijve factor.

Mandy: Ja, ze zit niet echt lekker los in d'r heupen.

Derek: Nee. Nee, maar dat zou je volgens mij, dar had je met een andere constructie in de basis ook nog wel iets aan kunnen doen. Want volgens mij is er best iets te bedenken waar je de basis wel stevig houdt, waar ze op moet staan, maar dat de rest...

Mandy: Ja, ook als ze, bijvoorbeeld met segmenten zouden werken.

Derek: Of met rubbers dingen weet je wel, die wat mee kunnen bewegen, die de een of de andere kant op kunnen veren, zodat je daar, dat zou ik in een, in een, weet je wel, The Little Mermaid 2.0 zou ik dat, zou ik daar nog wel aan willen knutselen.

Mandy: Weet jij of daar in Japan nog wat aan veranderd is?

Derek: Er zijn wel dingen veranderd in Japan, maar dat zijn meer uiterlijkheden. Ze hebben meer vissen in Japan. Op een gegeven moment zwemt er ook een haai ergens langs.

Mandy: Ja, ik hoorde het, ja.

Derek: Dat is wel heel mooi. Ze hebben sowieso meer vissen en ook meer mensen op het toneel in *Under the Sea*.

Mandy: Ook fijn.

Derek: Maar

Mandy: Maar aan het concept van Ursula?

Derek: Maar aan het wezenlijke concept van Ursula, nee. Ze is hetzelfde gebleven en eigenlijk alle grote, er zijn geen, ja, de sidderalen hebben een iets ander kostuum, maar dat is meer in de kleur en in de, volgens mij is ook het, het lichteffect is, eigenlijk overal nu eruit.

Mandy: Doen ze daar ook niet meer.

Derek: Wat ik nog steeds onbegrijpelijk en jammer vind. Maar ja, dat is dus ook, over discussies gesproken. Ja, het zijn niet echt puppets natuurlijk, want het is in een kostuum, maar...

Mandy: Ja, die sidderalen zijn een beetje dubieus of dat nou wel of niet poppen zijn, maar daar is inderdaad veel discussie over geweest.

Derek: Een kostuum met lichtjes, maar dat ja, daar hebben we eigenlijk, ach en tot in, ver in de run aan toe. Tot het op een gegeven moment iedereen het ineens beu was.

Mandy: Dat is gewoon doodgebloed die discussie.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Dat was echt helemaal...

Derek: En er was echt niks, wat we ook deden, het ging toch iedere keer fout. Dus ik had ook zoiets van ja. Ze hebben het ook echt nooit echt goed gedaan.

Mandy: Nee.

Derek: Niet een show.

Mandy: Nee.

Derek: Nee.

Mandy: Want dan deed de één het wel, maar dan deed de ander het niet. Of dan deed de linkerhand het wel, maar dan deed de rechterhad het niet.

Derek: Nee, dat was echt een doffe ellende.

Mandy: Was niet heel succesvol.

Derek: Nee.

Mandy: Goed, in de run, is er daar nog een situatie geweest waarbij er een beslissing is genomen over een pop? Wederom mag het klein zijn, mag het groot zijn, maar weer een situatie die je zou kunnen beschrijven.

Derek: Nee, want het was bij ons, even zien hoor. We hebben, het punt was natuurlijk dat wij in een opstart zaten waarin het er meer om ging om het mogelijk te maken om de show te runnen en alles wat er, wat er wel degelijk door hen besproken werd of dit zouden kunnen doen, of dit zou eigenlijk anders kunnen of zo, werd al, werd toen al gezegd, 'ja, dat doen we dan in Moskou wel'. Letterlijk.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Want hier was er dan geen geld meer voor.

Mandy: En geen tijd meer voor.

Derek: En vonden we niet belangrijk genoeg. En tussen Groningen en Rotterdam, waar toen echt nog wel, zijn eigenlijk geen grote veranderingen op dat gebied meer geweest. We hadden natuurlijk enorme problemen met die KeyComp waar iedereen dag en nacht mee bezig was.

Mandy: Hm, hm.

Derek: Maar het concept qua decor en het hele vliegwerk en het hele, dat stond eigenlijk wel aardig op de rails. En daar waren we ook in de try-outs en zo wel goed uitgekomen. Dat mensen d'r beter mee hebben leren werken, maar er is niets, het was ook niet nodig om er iets basics nog aan te veranderen, en alles was er, wat ik me kan herinneren.

Mandy: Ik kan me bijvoorbeeld wel..

Derek: De roggen, kwallen, vissen, die overzwommen.

Mandy: Ja, ik kan me wel herinneren dat er over Ursula's onderhoud af en toe discussies zijn geweest. Over die pokken die over het toneel heen vlogen.

Derek: Ja, maar dat was meer een kwestie van dat alles wat gemaakt is zag er fantastisch uit, het was alleen niet bestand tegen het dag in dag uit d'r mee werken in een grote show als deze. Het was veel te fragiel en je zou voor de aardigheid zou je eens naar Ursula moeten kijken nu, hoe ze erbij ligt.

Mandy: Is het zo erg?

Derek: Al die dingen, je ziet alleen maar restjes afgebrokkelde. Het wordt ook gewoon niet meer, niet of nauwelijks meer hersteld nu.

Mandy: Maar het is nog twee maanden, dan moet je toch...

Derek: I know, I know, I know, I know. Maar goed, dat word eens in de zoveel tijd gedaan, maar dat is zo bewerkelijk, dat ik dan ook weer denk van ja, volgens mij moet het ook mogelijk zijn om dat soort dingen van iets duurzamer materiaal te maken. Maar dat is van begin af aan inderdaad, en ook armen hebben we moeten vervangen. Die waren afgebroken bij de dingen. Toen zijn ze ook van steviger materiaal gemaakt. Bleek dat de armen van Ursula wat, het zijn een soort schuimrubberen ringen die vast gemaakt zijn op een soort leren band. Tenminste, geen leer, dat was een soort kunstleer of zo.

Mandy: Ja, dat plastic-achtige.

Derek: Ja, maar dat was veel te, bij het minste of geringste kon dat scheuren en dat is dus inderdaad een keer gebeurd. En hebben ze dus vervangen met armen die later met steviger materiaal in de basis aan de binnenkant, dus daar is wel degelijk nog een wijziging. En dat was niet hoe het eruitziet, het was dezelfde grootte, het was alleen van materiaal dat wel bestand was tegen toch iedere dag redelijk wilde dingen doen met die armen.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Dus, en dat is wel nog, in, dat is tijdens de tournee gebeurd. En ik weet dat wel in Eindhoven of Breda begonnen de eerste armen al te scheuren. En zijn ze dus ook vervangen toen.

Mandy: Ja, en dat is in overleg gegaan met Toby neem ik aan, of met Bob.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Disney misschien?

Derek: Want die feedback over de, want dat was voor hen natuurlijk ook, dat ging bijna dagelijks, wekelijks terug, en toen is, het probleem is voorgelegd, weet je wel, waarom die scheuren dan, dat het te maken had met de binnenkant van het materiaal. Heeft Toby toen zelf volgens mij daar het andere materiaal voor gekozen en zijn die dus op alle latere armen ook toegepast.

Mandy: Maar dat zal best wel weer een duur grapje geweest zijn.

Derek: Ja, nou is natuurlijk altijd in zo'n productie voor dit, ze hadden op zich wel een vervangingsbudget ingecalculeerd. Je kan nooit een jaar met dit soort dingen.

Mandy: Nee, was 't maar waar.

Derek: Maar dat was natuurlijk wel erg snel, maar dat is, dat valt dan nog onder de beginners, hoe noem je dat, kinderziektes.

Mandy: Ja, dat krijg je als je de blauwprint voor de rest van de wereld bent, dan ben jij degene die met alle problemen zit.

Derek: De kinderziektes hebben wij er een beetje uitgewerkt.

Mandy: En was dat wel de beste oplossing? Of hadden ze dat eigenlijk gewoon aan kunnen zien komen en hadden ze dat veel eerder moeten doen?

Derek: Ik denk dat ze met heel veel van die dingen, maar dat zijn heel veel van die mensen gingen voor de look, voor de schoonheid, zeg maar. Maar je moet natuurlijk wel kijken van d'r moet iedere dag soms twee keer op een dag zo'n show mee gespeeld worden. Das ook met die vissen van Ger die die in de chef gebruikt, die vielen ook na twee weken uit mekaar van ellende. Dat de graten niet meer.. maar ja, hij moet ze eruit trekken, dus dat moet heel stevig zijn. En ook daar hebben we een nieuwe versie en zelfs dat, het zijn gewoon hele bewerkelijke dingen die ..

Mandy: Ja, zeker als Ger er lekker op los gaat natuurlijk, dat moet wel wat kunnen hebben.

Derek: Ja, die hele, die hele choreografie is erop gemaakt dat hij die dingen staat de slaan en ze uit mekaar trekt, dus ja, het moet tegen een stootje kunnen. En dat is een beetje de...

Mandy: Ja, maar dat hadden ze toch van tevoren kunnen weten.

Derek: Ja, maar dat zijn geen mensen, het zijn mensen die heel erg in die artsy kunst sfeer zitten, die daar heel goed in zijn, die volgens mij niet eerder iets ontworpen hadden voor een show die echt 8-9 keer per week speelt. Ja, ik weet het ook niet. Ik had ook zoiets van dat kan je toch van te voren bedenken dat het tegen een stootje moet kunnen, maar dat was met heel veel dingen in deze show. Ook qua decor, het ziet er allemaal prachtig uit, maar niet echt gemaakt voor een, voor om in een truck gestopt te worden en... maar ja dat zijn natuurlijk, ik bedoel, die werken of voor een theater in Londen of voor The National in The West End, ja, waar ze dan 4-5 keer per week spelen. Allemaal heel *delicate* en weet ik veel, ja, het is gewoon...

Mandy: Ja, het wordt niet in Pieter Smit vrachtwagens geperst.

Derek: Ik heb nog een filmpje hoe ze die koralen en dingen in de vrachtauto staan te persen. Nou dan mag, dan ben ik echt heel verbaasd dat het er überhaupt nog bij staat. Dat, ja.

Mandy: Maar is dat dan ook iets wat jij in het vervolg misschien anders zou gaan doen? Dat als je in een andere productie in een opstart zit en ze willen iets doen, dat je misschien wat harder roept van ja maar we moeten nog 9 shows ermee doen?

Derek: Nee, dat, in dat, in die discussies in een opstart heb ik wel geleerd je kan beter af en toe gewoon, het, zij hebben daar geen tijd voor. Het is een echt Bob Crowley 'ik heb zoveel Tony's gewonnen', en Tom Schumacher 'ik leid een biljoenenimperium', dingen, als dat bezig is, ja. Dan denk ik ook van nou ja, je doet maar lekker. Het is jullie geld, niet het mijne. Want heel vaak luisteren ze, weet je wel.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Dus dat, nee. Maar, kijk ik ben meer, natuurlijk, mijn werk ligt meer op het gebied van je moet die show iedere dag draaiende houden. Als ik zie in het, hoe ze de mensen indelen, wie ze welke understudies geven. Iemand die drie dezelfde heeft als zijn buurman, weet je wel, waardoor je altijd mensen kwijt gaat zijn op een bepaalde plek, ja dat soort dingen, daar grijp ik wel in. Maar hoe een prop of een kostuum eruit ziet, alleen als ik zie dat acteurs zelfs in de repetities al niet kunnen doen wat er van ze gevraagd wordt. Ja, dan...

Mandy: Ja, zoals bij die rok.

Derek: Bij die rok, ja, zijn die jongens op een gegeven moment ook naar mij toe gekomen, weet je wel. En toen heb ik ook gezegd daar moet je op een gegeven moment toch echt naar gaan kijken, want het is iedere keer.. en zij zijn dan ook vaak in zo'n repetitie van 'why did we stop?' weet je wel

Mandy: Omdat 'ie vast zit.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Hij wil niet verder.

Derek: Nee, en dan moet je dat soms op een slimme manier, op *safety issue*, stel als die wielen en dan kukelt Marjolijn er misschien wel uit, weet je wel.

Mandy: Als het werkt, eerlijk is eerlijk.

Derek: Maar ja, kijk, met dat soort slijtage-dingen, dat komt toch pas later aan het licht, zoals die armen van Ursula.

Mandy: Ja, en er is tijdens een opstart eigenlijk geen tijd voor om daar over te gaan zitten nadenken.

Derek: Ja, en ook niet, kijk, je krijgt dit in handen, dit materiaal, nou het ziet er goed uit, het werkt, maar je gaat niet kijken oh waar is het dan van gemaakt, zou dat wel tegen een stootje kunnen.

Mandy: Nee, en daar is de opstart gewoon te druk voor.

Derek: Ik ga er gewoon vanuit dat daar rekening mee gehouden wordt.

Mandy: Ja, daarom. Even wat vragen gewoon over het algemeen voor het gebruik van poppen in de podiumkunsten. Want je zei net zelf al dat je een hoop dingen van het National Theatre had gezien en War Horse natuurlijk.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Wat vind je van het huidige gebruik?

Derek: Ik vind dat er hele mooie dingen gedaan worden, maar je moet het wel kunnen. Ik heb op een gegeven moment, om maar wat te noemen, hier in Nederland De Fabeltjeskrant gezien, nou dat vond ik echt verschrikkelijk. Zo slecht. Want ik zat, ik zat nooit echt naar die poppen te kijken, ik zat naar een acteur te kijken die naast een pop stond. Of met dat ding in zijn handen of zo. Ook omdat die poppen niet goed gemaakt waren, het hele concept deugde niet. Ja, en ik heb, als je eh ziet waar je gewoon mensen die daar zo knap mee omgaan dat je, dat je echt op een gegeven moment naar een paard zit te kijken en zelf als er iets met dat paard gebeurt, ja dat moet je wel kunnen. Dat vergt heel veel van de mensen die die poppen bedienen en die die spelers zijn. His Dark Materials, daar werd ook heel veel met poppen gewerkt. Hele mooi show ook, of show, toneelstuk. Maar dat is wel een kunst apart, om jezelf als acteur om die pop op de voorgrond te zetten als het niet een pop is waar je meespeelt, maar als jij de pop bent, zeg maar. En dat is niet eens jezelf wegcijferen, want dat kan niet en dat is het ook niet, maar dat de focus terecht komt waar die terecht moet komen en dan ging het heel mooi. Maar ja, wat ik zeg. En dat zit al in de basis van hoe wordt het gemaakt, wie heeft daarover nagedacht en dat moet je ook kunnen, die keuzes maken. Wat ik zeg, ja, in Nederland de Fabeltjeskrant dat ik echt zoiets had van *ieuw*. Nee maar echt, van klopt niet.

Mandy: Nee, ik heb hem niet gezien, De Fabeltjeskrant, maar

Derek: Heel slecht.

Mandy: En het gebruik van poppen in Mermaid?

Derek: Ja, ik vind, nou wat ik zeg, ik zou Ursula, maar ik vond Ursula echt vanaf het allereerste moment, ik heb net vanochtend toevallig omdat iemand er iets naar gelinkt had zat ik een stukje van Sherie Rene Scott op Broadway te kijken die dus geen pop heeft, maar een soort grote jurk aan.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: En dit is toch veel en veel beter en interessanter en dreigender. Dus ik ben met Ursula ben ik heel blij. Ik vind die vissen heel leuk, wat hebben we nog meer voor, ja er had nog wel meer in gemogen. De kwallen zijn prachtig, vind ik echt bloedmooi. Dat soort werk had er wel van mij nog meer in gekund. Want ik vind dat maakt het alleen maar interessanter en leuker.

Mandy: En het voegt echt wat toe aan de voorstelling.

Derek: Absoluut, het vult die hele onderwaterwereld en ja, ik vind, wel, ja, hoe ga je, kijk in *Under the Sea* hebben mensen op een gegeven moment wel van die hanenkammen en vissenpakjes en dan die hele combinatie daar van dat geheel werkt ook heel goed. Maar in het begin ook als je die kwallen over ziet zwemmen, dat zijn toch magisch beelden. En zeker met onderwaterwezens, kwallen, vissen, weet je wel, als je wel eens gaat duiken en ziet wat er allemaal qua kleur, qua vorm aan mogelijkheid is, vind ik echt van. Ik was echt jaloers toen ik die haai zag die ze in Japan kregen.

Mandy: Wij willen ook een haai!

Derek: Ik wil ook een haai! Gelijk naar Toby, '*I want a, I also want a shark*'. Maar helaas...

Mandy: Niet eerlijk dat ze in Japan wel een haai hebben.

Derek: Nee, maar ik houd een beetje mijn hart vast wat er de voorlaatste show allemaal over het toneel gaat drijven.

Mandy: Ik kan niet wachten, lijkt me heel leuk. Ah dat mag, de voorlaatste mogen ze onzin uithalen.

Derek: Just a little bit apprehensive. No I didn't see it Glenn, sorry, no.

Mandy: Nee, totaal niet opgevallen. Is de eennalaatste voorstelling, ik was heel druk met, uhm, niet kijken.

**Dispositional
Questions**

Derek: Met niet aanwezig zijn.

Mandy: En heb je een idee over wat de toekomst van poppen in het theater is?

Derek: Nou, ik denk dat het. Het is er natuurlijk al heel lang geweest, misschien wel altijd al wel. En ik denk ook zeker dat het door succes van voorstellingen als War Horse ook dit weer, kindervoorstellingen waar regelmatig met poppen gewerkt wordt, de sprookjesboom, weet ik veel, de os en de ezel, dat, denk ik dat dat ook echt wel gaat blijven. Het is natuurlijk ook een interessante manier om wezens anders dan mensen op een leuke manier of een andere manier soms tot leven te brengen. En dat hoeft niet altijd een heel realistische pop te zijn, maar de suggestie van. En ik denk dat dat ook de kracht is van theater, dat je suggereert, dat je niet alles, je beeld geen realiteit uit, je zet mensen fantasieën en gedachten aan het werk en daar, daaruit moeten dingen ontstaan. Dus ik denk dat het ook wel moet blijven. Ik zou het zonde vinden als ik het niet...

Mandy: Ik heb bijvoorbeeld met Adrian Kohler van Handspring Puppet Company gesproken en wat hij wel zegt is natuurlijk met poppen vraag je veel van je publiek. Ze moeten hard werken om het te gaan geloven, zeg maar. En wat hij bijvoorbeeld zei was dat je dus mensen moet leren te werken en ze niet meer alles moet voorschotelen.

Derek: Dat vind ik zo fijn hier bij The Little Mermaid, je ziet het, kinderen pikken het, die hoeft je dat niet te leren. Die geloven in wat ze, in wat jij vertelt dat ze niet moeten zien, maar wat, dit is de wereld, wij creëren het voor je, ga erin mee. En die doen dat gewoon. Wij volwassenen, onze wereld wordt veel te hyperrealistisch, met alles wat je op internet kan zien, ieder detail, weet je wel, dat moet allemaal geloofwaardig. En ik zie die trend ook op scholen en zo, als ze voorstellingen gaan maken, ze willen alles realistisch. De details moeten kloppen. Joop van den Ende heeft dat ook jaren gedaan, nee dat is niet goed. Echt alles moest realistisch. Nee, je zet een boompje neer en je zegt dat je in het bos bent, weet je wel. De rest moet het publiek erbij, en dat moet je nooit van een publiek wegnemen, want het is onzin dat je het ze moet leren. Wij hebben ze veel te veel geleerd dat, weet je wel, alles moet eruit zien als in het echt. Nee, onzin, theater zeker niet, daar moet de fantasie juist de macht houden. Altijd gehad, altijd zo blijven.

Mandy: Ja, een film mag je in een echt bos staan en op het toneel sta je tussen een paar stengels

Derek: Ik heb vijf uur lang naar Angels in America zitten kijken en het is een leeg toneel, er staat 1 kastje op een gegeven moment op, verder helemaal niks. Je zit vijf uur lang ademloos te kijken omdat de mensen je meenemen een wereld in en je ziet alles gewoon voor je. Dat is de kracht van theater, weet je wel. En dat kan je ook met een pop. En op een gegeven moment kan je ook gaan.. en die, dus, ja, ik vind het, ik vind het jammer dat dat weer, dat we die kant opgaan. Ik denk dat je in het theater juist veel meer, ja, de verbeelding moet blijven aanspreken van mensen. Want dat is iets dat we kwijt aan het raken zijn.

Mandy: Ja, laat ze maar werken.

Derek: Maar dat is helemaal geen werken.

Mandy: Voor volwassenen is dat op dit moment wel hard werken.

Derek: Ze moeten dingen loslaten die ze voor vanzelfsprekend aannemen of met hun, weet je wel, ieder reality programma wat ze alleen nog maar zitten te kijken. Nee, dat is wat ons onderscheid van de beesten, wij hebben wel fantasie, wij kunnen verbanden leggen die anderen niet, weet je wel. Wij kunnen juist. Dus dat, het grauwe realisme ontstijgen. Dat zijn alle dingen die je juist in het theater moet hebben. Dus ik ben helemaal geen voorstander van realisme.

Mandy: Ik ben van de week naar een Zauberflöte van Peter Brooks geweest. En het enige dat ze daar als decor hadden waren bamboestengels op zo'n stokje dat ze blijven staan. En dan een stuk of 40 van die bamboestengels en die zetten ze dan gewoon allemaal als decor neer. En de ene keer zetten ze ze allemaal op een hoop en dan was het een bos en de andere keer hield iemand ze boven iemands hoofd en dan zat ie dus in een grot. Het was briljant, het was echt briljant.

Derek: Ah, ja. de Lion King heeft op zich ook heel veel van die mooie dingen. Die savanne, die grasdingen op de hoofden van die mannen, weet je wel, die waren prachtig.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Er zaten ook qua poppen hele mooie dingen in. Ja, ik, ik houd er ook van. Vaak hoe meer je weglaat, hoe mooier het wordt. Je gaat echt op de dingen letten waar het om gaat. En hoe meer je probeert het precies aan te kleden met ieder deurtje en ieder, ja *boring*.

Mandy: Ja, het hangt ook van de show af. Ik denk dat bijvoorbeeld een Wiz moest het hebben van het spektakel.

Derek: Ja maar spektakel, ook daar was het niet hyperrealistisch.

Mandy: Nee.

Derek: Ik bedoel, weet je wel. Wij hebben ook spektakel, kijk naar dit nummer [*Under the Sea*], maar het is, het is geen realistisch spektakel. Er wordt toch veel, heel veel aan de verbeelding overgelaten. Maar je

schept wel de illusie van een groot, bewegend, kleurrijk... maar ja, nee, ja, goed, weg met het realisme.

Mandy: Goed, dan heb ik..

Derek: Meer poppen!

Salomon's Choices

Mandy: Ja, sowieso. Dan hebben we nog een paar mooie Salomonskeuzes voor je.

Derek: Aaahhhh!

Mandy: Jaaa! Maar je mag ze toelichten als je wilt, hoeft niet, maar dat helpt soms het leed wat te verzachten. Geld of kunst?

Derek: Kunst, no question.

Mandy: Risico of zekerheid?

Derek: Risico.

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Derek: Das alweer lastiger. Ik doe eerst de toelichting, ik vind namelijk dat het elkaar niet in de weg hoeft te staan. Maar goed, ik moet kiezen hè?

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Dan ga ik toch voor de vooruitgang. Ik houd niet van stilstand.

Mandy: Specialiseren of verbreden?

Derek: Dat is heel lastig, want ik ben zelf iemand die me veel te veel verbreed en ik zou me veel, eigenlijk wel eens moeten specialiseren. Maar ik vind specialisatie, nee, ik ben van de verbreding. Ieder mens wordt er beter van als je wat breder..

Mandy: Een vast team of frisse input?

Derek: Frisse input.

Mandy: Een contract of een vertrouwensrelatie?

Derek: Bij dit bedrijf een contract. Maar echt.

Mandy: Oh, dat had ik nou helemaal niet verwacht. Enkele lange termijnprojecten of meer korte termijnprojecten?

Derek: Eén enkel?

Mandy: Nee, enkele, dus een paar lange termijn, of een heleboel korte termijnprojecten?

Derek: Een paar lange termijnprojecten.

Mandy: Een paar lange termijnprojecten. Een positief publiek of positieve recensenten?

Derek: Positief publiek.

Mandy: Hedendaags of voor de eeuwigheid?

Derek: Voor de eeuwigheid.

Mandy: Het budget aan een grote naam of een ster spenderen of aan heel veel andere..

Derek: Niet aan een grote naam, nooit of te nimmer.

Mandy: Ah, dat viel best wel mee, toch?

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Vielen wel mee .

Derek: Zaten er twee bij...

Finishing Up

Mandy: Is er nog iets waar je nog op terug wilt komen of iets wat je wilt noemen wat ik misschien heb overgeslagen of waarvan je vindt dat het nog behandeld moet worden.

Derek: Nee, nee, want ik heb net even genoemd, maar ik zat even te denken van Lion King was ook een musical waarvan ik vind dat ze heel goed met puppets en maskers gewerkt hadden. En ik denk ook dat als ik dan nu ook weer zie, ik die daar twee meisjes met een paar boa's op een stokje die anemoontje spelen. En het werkt gewoon fantastisch want er zit beweging in. En dan denk ik ja, je verzint het niet mee, maar het geeft wel, het is het speelse, het beweeglijke, het ongrijpbare van het theater. Denk ik, ja, is toch leuk. Nee, ik ben heel benieuwd als ze, want ik weet dat ze War Horse hier willen doen in Nederland, het enige wat ik, wat ik in Nederland nog niet echt gezien heb is die *know how* van dat hoe werk je met zo'n pop, zoals ik dat ademloos heb zitten kijken in New London Theatre, dat ik die mannen op een gegeven moment gewoon kwijt ben.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Ook al staat ie ernaast en houd ie dat hoofd vast de hele tijd. Maar je zit echt naar een paard te kijken en dan denk ik van.. en dat, moet ik nog zien. Want ik kan me in Nederland niet, tenminste echt, dat soort dingen, waar het echt zo ver gaat, weetje, het is dan in een musical wel eens gedaan, maar dat is dan ook weer een buitenlands team. Zo maar op die shows als Dark Materials of andere dingen waar ik die poppen in gezien heb. Dus zo, ja, dat is misschien nog wel iets om in de gaten te houden hoe we dat hier gaan doen. Ik ben heel benieuwd, ben heel benieuwd.

Mandy: Ik heb met Finn Caldwell gesproken, die gaat de audities doen hier, en hij gaat misschien ook de

poppenregie doen hier. En hij heeft hem voor Londen gedaan, heeft hem in Australië gedaan, in Amerika gedaan. Dus als hij het inderdaad gaat doen, dan denk ik dat dat al enorm gaat helpen.

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Hij gaat in ieder geval de audities doen, maar of hij de regie ook gaat doen is nog niet zeker. Maar ik hoop daar stiekem wel een beetje op.

Derek: Ja, ik denk zeker dat het hier nodig is, dat het iemand die dat ook als een soort docent bijna.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Ik denk best dat er misschien van mime-opleidingen of dingen ook mensen zijn die daar gevoelig voor zijn, maar...

Mandy: Tuurlijk, maar het zou heel fijn zijn als er iemand is die die show zo door en door kent van alle kanten, want Finn heeft hem zowel gespeeld als geregisseerd, ja dat zou natuurlijk wel heel fijn zijn als we die hierheen krijgen.

Derek: Ja, maar het is ook iets met die Nederlandse, dat zie ik ook met dat gezeik hier soms bij Mermaid, mensen kunnen hun eigen ik, hun eigen ego niet genoeg uitschakelen of opzij zetten. Engelse mensen, acteurs kunnen echt verdwijnen in een rol, kunnen echt helemaal verdwijnen op het toneel als de rol dat van ze vraagt. En op de een of andere mensen is dat in Nederland toch echt, ja, dat blijft heel moeilijk.

Mandy: Ik vraag me ook af hoe we dat hier, hoe we mensen hier zover krijgen dat ze zeggen 'hi, ik speel de kont van het paard'

Derek: Ja.

Mandy: Die Engelsen zijn er zwaar trots op.

Derek: Ja, dat is West End credit. Ja, maar je staat in War Horse een van de moeilijkste en belangrijkste dingen te doen, ja maar dat is hier in Nederland..

Mandy: Dan blijf je toch een beetje de kont van het paard.

Derek: Ik wil niet zo'n rog zijn, nee, je moet proberen dat lapje stof tot leven te wekken.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Maar dat is een verschil in, wat ik zeg, dat heeft met het Nederlandse, we zijn een heel eigengereid raar volk wat dat betreft.

Mandy: Yep.

Derek: Ja, maar dat krijg je ook als je buitenlandse regisseurs, die verbazen zich er iedere keer weer over hoeveel ge-ja-maar... Nee! Je moet gewoon luisteren naar die man en doen wat ie zegt of doen wat ie van je vraagt.

Mandy: Daar istie een beetje de regisseur voor.

Derek: Ja, maar in Nederland moet alles maar met inspraak en we gaan zelf wel bedenken hoe we het gaan doen. Nee!

Mandy: Eerst luisteren.

Derek: Ja, dat is dat.. ik... wens die man sterkte, haha.

Mandy: Ik heb met hem gesproken en ik durf te wedden dat hij bij de top 10 van de meest geduldige mannen ter wereld hoort. Er is een aura van rust om die man heen, het is bijna boeddhistisch. Dus wat dat betreft denk ik dat je hem niet heel snel gek krijgt.

Derek: Nou, dat is wel goed dan.

Mandy: Maar ja, het is heel bizar, maar hij heeft, ja, Londen gedaan, hij heet Australië, en Amerika, alle drie als regisseur. En in Australië moest het helemaal opgezet worden, daar was toen niets. In Londen is hij er als tweede poppenregisseur bijgekomen. Hij heeft zelf ook alle poppen gespeeld, gedurende tig jaar, want hij is er vanaf de eerste workshop bij geweest en hij is begonnen gewoon als Joey, maar hij heeft uiteindelijk alle rollen gehad, inclusief de gans. Dus hij heeft wel een hele goede kijk op de show. Dus het is sowieso top dat hij naar Nederland komt, maar laat hem hier vooral ook even blijven.

Derek: Ja, maar dat zie je ook aan iemand als Toby die gewoon bevlogen is in zijn vak, weet je wel. Die echt gek is van, en dus ook met het grootste geduld uit gaat leggen hoe je dat dan kunt bewegen en oh dan kun je dat nog doen. En als een acteur iets doet waarvan hij denkt, dat inspireert hem dan ook weer.

Mandy: Ja.

Derek: Ja, zo iemand heb je gewoon nodig.

Appendix E – Interview Finn Caldwell – 18-04-2013

Section titles

Start-up

Interview transcript

Finn: What can I do for you?

Mandy: Well, I'm writing my thesis about puppetry and I've chosen three cases: Im, War Horse and Dog's Heart..

Finn: Yeah.

Background Information

Mandy: ...And I would like to ask you some open questions, so I'm not gonna steer you too much. I would just like you to talk. Of course when you're heading completely in the wrong direction I might steer you a bit, but furthermore its open, up to you. And they're on situations of the cases you've worked on. And I also want to ask you some background information, just so that I can complete my analysis. I would like to start actually with some background information from you. I've already checked websites and internet, so I know quite a lot, but I do want to ask you some information about War Horse and Dog's Heart where you worked on. How long you worked there and what kind of contract did you have?

Finn: Sure. Well I worked on War Horse since almost the very first research and development workshops, which was about six years ago, I think. And I've, so I was in, then I was in the show. So I worked on it in the research and development and then I was in the show. And then I was in it when it was in London at the National Theater. And then we finished the season, and then, after the comeback for the second season, so I was in the second season at the national theatre. And from there we transferred directly to West End. And then I was in it two seasons at the West End and then I stepped out and started directing the puppetry. From then I've directed the puppetry in the London production, all of the London productions, except the most recent one. And I have just, in the end of last year, I was in Australia for 3,5 moths casting and directing the puppetry for the new Australian production, from scratch. And, so meaning that we employed entirely new performers for that show. And there was only me and one guy from New York who knew the show from the past. And I'm currently still working War Horse, I've actually pretty much not working on it this year, which is a great relieve, because having worked on a project for so long, as magical as War Horse is, and I still find it magical and amazing and wonderful, and I think the show and the process of the show is amazing, but it's great to have a break, for me.

Mandy: Yeah, of course.

The ones with skill

Finn: And it's been, I've been lucky, while I've been working I have been able to work on other things. But, this year I'm doing two new projects, but I'm also, I've been roped into casting the UK tour. So I'm just casting that and somebody else will direct it. And then I'm casting Holland and they've asked me to do the Holland production in 2014.

Mandy: Oh cool, so you're coming here.

Finn: I'm thinking about it.

Mandy: Would be nice.

Finn: Yeah, well the show will definitely come there, whether I will do it, I'm not sure...

Mandy: But you're the best.

Finn: ...But I'll cast it.

Mandy: I've heard from everyone that you're the best.

Finn: I'm coming to Holland, where are we now, in May, I think. May or June, May. And I'll cast the show than.

Mandy: Oh, fun!

Finn: So that's my background with War Horse. Dog's Heart I started work on it about three years ago. I've had much less time with Dog's Heart. But again the wonderful thing about War Horse is that it has allowed me to do other shows like Dog's Heart. Work with Complicite, but also, like, work with, work on other Handspring shows and other National Theater shows. Dog's Heart I've been working on for about three years and I, we started again in the workshop phase. Working with Blind Summit who are a very famous puppet company here in England. Who I've worked with a long, long time. That's where I first was introduced to puppets. And me, working with Blind Summit and Complicite started work on the research and development about 3 years ago and well, yeah, we were just mocking about in a room with dog heads and bits of leg and much like War Horse, you know, we kind of went 'okay, this could work. Except for it's an opera, so it's crazy'.

Opera? That's crazy!

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: And then, and it was interesting – oh are you still there?

Mandy: I'm still here

Finn: Oh, the video went. Shall I call you back, see if you can see me maybe?

Mandy: Yeah, sure!

Finn: Okay, let's carry on.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: So, so, yes, interestingly with Dog's Heart Simon had to, Simon McBurney, Complicite, had to persuade The Netherlands that we were specialized skilled people and therefore they needed us for the production. So actually they went out there and met some, what's the word, 'poppen people' Netherlands puppeteers.

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: They had to do that, actually, we were people of a very specific skill set and that we would be able to do this in a way that not everybody did. So we had to prove that we were part of the essential, to the process of making the dog come alive. So then we performed that show in Amsterdam and then about 8 months later, Christmas before last, we performed that show at the INO and then I just come back from Milan, where we just performed it in Milan.

Mandy: I know, I wanted to go there, but unfortunately I couldn't make it.

Finn: That my history with Dog's Heart.

Mandy: And what kind of contract did you have? Are you at liberty to tell me anything about that?

Finn: Well, what is useful for you to know?

Mandy: Did you have? Well, like we've got different kinds of arrangements in Holland. You can have contracts, like with War Horse, but then you wouldn't be able to do other shows, so you apparently didn't have a fixed contract. But then did you do that as a freelancer or is there any other form of contract that you have?

Finn: I think it's perhaps not clear what's a fixed contract.

Mandy: In Holland that means that's your only boss, employer.

Finn: All performers in the UK are freelance; are self-employed. And so you, every job is done on a contract by contract basis. So very, very rarely do you have a long term contract. You only have a contract for a show, as much as, more often than not.

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: But even with a show like War Horse or a regular performing, but successful performers will be able to negotiate, are often offered more work during a long run.

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: So, you will often have to negotiate with however has provided your contract. Oh can I spend the day to day going off to do some filming here, there or everywhere. And that's kind of negotiating on a case by case basis. Most of the time your contracted for your main job. And then everything or anything else that you are able or trying to do you have to fit in around that.

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: And more often than not people are willing to.. for instance I was performing a show with handspring, the puppet creators of War Horse, in London called or you could kiss me. Which was the show, about, about the two gentlemen that started handspring, Basil and Adrian. And it was a puppets from their pasts and their future portraying them. And so we were performing this show and I'd also been offered to this second contract of heart of a dog. So I was performing or you could kiss me whilst performing heart of a dog.

Mandy: Okay. And that's not a problem at all?

Finn: No, it is a problem. You have to have very special permission.

Mandy: Okay

Finn: And the contract will want to know who has first, prior claim. And it needs to be agreed between the two companies. It was very messy and it was quite difficult, but I was very keen to do it so... if you, if you have, if you're in particular demand then of course people want to make contract compromises to work with you.

Mandy: Yeah, of course. I've emailed you about the three decisive moments, so that you could prepare a little bit. What I really want is for you to describe three moments where a decision was made, that you were directly or indirectly involved in. and it doesn't matter what kind of decision it is, as long as you are a bit knowledgeable about it and I want, I would like it if those three moments are from three different time periods. One is in the preparation phase of a production, one is in the rehearsal phase of a production and one is in the run of the production. And to me it would most helpful if two are in, from Dog's Heart and one is from War Horse. Could you think..

Finn: Yeah, okay, yeah, well let's just tackle them one at a time

Situational Sketches

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: It's just, in terms of you interviewing people, it's more useful if you lead things. It's difficult, it's a little bit tricky, it's a little bit like you giving me homework. To ask me to prepare and the sort. I would say just in term of you interviewing people in the future it's worth .. sorry to give you advise...

Mandy: No, no, no, that's alright

Finn: I think it's worth guiding people through each stage, so that they, rather than, but anyway, let's tackle... so anyway. You would like one from the post, from the production phase, and you'd rather that that's from Dog's Heart.

Mandy: No, I don't mind if that's from Dog's Heart, I would like two from Dog's Heart and one from War Horse, because I've already got quite a few examples from War Horse. And for now you're my only contact at Dog's Heart.

Finn: Sure.

Mandy: So I would like...

Finn: So what's difficult about the question slightly is that it's so broad. What is it that you are trying to answer in your work.

Mandy: But if I'm going to tell you that, that would mean that I'm steering your answer, and I really would like to avoid steering your answer. What I'm researching is situations and I want to know what happened, who were involved, why they chose to do something this way or that way, if there was any tension between people, and giving your answers, I'm going to analyze those and compare them with other situations and other examples given by other interviewees. So I don't want interview, I don't want to steer your answer by telling you the exact nature of my interview, of my thesis, because than it would negatively affect the validity of the research. Is that clear enough?

Finn: Yes, but still very, very broad.

Mandy: I know, but that's also, that's good. I mean, your, it doesn't matter if it's a decision about a toe of a puppet or if it's something incredibly huge. I can give you an example that Toby gave. Toby told me about Mermaid.

Finn: Yeah.

Mandy: Where during the rehearsal period they, he filmed shadow puppetry and in, they've noticed that the shadow puppetry wasn't very useful and they cut the entire shadow puppetry out of the show. So that's a huge decision. Another example that I can give a very small decision is when something went wrong during War Horse and he decided how to fix it at that moment in time. So that was a very small, very personal decision and the other one was a huge decision incorporating pretty much everyone from the production. So both are okay.

DH: Color of the Dog

Finn: Okay. Alright. Well let's talk about Dog's Heart then. There had been an ongoing with Dog's Heart that the dog is black.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: And the set is essentially white. So, that would seem to be not a problem, but the set is white at the beginning of the show and then it becomes many different colors. And black puppets are incredibly challenging, so we, Simon kept saying I can't see the dog and so many decisions were made about whether we as the puppeteers should wear the same color as the dog, or to try and blend in to it in a way that the puppeteers do at War Horse, they become part of the puppet by wearing similar shades of color to the puppet. Or whether we should be wearing opposite colors to the puppet to highlight the puppet, cause the puppet is fairly small and an operatic stage, that is very difficult.

Mandy: Hm hm

Finn: And, to be honest, this was never resolved. And it's never been really satisfactory been solved. In the first and Simon is very, very temperamental director, Simon McBurney, and because he was panicking, it was the first opera he ever worked on

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: He became very agitated and he just wanted to start blaming people left front and center. Really he wanted us as the puppeteers to take responsibility for our own costumes. Even though we were in a sort of massive opera production where you have a set designer, costume designer, and all of the people are trying to do their jobs. But he was shouting at us, saying you got to help me, you got to help me. So every day we would come on, every day in the technical period we would come on wearing different things. Some day we would be wearing sort of very, very beige, beige, baggy, linneny costumes and of course we would also try to fit it with the period's style of the time, so we would sort of Russian, peasant kind of garb, very beige, linneny stuff. And then another time, the other day we came in, another day we came in wearing sort of rock 'n roll skintight black stuff, with black tape wrapped around us and black make up.

And none of these things seemed to work. Or they, they, they solved some problems and made other, and created other problems. So this is very difficult, and, and it never really got resolved. So it was a real lesson, the main thing to take from it, it's real lesson for me is probably don't make black puppets. The trouble is, Bulgakov the dog is mentioned in the story as being dark brown, black. So it's really hard and how you highlight it's movements, you know.

Mandy: So what did you actually wear during the performances?

Finn: In the end we took a compromise. So in the end we were sort of in grey, brown, dark brown, dark beige clothes with a lot of dirt on them and a lot of dirt on our faces and hands. So we were somewhere between light enough to highlight the dog as being distinct in front of us but dark enough to try and blend in to his world and blend in to the background. Although I'm, in that situation I'm not convinced it was a, a 100% successful.

Mandy: No, but apparently there wasn't a very successful answer, except another dog

Finn: Yes, yes, yeah, maybe, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Mandy: Was it noticed by anyone, like the audience, critics, peers, who said, who mentioned anything about the color of the dog?

Finn: No, no, they didn't specifically. But I don't think that's something that an audience would pick up on consciously. I think that's something they would subliminally notice and then attribute their discomfort to something else. So, I don't think people are attuned, the general public is attuned well enough to puppetry to in general make criticisms of it. I think that they don't see enough of it, nobody says wow, the puppetry is very core? in that production. Although me as a puppeteer and a puppet director, I often go to productions and say oh I really admire the skill of the puppeteers or I thought they were, had not really developed any perceivable technique or skill. I think it's more likely that they would see something like, if they became too aware of us as the puppeteer, they would see that as lack of skill, or they would perceive that as, they didn't like the puppet. I think they would say. My guess is, especially an opera audience, rather than a sort of avant garde theater audience. I think an opera audience is more likely to say I didn't understand the use of the puppet or I didn't like it being in the show. They might have, but nobody said, nobody said I can't see the puppet. But people did say they didn't like the puppet. However the puppet in general gets the biggest cheer at the end of the show.

Mandy: Yeah, that's also the reactions I got from various people I spoke, was that they really enjoyed the puppet and that they also really enjoyed the fact that they could see you, but not notice you.

Finn: Yeah, that's the gobble, huh?!

Mandy: Yeah, so the reactions I got were at least very positive and to the ends that you are trying to reach.

Finn: That's nice to hear.

Mandy: During the rehearsal phase, was there any other moment that a decision needed to be made, not concerning the color of the puppet?

Finn: Yes, there was a very interesting moment when we all working in Holland. We were working with a Russian, we were working with the guy, you have seen the show, right? Have you seen the show, no?

Mandy: No, I have not been able to, but I've seen a lot on the internet and I tried to read a lot about it.

Finn: In the, in the first half, the dog is portrayed by the puppet, which, and at the end of the first half the dog puppet transforms into the man of the dog, who is than an opera singer. And then the second half of the show, the character of the dog is portrayed by this opera singer. In the rehearsal process this opera singer, who was a Russian man in Amsterdam. A very strange man, which is right for the dog, because the character is very strange, but he was very, possibly, well, yes, he was very removed. He was a very, very removed, distant individual. And would openly say he really didn't like opera, he just earned a lot of money doing it, to go home and live his life. And so he, we were working with him and the end of the first half, the dog starts to sing, so his voice becomes present before he does himself. And Simon, the director, was very keen for him to start, to join it sort of the puppetry. And actually, strangely this man looks a bit like me

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: He looked a bit like me. In that he's ta.. I used to have no hair at that point, and he has no hair, and we're both quite tall and well build. And so he, so Simon had this idea that people would suddenly think that one of the puppeteers was becoming this opera singer. So that I would sort of disappear and that this guy would take over.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: He was totally unwilling, in principle he agreed to this idea. But he was so unwilling to engage with the production physically. so at one point we were moving round the stage and Simon was trying to get him to stay with us as the group of puppeteers and he was, he had this guy by his shoulders and he was shaking him as I've said before, Simon is quite a passionate..

It's in the details

DH: Who let the dog sing?

Mandy: I've heard more about him, yeah.

Finn: Yeah. So he's shaking this opera singer by the shoulders, screaming at the top of his voice ENGAGE, ENGAGE, meaning engage physically with the...

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: And strangely, while Simon is doing this to him his is able to be physically present on stage, but as soon as Simon stops he drops, dropped, his energy dies and he goes away. So it was impossible and it also got to the stage where he decided he was, this opera singer decided he was going to refuse to sing the, the sounds given to him for the end of the first half. Because the sounds were totally barking, and screaming, but set to a musical score. And he thought this was gonna damage his voice. And so Simon said to me, you know, having heard of me doing the horse noises and various other, and I've, so I've worked on lots of different noises in my time for animals, so a bark was very easy for me to go to, a bark and a scream. So Simon start, asked me if I would be willing to take on this task, and really Simon asked me to humiliate and attack the opera singer.

Mandy: Yeah, of course.

Finn: You understand that?

Mandy: Yeah!

Finn: So he, I wouldn't say, he didn't say that to me, but it was obvious, that he was, he turned away from the opera singer and said okay, can this guy do it, can somebody else do it? And of course, what's interesting about the opera world as well as opera singers, some are very open minded and wonderful to work with, but many are very closed within the world of opera.

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: And very interested just in the art of opera. And so it's often felt to me, I have worked on a couple of opera's in my life. Like the opera singers are sort of jovially tolerant of other art forms, like puppetry for instance, and like dancers. Dancers in the opera world get paid an absolute pittance.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: And are the lowest of the low. In fact, I was talking to an opera singer who, when he worked on his first job, after a couple of weeks in the rehearsal room got a letter from the manager saying please do not talk to the chorus.

Mandy: Oh my god.

Finn: So you know, there's a real hierarchy.

Mandy: Yeah, I've worked on a couple of opera's, I know that there is. But sometimes you're still amazed by the examples.

Finn: Yes, incredible. So I think that partly Simon turning to a puppeteer and saying could you sing this, even if it's barking, in front of this world class opera singer was deliberately to shame him

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: Anyway, so what happened was, but this is, and I was willing to take it on, but we, during that session of music were running as fast as we can, holding a heavy puppet, around this entire stage, which is raked and you know, so it was incredibly complex piece of physical action and puppetry. And when you start, and then he asked me to take on this barking and what that meant s that then I had to respond to the conductor.

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: You have to look at the conductor and get the moment when you, when you're asked to sing. And actually when we came to rehearse the scene for the second time, although I had learned the barking and the screaming I, I wasn't in a position to be able to always watch the conductor. And so actually Simon got very, very frustrated with me, really quickly. Which is really interesting

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: And I found that incredibly upsetting and challenging actually, I found that, cause I felt like, well A it was my first time working with Complicite and it had been a dream of mine to work with them for long time. And I had given a lot to the process and I was throwing myself into it whole heartedly and then B I was, you know doing something that was alien to me and trying to accomplish seriously difficult tasks at the same time

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: And when I didn't achieve it the first time Simon was starting to get angry at me. And as I say, I found that very upsetting and what I've realized since is that, because of the nature of who Simon is, he wasn't really getting angry with me. Much, much that he wasn't really offering me the role to sing, he was really doing something else to somebody else. He wasn't really getting angry with me, he was angry with himself, because every time he's getting angry in the room, and he does it daily

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: He is getting angry at an idea that he's had and isn't working. So really he's getting angry at his own idea failing. Not at you for failing to produce

Mandy: No, but that's hard to work with.

Finn: It's very hard to work with, but you know, that was a real, that was an eye-opener for me. And my mom, my mother is a psychotherapist and my father has just completed his training as one as well.

Mandy: Cool.

Finn: And as long as I can understand people's prejudices and idiosyncrasies I don't mind working with them. And actually having worked with him twice more on it, even though I see him do the same things over and over, I don't feel, to other people and sometimes to me, but not so much for me anymore, he, I understand that and as I learned from it and it was interesting, and I'm, because I understand the way he operates, I'm comfortable working like that.

Mandy: And how did the Russian singer react? Did he let you do it of in the end did he do it?

Finn: No, I did it in the end. In the end I mastered it and I did it in the show for Amsterdam. When we came to London we had a new dog singer and he was perfectly happy to do it, so, and the same in Milan. But in the Amsterdam production I sung the last part of the dog's opera. Or barked, I shouldn't say sung.

Mandy: Somewhere in between.

Finn: Yeah.

Mandy: Because we're always, already quite halfway I would like to ask you the third situation. During the run, maybe from War Horse, was there a moment where a decision was made that you are knowledgeable about? Could be something incredibly small

Finn: Well, yeah, there is an example. Did Toby talk about when the puppet breaks and whether it goes off stage or not?

Mandy: He talked about when the puppet broke down when his back legs fell off, but not about the decision whether to go off stage or not.

Finn: Well I think it maybe, it's interesting to talk about the decision to whether to go off stage or not, because that's something I was part in, as a performer and then have been part in took in as a director.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: When the puppet, when a puppet breaks on stage it's very much like, actual fact in Australia where we just did the show in Australia. Have you seen War Horse?

Mandy: Again, unfortunately no.

Finn: Oh. That's really wonderful.

Mandy: Yeah, I really, I really want to see both.. but War Horse at least is coming to Holland.

Finn: Well in the show in War Horse it opens with the baby horse puppet. But the first human character to speak is an auctioneer, someone who sort of runs an auction. But he speaks very fast and very loud for the first ten minutes. And he's bidding people of against one another and he talks yeah very fast and very loud. And during that proce.. and during one of our previews in Australia the chap playing the auctioneer lost his voice on stage.

Mandy: Oh!

Finn: So he went from being able to speak like this, as I'm speaking to you now, to like this [*whispers more and more*] and it got worse and worse and then he was speaking like this. And by the end of his ten minutes his voice had gone.

Mandy: Oh, poor guy.

Finn: And it was totally, it was totally hart and mouth, you know. It was completely heart breaking. And extraordinary to watch. It was completely horrifying. And I think that watching a puppet breaking, as the puppet is a central character on stage, is the same thing. the puppets voice is, it's ability to move, it's ability to communicate. And if part of its ability to communicate is broken, then the show should be stopped. And it's interesting to try to get people to understand that idea, again having been in the puppet on stage when one of the puppets is broken and the stage management saying carry on carry on until the next scene, but actually, and them actually wanting not to stop the show, because stopping the show goes in the show report.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: And the director and producer see it, and who will be blamed for stopping the show? Not the performers.

Mandy: No.

Finn: The production team, so they, they have a invested interest in not stopping the show. But of course they couldn't continue the show if an actor wasn't able to speak. So if the puppet is an essential character

and the puppet breaks and it's not possible to continue the communication of the story, then I believe the show should be stopped or someone comes on stage and mends the puppet during the show. But what you can't do is bust through to the next moment and again it's this thing, connected to this thing I was saying about the audience not being willing to or informed enough to judge puppetry.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: It's not well enough, well enough known by even people working on the show in the production team. Than actually, what's happening here is a process of communication visually between the puppet and the audience. And if that breaks down it's very difficult for them to understand that at that point the story is being severed. The connection with the audience is being severed

Mandy: Yeah

Finn: And, and, and that's essential, so what I've had instances about working in the London production on stage where I've been trying to insist that the puppet goes off stage. And then actually in Australia in the previous I stopped the show, because Joey broke his back leg, the main character horse broke his back leg. And again because we were in such a rush, as it always is in War Horse we hadn't had the conversation with the production team to say if this happens we stop the show. So they were keen to continue with the horse, but I had to ask them to stop. And they were frustrated at first, when I asked them to do it they were cross. And then I explained to them at that point the story is stopping, the main characters story has stopped. And the people that were with me from England the original lighting designer, Paule Constable, and the sound designer Chris Shut were completely there immediately in saying yes he's right, we must stop the show at this point. Because we understand, they understand from working the show for a long time, the primary focus of the audience is what the horse is communicating. So it's interesting

Mandy: So they accepted it of course, but maybe with some frustration, but is there something that you've learned from that, that you've taken away for a next time? That maybe you should speak about it beforehand, or is that, there is another way to convince them that stopping is the right thing to do?

Finn: Yes. Maybe, it would have been great to talk to the beforehand. As I say, I mean War Horse, I don't, I don't garant.. I can't promise myself that I would do that, because the only reason I would say that is because, I, you work on, when I put that show on in Australia from scratch, see I've done it many times in London, when we re-rehearsed a few people into the cast. But essentially the bulk of the cast is the same

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: Taking it from scratch, as it's been build a couple of times around the world now from scratch, means you work 6 hours, six days a week for you know 10 hours a day. And even then you'd never get all the information across. It's such a complex individual show, and it must be done in, it must be done in a genuine way rather than just forcing people to do things without them understanding why. Otherwise it doesn't have the heartbeat that is the thing that makes it so successful. So what I'm trying to say is I don't know if I'll ever communicate all the things that I want to communicate about that show.

Mandy: No

Finn: So, I guess I don't think too badly. I think we just didn't get that piece of information across quickly enough and once they got it then

Mandy: It worked out.

Finn: It was fine, yeah. I mean, I trained and assist in Australia, while I was out there and you know we spent about ten weeks together all day every day six days a week and me just telling her everything that I knew, as much as I could. And then I, we agreed, she and I both agreed that she still feels unprepared to deal with it herself.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: It's just so, so complex that show. Which is why it's so wonderful.

Mandy: Of course, and it's why it's such a big success.

Finn: And they, yeah, and they're currently trying to stream, **just between you and I** [Off the record]

Mandy: Yeah, it would be.

Serious Art

Finn: It's [War Horse, M.H.] done a lot for the puppetry culture here in England. I mean there is a lot more interested in it and it being taken much more seriously as an art form.

Mandy: It's done a lot for the puppetry culture everywhere, I mean it's massively successful all around the world, so it's.

Finn: Yeah.

Mandy: That's a brilliant start, but it would be a shame if it's mass production now and people don't feel the heart that's in it.

Finn: Yeah.

Dispositional

Mandy: So that would be a shame. To carry on, I've got three open question for you. Again, I won't steer

Questions

What does puppetry add?

you too much, but this time I've got a regular question for you to answer. The first one is how do you feel about the current use of puppetry, but in the performing arts in general, so not in the cases you've worked on per se.

Finn: Well I think because War Horse has become so successful, mainly because of War Horse, but also, I don't think it was just War Horse. In England certainly there has been a resurgence in visual arts. People are becoming much more interested in not just the tech, I mean in England we have a particularly strong interest in tech based theatre. But, what was happening before War Horse came on the scene is that people were becoming more and more interested in the visual arts. So I don't think it was just War Horse, but War Horse has certainly helped. And what that meant is that everybody suddenly wanted to use puppetry. And actually I think most people misunderstand what it's useful for. So it's become, people using because it's fashionable, a lot of the time, and I would say more than half, much more than half the time I'm asked to work on a puppetry production, a production with puppetry in it, they want the puppetry there as special effects. Like, I mean, you know, I'm quite strict with myself about not doing that. But, you know, a lot of people do, I mean, you know, Toby worked on that show Goodnight Mister Tom, which had a dog in it, and why shouldn't the puppetry, the dog be a puppet. But, a lot of the time, you know, and that's completely valid, but a lot of the time people say well there's a little girl in the show and I think it should be a puppet.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: Why? What does the puppet add? And when, I teach a lot of puppetry. And so my big question always at the end of, usually in the middle of the workshop I say why should we use a puppet? What can a puppet do that a human can't? Or what's the difference between the puppet and a human on stage? And most of the time people say well a puppet can fly, or it can be a ghost, or it can, you know, it can disappear, you know, and they will list the special effect things that a puppet is capable of. And hopefully, by the end of the workshop they come up with a different answer. My hope would be that that answer is that a puppet can represent humanity in a more epic way. Not just humanity, life maybe. So the miracle of life. Sorry, I'm getting really artsy fartsy here.

Mandy: Yeah, I'm getting a lot of background noises.

Finn: Sorry, it's a...

Mandy: No, it's fine.

Finn: It's a, it's raining here. It's that, can you hear me now?

Mandy: Yeah, it's okay.

Finn: I think what puppets do very, very well, is they, they highlight the, the, the, epic in the domestic, or the miraculous in the normal.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: So a puppet drinking a cup of tea can be completely mesmerizing and can talk to you and speak like poetry or like a painting can about the nature of life. Whereas a human being, as an actor drinking a cup of tea, probably doesn't have the same impact.

Mandy: That's what Toby said, that you would never congratulate an actor on breathing.

Finn: Yeah.

Mandy: But when a puppet breaths that's an achievement.

Finn: Yeah. So I think that people don't, or that most people interested in using puppetry, don't really understand the nature of the art form. So I would like, I, I, I, one of the things I'm excited about is whenever I get the opportunity is talking to people about that and showing it in my work. And why it's different from acting.

Mandy: And how do you feel about the use of puppetry in War Horse and Dog's Heart? Did they do it correctly, according to your ideas of puppetry?

Finn: Haha, correctly.

Mandy: Well....

Craft of the art

Finn: I think there's no correct in puppetry, that's the interesting thing about it. Like dance I think it's almost, it can be any, any style can work. But yes. I mean I think in War Horse it's probably, you know, it is, it is absolutely amazing and certainly, yeah, I think War Horse is almost as good as it can be. Because it is, the puppet is the central character, the communication is communicated through the visual, the puppets are developed and maintained to the highest standard they can be maintained at, and you know. Even the story is not that great. The story is very simple, which allows the puppets to sing, really. To, to, to be alive, to do their best work. So I think War Horse is pretty idyllic in terms of what a show, a vehicle, a show vehicle for puppetry. And the fact that it's been so successful has made it even more possible to improve

on that. I mean Toby and I had the great benefit of, because we didn't work on the New York production and we didn't work on the Canadian production.. both of us stayed in London for a long time and were able year after year to work with people, not just getting them up to the standard where they could perform the show, but then we come back the same people had got the standard but their training had been performing for years, and then we got to rehearse with them again for another two months. And we got to take the standard higher, and higher, and higher, and higher. And it's really, I feel very privileged and it has raised my bar in terms of what I think it's capable, the craft of the art form is capable of. A lot of people talk about you know, puppetry must continue to challenge people. And handspring are very fond of this. Basil and Adrian of handspring are often saying you know we've got to do things with puppetry that people have never seen before and I think that's very valid, but there is something else, which is what I'm really interested in, which is increasing the level of skill beyond that which exists already. A dancer doesn't always just want to do something new. They pick a theme and they, and they become more and more experienced and skillful in that theme or in that one use of their body. And I don't think we've reached the end of the limit of what I, you know, you might call *bunraku* or in western terms I call it contact puppetry, where you're in physical contact with the puppet you're operating, I think the level of skill, we have people in England been in War Horse for a couple of years which are extremely highly skilled, much more skilled than I am now. But, but I still think we can take that level a scale higher and I'm really excited about making, taking peoples breath away with the level of skill. Not about changing and doing something new, but becoming better at the things that you practice.

Mandy: And what's your thought on the future of puppetry, because it's an ancient art form of course, but probably since War Horse it's become, it's up and coming again.

Finn: Yeah.

Mandy: So what do you see for the future?

Finn: Toby must have, this is a conversation Toby and I have had many times, and he must have said the beginning of a , the crest of a wave or the beginning of a mountain, did he say that?

Mandy: No.

Finn: Oh, that's funny, that's a phrase we've used together. Is puppetry currently at the crest of a wave, i.e. it's at its highest point and from now will go down or its at a foothill of a mountain and we've go a long way to climb. You know, I've got a hope that it's, we're at a foothill of a mountain. I think if we continue to use puppetry for what it's good at, as opposed as just a special effect or as a sort of stop gap, and I think it will continue to be interesting for people. But I think already we're in England we're beginning to see a backlash against it.

Mandy: Okay.

Finn: And of course everything moves in phases, you know, naturalism in theatre as opposed to much more stylized abstract form of theatre. These things just move like pendulums; things come and go. I hope puppetry will be with us for a bit longer, because I still feel like I've got some exciting things to try and show with it. So I hope, you know we might have another 5 – 10 years with people being really interested in it. But I think it's inevitable. It won't, it's not, and you know, just because, you know, and dance, even dance which is a much, currently a much more fundamental element to the performing arts than puppetry is. Do you think that's fair?

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: So dance, even dance its popularity comes and goes.

Mandy: Definitely.

Finn: Theaters popularity comes and goes. So, so the life arts is very, very popular at the moment. In general in England. I think probably in the world, but in England particularly its very popular. And puppetry within the life arts is very popular. So whether life arts will continue to be this popular, or whether puppetry will continue, I don't know, for how long, but I think it must, things must come and go.

Mandy: Yeah, for sure. I would, want to finalize this interview with some Salomon's choices. You have to choose between two concepts, no matter how hard the choice. But you can elaborate your choice, so, but you have to choose. The first one is money or art?

Finn: Oh art, art, but I will say as I got older and started to earn more money, I do like money.

Mandy: Don't we all.

Finn: But, in the last 5 years I've earned more money than I've ever earned in my life and I do like it. I like not being worried, or, I think it's detrimental to one's ability to make art, if you worry. If you're worried and anxious and uncomfortable because of your money situation than that's tricky. But I've always put art before finance in my life. And I will probably, I will continue to do so.

Mandy: Risk or security? Are you still there?

Finn: Yeah, I'm just thinking

Mandy: I don't see you, I'm sorry.

Finn: No, that's okay. I don't think you can, I, you need both. You need both, fundamentally risk, probably, but just because out of risk becomes, comes creativity, but I don't think you're in a position to willingly risk unless you have some level of security. If you're in constant risk than you'll, than you not really, than at the end you're in a place of fear. You must be able to sort of acknowledge fear and carry on anyway. But if fear becomes you than you no longer able to utilize risk and fear in a useful way.

Mandy: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses?

Finn: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses? Who, what does progress mean, does progress just meaning forward whether it's good or bad?

Mandy: That's up to you to decide .

Finn: Haha.

Mandy: Hm, hm, sorry.

Finn: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses? Well they're both, they're both destructive, aren't they?! They're both positive and negative.

Mandy: Yeah.

Finn: Which is very hard. I don't know I'm afraid. I can't separate does two out. I'll have to say both, I'm cheating.

Mandy: Yeah, you are. but okay, I'll except it for once. To specialize or to broaden?

Finn: Wow, well that's really interesting. Yeah, I mean, you know. I probably spent my life specializing and then broadening, and specializing and then broadening, and specializing and broadening, right now I'm specializing, so I'll say specialize.

Mandy: A permanent team or fresh input?

Finn: I get a lot of new input in my life and, and something I've always longed for is to be part of a long term team, so I'm gonna say a long term team.

Mandy: A contract or trust?

Finn: Trust.

Mandy: A few long term projects or a lot of short term projects?

Finn: A few long term projects.

Mandy: A positive audience or positive critics?

Finn: A positive audience.

Mandy: Contemporary or for all eternity?

Finn: Sorry?

Mandy: Contemporary or for all eternity?

Finn: One more time. Contemporary or?

Mandy: Or for eternity?

Finn: Contemporary I think.

Mandy: Use the, a large amount of your budget on a star or use your budget on many less expensive things.

Finn: Less expensive things.

Mandy: Before I want to start thanking you I want to ask you if there's anything that you want to readdress or at you want to address because you think I've missed it.

Finn: Noooo.

Finishing Up

Appendix F – Interview Josie Dexter – 02-05-2013

Section titles

Start-up

Interview transcript

Josie: Hey Mandy!

Mandy: Hi Josie. I'm sorry I'm late, it just freaked out.

Josie: It's okay, don't worry. Are you okay?

Mandy: I'm okay, how are you?

Josie: Yeah I'm good, thank you

Mandy: How was your workshop on Monday?

Josie: It was good. It ended up lasting yesterday. And the day before as well, so it was a three day thing in the end.

Mandy: Cool.

Josie: And, yeah, it was with Blind Summit, the guys that made the dog.

Mandy: Cool.

Josie: Yeah. So it was good.

Mandy: Oh, nice. I'm really happy that you will help me. Thank you so much.

Josie: That's okay, no worries.

Mandy: It will take about an hour and I will start by asking you some background information, then the situational sketches that I've already emailed you about, then I've got some, a few open questions and I'll end with some Salomon's choices.

Josie: Okay, cool.

Mandy: So, I first want to start with your background, because you're an actor as well as a puppeteer.

Background Information

Josie: Yes.

Mandy: So how did it come to be that you're both?

Josie: I, I trained as an actor at a drama school in England and then after a few years I went to Paris, and I did a short course at a drama school there, that is, it's similar to the Jacques Lecoq school, so it's more physical theatre and clowning and that kind of thing. And when I came back I, I realized that was a bit more the kind of work I wanted to do. And Blind Summit, a puppetry company, were holding open auditions for their show. And so I, I asked for an audition and I went to that and then, and they, I suppose the important thing is, they employ actors rather than puppeteers. And so even though I didn't do that first job, they called me back later on and I did a show with them. And, and so it didn't feel like such a departure from acting in a way. It just felt like an extension of it and, and sort of like, devising theatre, you know, but there just happened to be puppets there. And then I just kept getting jobs that involved puppets. So, and, you know, you sort of take whatever is offered and, but it's always been with people who want some acting as well as some puppetry. With Complicite and with some other companies in England as well. So, yeah, I haven't, I'm not completely a puppeteer now. I'm still an actor that does puppetry, you know.

Mandy: A little bit of both.

Josie: Yeah, exactly.

Mandy: And for Dog's Heart, how long were you involved in the production?

Josie: Well, we did a, we did a workshop in London for about a week and then I think we did 7 weeks rehearsal in Amsterdam. And then we performed it for about three weeks. And then several months later we rehearsed it again to perform it in London and then I've just done it again in Milan, a few years later. So the initial, the initial phase was about three months.

Mandy: And did they also choose you because of your acting skills? Because in Dog's Heart again you're very visible as one of the puppeteers.

Josie: Yeah, I think so. It actually came about, it was sort of very simple in the end. Blind summit had been asked to make the dog, they've worked with Simon, the director, before. And, and so they had a few ideas about what the dog should be and, and just before, a few months before they started rehearsing, they, they suggested that he should see myself and Finn Caldwell, and Robin Beer, to just see what it could be like to have three puppeteers operating something, just as a, a, a, a test, a, an improvisation. Because in fact I think the puppeteers were going to be Dutch originally, but we, so we worked with him for a day and actually, because we all know each other and we've worked together before, there was already a good creativity between us. So I think Simon then just thought, oh well, these 3 should do it. And we all are actors as well, so, yeah, it was handy for him. But it was more the, we had a common language of puppetry and theatre and everything, so, yeah.

Lecoq School

Mandy: May I ask what kind of contract you had with Dog's Heart?

Josie: In what sense, like, what?

Mandy: Just the regular, what kind of arrangements did you make? Where you allowed to work other jobs in the meantime, stuff like that.

Josie: Oh, yeah, it was just, I mean it was a pretty standard contract. It was quite, we were booked quite late, like it was, it was quite close to the job starting, so, and because it was in Amsterdam obviously it meant we were all just going to relocate there and just work on that solidly. But yeah, it was a, it was a pretty standard contract of just, yeah, being employed for the whole rehearsal period and, and the shows and, I mean to be honest when you're working with Simon, you just have to, you just have to throw yourself into it and commit all of your time to it. Because that's what it is. It's a, it's a quite intense but very collaborative process and you get the most out of it if you just focus on that completely so, yeah.

Mandy: So no matter the contract, just full in.

Josie: Yeah. There was a, there was a group of us, myself and the other puppeteers and the sort of small team of actors, some Dutch and some British who, who worked maybe a little bit, a little bit more with him outside of the rehearsal time to try and explore the opera in a way that he was more familiar with. You know, in a sort of more, relaxed, devising sense, and play around with it and, and I think that was very important for that process to have a group of people that he could do that with. So yeah, so we would stay there in the evenings and try things out. It was good.

Mandy: Yeah. I've already emailed you about the three moments.

Josie: Hm, hm.

Situational Sketches

Mandy: What I want to know is three moments in three different periods, so one in the preparation phase, one during the rehearsals, and one during the run, where a decision was made. And it doesn't matter whether it's a large decision or a small decision, the only thing that matters is that you are knowledgeable about it, so that you can elaborate a bit on it. So I would like to start with a decision making moment during the preparation phase of Dog's Heart.

Josie: Hm, hm.

Mandy: Can you sketch that situation for me?

DH: It's a dog!

Josie: I suppose the first real decision making that I was present for would be kind of what, what this dog was. Because there had been a lot of ideas about how to represent it. And in the first week of workshopping that I did with Simon and Blind Summit and some singers in London we focused in on the fact that this dog .. it sound's obvious but that it needed to look like a dog. We wanted an actual dog shaped puppet rather than something more representational like holding up a sign or, you know, a mask or other objects coming together. We had tried that the dog was just made of pieces of rubbish. You know, as if they been found on the streets of Moscow and, but in fact it's the protagonist in the show and so we knew that it needed to be something the audience could really focus on and sympathize with and.. so that was, I mean that was, that was a key thing. It sounds very obvious now, but to actually have a puppet that did look and moved like a dog really would, an anatomical representation of the dog. And so the first prototype that we used was basically a dog skeleton. And then that grew and it had pieces added to it and, and that kind of thing, but that was a, that was the real starting point: that there would be a kind of anatomical version of this dog to operate. And we would, and there would be three of us operating it, because at that point, previous to that we didn't know whether it would be one person or five or whatever. And we worked out that to keep it alive we needed to have three people dealing with all of its different limbs and everything to a, to make it as, to give it as much potential as possible.

Mandy: And was that a group decision or was there one who really initiated that decision?

Josie: I mean it's kind of a, kind of a group decision, but essentially that was Simon and the designer, Nick Barnes, but we were involved in it in the sense that, you know, we were the ones trying to bring it alive and trying to, yeah, you know, sort of do something convincing and interesting with it, so we, you know, we were involved in the sense that we could say oh it's impossible to move that or, I think it would be more exciting if I wasn't holding on all the time, so, you know.

Mandy: And did everyone accept it?

Josie: Did?

Mandy: Everyone accept it? Was everyone happy with the outcome of that workshop?

Josie: Yes, yeah.

Mandy: So you would think that in the end this would be the ideal solution, that the dog is accurate like a dog in shape and size and color.

Josie: Yeah, I mean, yes, the color that was something that we continued to sort of debate and explore and

all through the rehearsal period and then also through you know the time on stage, the technical time on stage, because it's a, it's always a battle to, to light a puppet and to make the puppet the focus of the attention, because humans are so interesting on stage and a puppet has to sort of be quite extraordinary to pull focus away from humans. So the color was, that was something that we kept exploring. But I would say that the size and style, the skeletal anatomical style, I think that was, that was established fairly early on, yeah.

Mandy: And is there anything that you would do differently a next time, or was this the process like you really hope it to be?

Josie: I don't think, I don't think there is anything I'd do differently. I think, I suppose on a, on a personal level, you know, with every job I do I get more confident. You still always start at square one, at the beginning, but you know, so I mean, to be, there's always, there's always a, the opportunity to be bolder every time you start something with your ideas and with you performance and not be afraid of getting it wrong. But I, but having said that, I think for me and for the company it was the process, process was what it needed to be and it was, it was really exciting and we really felt like we were discovering things and, and, and doing that together as well.

Mandy: And it worked out.

Josie: And it worked out, yeah.

Mandy: I would like to continue with another decision making moment.

Josie: Yeah.

Mandy: But then during the rehearsal period. Do you know of a moment in that time phase?

Josie: I suppose the next or another key moment was, having sort of established what this dog was physically, it was then the rehearsals were about us learning what we could do with that, the possibilities of it. And, and as always with puppetry you reach a point where things sort of crystallize and at the beginning, it can feel quite technical you know. It's about oh, how do I, literally, how do I hold on to this, and how do I move that leg, and where do I have to be in order to move it. And it can feel very technical and just about the mechanics of it. And then, I think, you reach a point which we certainly did in rehearsal, where you've gone beyond that and it's about, you know, the thoughts and the character of this dog and how it behaves, how it acts really. So that, when, we definitely reached a point where we, where we discovered what it was to be still with the dog, you know. We didn't have to constantly keep moving, and being dog like, and wagging the tail, and running around, that it could just be still and watch the action and have thoughts, and that that was enough. So there, there came a point where trusting that, and trusting that it could act and be interesting and, and then having discovered it where that became quite exciting and sort of really key I think, in terms of making it a proper performance. So yes, so reaching, so the moment of discovering that we still had to act and.. we did just rely on being doggy.

Mandy: And did that cause any tension? I mean, I could imagine that Simon would have been anxious with the dog just standing still or something?

Josie: Yes. It didn't cause tension, it's more about, I mean Simon, Simon, because basically there is a lot of scene. Because the first scene of the opera the dog is the dog and he is the centre of it, and then quite quickly he is observing the world of the professors flat and, and he doesn't really say much, and he's literally just watching everything. And so Simon kind of left us to discover what that was, in a way. And then he would obviously, you know, I mean, if there was a particular moment of interaction that he wanted to establish between us and the characters or something, than we'd work on that. But essentially he left us on our own to discover what it this dog would do when it wasn't talking to the audience or barking at the other characters. So it didn't cause any tension, I think he was happy to see us you know really invest in it. It's just, it's just a case of holding your nerves, that that's, that what you're doing is enough.

Mandy: And did it also have consequences for how you view puppetry afterwards. I mean you've discovered that a puppet can also be interesting when it's not actually doing something. So is that something that you've used afterwards?

Josie: Yeah, I mean, it's always, yeah it's, it's, it's something I sort of knew before, but you forget it every time, I think. Or I quite often do, because they're, they're really extraordinary, and it's really a temptation to sort of show off what it can do, but actually the most extraordinary thing you can do with a puppet is to, you know, make it look like it's really alive, and to be really alive, it's just thinking and watching and reacting to things as, as, as anything else would do. So it's, I have taken it, taken that lesson into other things, yeah and, especially with animals I suppose, because it's more obvious that a human puppet would be thinking and feeling things, but with animals you sort of forget, whether that's, whether that's going to look truthful, but of course it is. It's exactly the same for them as well. So yeah, it's a ...

Mandy: Yeah, if I'm thinking about my dog, he's usually still.

Josie: yeah, yeah. And it doesn't mean that they're not doing anything, it just means, you know, it's a truthful state.

Mandy: Yeah. And was there a decision making moment during the run?

Josie: Yes. Yeah, I was thinking about this. Because what happened was in Amsterdam, so we probably did about 8 performances and during that time we really discovered, or we, we started to think a lot more about who, about us, the puppeteers and what, and what we were doing when we were around this dog. And I think we realized during that run that, 'cause often in puppetry you're sort of trying to hide a little bit, you know. You don't want people to look at you, you want them to look at the puppet, and, but we really discovered during that run that actually in order to do that, to make people look at the puppet, we needed to be quite bold in how we moved around it. Because we'd already established this thing of swapping positions on it. So someone would be operating the head of the dog and then the person that was on the back legs might swap and take over. And that grew initially out of a practical thing, which was, it's very painful to..

Mandy: Yeah.

Josie: ...stay in the same position for a long time. And so we, you know, we swapped around. But it was during the run when we realized what this swapping around could also be. It was a kind of, a kind of energy around the dog. And that actually the bolder we were with that, the more extraordinary the dog could look in the middle. Because again, it was still and it sort of had its own fixed point and there were people, you know, coming on and off it. And the bolder we were with that, we realized that it looked even more extraordinary, because you sort of couldn't see when it was being puppeteered and when it wasn't. So that was definitely a discovery that we did in the Amsterdam run that we then put in practice in the London rehearsals and run a couple of months later and it was actually commented on quite a bit amongst, amongst puppetry friends. As a sort of interesting and, an interesting thing. You know, to really declare what you're doing as puppeteers and that it, and remarkably that it wasn't distracting from the puppet, yeah.

Mandy: And how did the audience or the critics react?

Josie: To that specific?

Mandy: Yeah? Was there any remark from them?

Josie: I can't remember about the critics. But certainly, you know, members of the audience certainly, they sort of, someone recently, in Italy, described it as this sort of vortex around the dog, which I quite liked. But people sort of said that it, it really fitted in and added to this whole, the bigger picture, which Simon had created. Of humans manipulating the whole stage, you know. Running on, staging the set, running off again. And so for us to be doing that kind of in miniature around the dog felt very, very much part of the piece. And so people said it was a, it was a really good parallel.

Mandy: So, it wasn't just that the other puppeteers noticed it, but it was also really noticeable for the layman?

Josie: Yeah, I think so, I think so. Yeah, I suppose, I mean I don't know, in a way I'm not sure if anyone.. I don't think it's that amazing a discovery, but I don't think I've seen people do that kind of thing really. You know, people are often, like puppetry, to think about the puppetry I've seen, the puppeteer is kind of stuck with the puppet all the time. So to create some sort of fluidity around it, I think it was, was kind of, yeah.

Mandy: And how did the other actors and singers from the opera respond to it? Because they are not used to work with a puppet, especially one that is so important, how did they respond?

Josie: Yeah, well, I think, it was interesting actually, because to start with I think everyone was sort of quite fascinated by it. And you know we were a little bit like a sort of party piece, you know. Every new singer that arrived in the rehearsal room Simon would say look at the dog, look what the dog can do. And everyone was sort of like 'who, yes, extraordinary'. And I think that, the, the thing they were fascinated by was the thing that the puppeteers being so obvious.

Mandy: Yeah.

Josie: So visible. And yet the dog being the centre of attention. I think, I think, it, it, it threw up its own challenges for them, as it did for us as well, because, you know, opera is sort of an extraordinary, you've got so many things going on. The thing is trying to focus on the singing, and the conductor, and the orchestra, and acting, and then you've got some people being a dog around them. It's sort of a lot to take in. But on the, I think because it was such a central part of the opera and, and because they could see that it worked, or that it had the potential to work, right from the beginning. I think everyone was, you know, everyone was very supportive and excited by it and, and particularly the people that had the, do the voices, the voice of the dog, we had to establish quite a sort of close working relationship with them, trying

DH: Vortex around the still dog

Hierarchy in opera

to marry the two things to get the voice sounding like it was attached to the dog in some way, so physically we had to kind of work together as a little unit. Which I'm almost certain was the first time that either of the singers had to do anything like that, you know. So yeah, it was some, but it was, yeah, I think everyone was, everyone was intrigued by it.

Mandy: Not afraid that the dog would steal their thunder?

Josie: Well, I mean, yes, in that sort of way, yes. And, yeah, and they didn't want the dog sort of standing in front of them, or you know, but it's opera. Yeah.

Mandy: And did it help that you've got an actress background, with them. That you understand that they, or a little bit more maybe, that you understand how they feel as actors and not as puppeteers and working with a puppet in that case.

Josie: Do you mean between me and the?

Mandy: And the opera singers.

Josie: Yes, I suppose it did. Yeah. I suppose it did help, because, and also because obviously we were focused, our job was to make the puppet work, but because of Simon's approach, kind of a collaborative approach, and because we were part of this team of actors that were helping him to, you know, come up with different sequences, we were very aware of what else was being created around us. And what a challenge that was for the, for the singers. And we, you know, we all worked together, like we'd all do a kind of, like physical warm ups together as a whole cast and Simon would get us all to do different sort of games and exercises together as a whole cast, so I think that was a, that was essential, that we were all having to, we were all having to discover this style of performing together, regardless of whether we were singing, puppeteering, you know, in the chorus or, so there was a, there was a real feeling that we all were going to have to work it out, the same.

Mandy: And is there anything what you've experienced during the run that you would change a next time?

Josie: We've done it three times now, so it has changed, inevitably. Things get sort of tweaked and, in terms of the puppet, we've continued to, to sort of try and explore its truthfulness and, because at one point, that we were kind of, we were kind of stylizing the dog in a similar way to how the performers were quite stylized. Simon wanted quite heightened, sort of physical language, lots of people kind of standing on in, in extreme poses and things. And we, we kind of tried that with the dog a bit, but to be honest we've actually continued as we've gone on to be more simpler with the dog and more truthful, so that he's the one that looks kind of normal within this mad world of big characters. So, yeah, I guess we've just kind of learned that from it, the more we've done it that that's his role in it. Yeah. Can't think of anything I'd change if we did it again.

Mandy: And for you personally? Something that you would change for yourself? The way you worked, or the way you approached something?

Cog in the machine

Josie: I think, I think from doing the show in Amsterdam I then learned, I really learned sort of like what it was to be like a little cog in a very big machine. But that, but the, certainly with the spaces that Simon creates, that that cog was like really vital and that you should really invest in your little moment. And I could kind of see how it, it did really require all of us to be doing that in order for the show to work. So just that, reminding yourself that, you know, you're telling the story, even if you're just wagging the tail of the dog. That is part of this bigger picture, and this bigger story, and it's being told, and because it's, it can be easy to forget that, I think. Particularly in opera, where someone is singing really loud, and there is an orchestra playing and you sort of think that that's only one, 'can they actually see me?'. So you know, becoming aware of what that was? I've definitely taken that into other things I've done.

Mandy: I've got three open questions for you about puppetry in the performing arts.

Josie: yeah.

Mandy: And so you can elaborate and maybe I'll steer you a bit, but you can just use your own imagination on what you want to tell and your own ways of telling your story and I won't steer too much.

Josie: Hm, hm.

Mandy: So, how do you feel about the current use of puppetry in the performing arts in general, so not just in Dog's Heart or in any performances that you worked on, but in, but overall.

Dispositional Questions

What does puppetry add?

Josie: I think it's, I mean it's sort of suddenly become quite popular and mainstream, because of things like War Horse. But I think that it's really exciting that it's been given, there's been given a bit more, kind of respect, I suppose, in a way. That it's moved away from just being for children. And that it's, it's seen as a sort of interesting theatrical devise. That the theatricality of it has become more interesting, you know. A bit like people using masks in theatre and, and its', it's a, it's become a kind of, it's an interesting language to explore and add into work. And to use some work that you might not necessarily have thought of using

it in before, you know. Puppets I think for a long time where just fairy's and animals and, you know, the things that people did not really know how to do with anything else. They just made a puppet of it. But I think things like War Horse and Blind Summit's work definitely and there's lots of other puppetry companies in England that are really trying to be really good at it, and to be really accurate and explore the, like really what it is to have a puppet on stage rather than just put one there and everyone expects it. I think it's exciting, yeah. It seem, it seems really interesting. I think, I think still it's like with acting and anything, you know, it doesn't always work and you've got to, you've got to really interrogate why you're using a puppet, I think, in things. Because it takes a lot of manpower and it's a big thing for an audience to invest in. So if it's not really necessary, I think, people can get a bit, you know, they lose interest in it, so yeah.

Mandy: And how do you feel about the use of puppetry in Dog's Heart specifically?

Josie: Well, I, I think it's I mean it's hard to imagine it without it now. It's kind of so woven into the fabric of that show.

Mandy: Yeah.

Josie: And by that I don't just mean the dog. It's sort of like the whole world of that stage feels like it shares a kind of, a common thing with the puppetry, the people moving it and manipulating it, so it feels completely integral to that story. And it feels, gosh it's weird, yeah. I mean, it feel like it's in the music, actually. You know. There's so many moments in the score that it feel like they're for the dog or they're for the puppetry. You know, so because it's now become, it's really become a part of it. And we've discovered those moments through the puppetry and through people moving furniture and objects and things, so that, it would be very strange to take that out of it now and have a real dog or something. Yeah, I think it's, I think it's really integral to it, I think that Simon would probably agree.

Mandy: And it improved the show?

Josie: Yeah, I think so, I think so. I think the dog needed to be something, sounds a bit big-headed, but you know, it needed to be something so quite extraordinary. That's not to say that our puppetry is so extraordinary, it think

Mandy: Well it is, but ..

Josie: But it is, but it is, it's, it's a, it's quite a thing I think to have three people or four of us sometimes, you know, really investing in this one object and bringing it to live and, so that the thing can take off on its own. And I think it needed to have some kind of human, humanity in it, which it does by having puppeteers around it. Because it's, in the story it's so, you connect with it immediately, on a very human level. It's very, the dog is very funny and he, he says the kind of things that you feel that you would say when you walked into the professors flat, so it needed a kind of humanity to it. Which it, it being, I don't know, like a projection of a dog, or a robot or something, you know, it wouldn't have had that. So I think, yeah, so I think it's really key.

Mandy: And puppetry is of course an, a really ancient art form, but you already said that it's really up and coming right now.

Josie: Yes.

Mandy: What are your thoughts about the future of puppetry?

Josie: Don't know. I suppose they're sort of tied in with my thoughts about theatre in general and the future. I think it will all adapt and that people will use it where it's necessary. Puppetry is a, is you know, is hard. It's, it's a kind, it's a very simple and pure sort of art form. And I think, you know, like masks and, so I think it, I doubt it all, oh god, goodness knows, becomes sort of a digital sort of thing. But I think there will be a place for it, because it's about, it's at best it's really good acting, but sort of, color implanted into this object, so it's the ultimate suspension of disbelief for an audience, but I think it's, it's always interesting. I don't know what will happen to it. I mean it might just sort of go in waves, you know. It will come and go, and then someone will find a really good story that needs it, and then it will come back. And yeah.

Mandy: I mean, it actually always has. It has had its ups and downs.

Josie: Yeah. And people have used it for different things, you know, this week we've been looking at these, these really old Japanese plays that the, the first kind of *Bunraku* puppetry plays in Japan. And you know, in that the puppets, the puppets acted the whole story. They did everything and, and it's quite hard to do that now. It's quite hard to get a puppet to do the whole thing, so, yeah, it will inevitably change. Peoples tastes will change.

Mandy: Okay. I've got a couple of Salomon's choices for you.

Josie: Hm, hm.

Mandy: And you will have to choose between two concepts, no matter how hard.

Josie: Yeah.

Mandy: But you can elaborate your choice if you want to.

Josie: Right.

Mandy: So the first one is money or art?

Josie: Art, definitely.

Mandy: Risk or security?

Josie: Risk.

Mandy: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses?

Josie: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses? Hm, progress at all expenses.

Mandy: To specialize or to broaden?

Josie: Well, interesting. Broaden, I think. But I often find, yeah, that through specializing you do broaden anyway, but yeah, broaden.

Mandy: A permanent team or fresh input?

Josie: A mixture of both. Oh yeah, I mean. Oh, fresh input then, if I had to choose I'd say fresh input. But a permanent team is, yeah, really important.

Mandy: A contract or trust?

Josie: Trust.

Mandy: A few long term projects or a lot of short term projects?

Josie: Hm, a few long term projects.

Mandy: Positive audience or positive critics?

Josie: Positive audience.

Mandy: Contemporary or for eternity?

Josie: Contemporary.

Mandy: Use the main part of the budget on a star or use the main part of the budget on many, many things.

Josie: Many, many things.

Mandy: Oh, they weren't that hard, were they?

Josie: No, they're really interesting though. It was good.

Mandy: Is there one you want to elaborate on?

Josie: What was the one before, what was the one I was really stuck on, before broaden or specialize?

Mandy: Keep what's right or progress at all expenses.

Josie: Yeah, that is hard. Because, hm, I do think you have to keep progressing, progress. But the, the, yeah, the easy thing is to just keep what's right, isn't it?

Mandy: Yeah, that's always easy.

Josie: Yeah.

Mandy: Before I start to thank you, I want to know if there is anything that you want to readdress or if there's anything that you want to address because you think I've missed it?

Josie: No, I don't think so. No.

Mandy: Good, then I want to thank you so much for helping me with this interview.

Finishing Up

Appendix G – Interview Max Webster – 03-05-2013

Section titles	Interview transcript
Start-up	<p><i>Pleasantries are exchanged and we get acquainted, as this was the only non-scheduled and unprepared Skype session.</i></p>
Background Questions	<p>Max: I was Simon's associate director on Dog's Heart.</p>
	<p>Mandy: How did you become an associate director?</p>
	<p>Max: Well, that's two questions really. I always, I've been working as a professional, I'm 30 years old. I've been working as a professional theatre director for about 7 or 8 years. And for the last 4 years I've been working as an assistant to Simon McBurney, who runs Complicite. How I became a theatre director is one question, I became the assistant to Simon because he'd always been, well I suppose, the honest answer is my artistic interest.. like a lot of people in the UK he was making the most exciting.. in the 90s when I kind of, when I was in my, seeing, that formative period, he was making I think the most exciting theater in England at the moment and so I always wanted to work for him and learn from him. And I'd also studied at the Lecoq School in Paris, which I suppose is kind of a key thing that puts all of this work together. And so had something of a similar background, so maybe I was a natural person to work with him, yeah, collaborate.</p>
	<p>Mandy: So you've worked with him for 7 years?</p>
	<p>Max: 4, 5, 4 years.</p>
	<p>Mandy: 4 years.</p>
	<p>Max: Maybe, nearly, it might be 5 now.</p>
	<p>Mandy: So, it's a jubilee.</p>
	<p>Max: Yes.</p>
	<p>Mandy: And what other things did you do, except for working with him?</p>
	<p>Max: Well, I have different things. So I suppose I have, one branch of my career that's been working on my own international productions, so I directed shows in Denmark, Italy, France, South-Africa, Cuba, Nepal, Argentina, Asia, kind of a thing for international festivals. And that's been often working with indigenous performance traditions or local performance traditions. So in Asia and Africa, making narrative work out of those different groups, different traditions. And then I suppose it's as been work in smaller scale theaters in London, and more recently working larger scale theatres in England. So I've just done particular mockingbird at the... in Manchester a couple of months ago.</p>
	<p>Mandy: Cool. And that at just 30.</p>
	<p>Max: You what?</p>
	<p>Mandy: And that at just 30. You're still so young.</p>
	<p>Max: Yes, yes, but you know, you have to be ambitious, or you don't have to.</p>
	<p>Mandy: But you are.</p>
	<p>Max: Yeah.</p>
<p>Mandy: So you were Simon's associate during Dog's Heart?</p>	
<p>Max: Yes.</p>	
<p>Mandy: Were you involved from the moment the idea started?</p>	
<p>Max: The idea started two years, three years before, when Pierre Audi commissioned Sascha Raskatov to write this opera, so I wasn't involved then. So I was involved as soon as they started doing workshops and reading it and playing it through. So it was about two years preparing before we started rehearsals in the Netherlands, so yes.</p>	
<p>Mandy: And what kind of contract do you have? Do you have a contract, if I may ask of course, but do you have a contract with Simon or just for every single production you do?</p>	
<p>Max: I've been freelance, I'm freelance. So, development work for the workshop is paid a very small amount, you get paid a very small amount of money. It's a daily fee and then as the staff director or associate or assistant director you'd be on a contract to the opera house. So sometimes I have been employed by Complicite and sometimes by the houses who produce these things.</p>	
Situational Sketches	<p>Mandy: Okay, I want to ask you about three moments during Dog's Heart</p>
	<p>Max: Yeah.</p>
	<p>Mandy: Where a decision was made. But it doesn't matter if it's a really large decision, or if it's a small decision, or if it had huge impact, the only thing is that you need to be a bit knowledgeable so that you can elaborate on it. And the decisions need to be from three different time frames. So the first one I want to ask you is from the preparations phase, so during the workshops. Was there a decision made concerning</p>

the puppetry in Dog's Heart that you are knowledgeable about and that you can sketch the situation for me.

DH: It's a dog!

Max: Okay, so here is, here was the biggest decision about the dog, which was how do you put a dog on stage. So in the score, Sasha Raskatov says that the dog has to have two voices, which is a pleasant voice, which you could kind of think of, if you like, as the dog's thoughts to itself, and an unpleasant voice, which is a rougher voice, a shoutier voice, which you might like to think of as the dogs, as the dog is heard upon the streets. Now in the score, Sasha Raskatov, who has studied a lot of indigenous singing and took me to Siberia, and ethnic minorities of the former USSR, wanted to replicate the singing of an Inuit tribe, when they're singing to a drum, with a resonator. So he wrote the piece originally for Elena, his wife, who sings the part of an unpleasant dog, the unpleasant voice. The whole role should have been sung into a drum, with a megaphone. So Sasha was absolutely adamant that what he wanted to see on stage was a timpani, a kind of big kettle drum, with Elena singing the role into the megaphone. So I suppose one of the earliest stages, one of the biggest decisions was whether we were going to have a timpani on stage. And so we spent about a week pulling a big drum around the studio. Trying to put ears on a drum, tails on a drum, people behind the drum. I've never moved a kettle drum so much in my life. So that was the first, the first big decision was how do you make a dog and then you get the decision of how do you incorporate the singers into the team of dog-makers. So that's, there were two people voicing the dog, singing the voice of the dog, and so the question becomes where do they stand and how do they give voice to the dog. A normal puppet, it's one of the puppeteers, in normal puppetry tradition, in most puppetry traditions the person operating it voices the puppet. But voicing a *bunraku* style dog marionette is obviously very, very complicated, and quite difficult to if you're holding a speaker. So it was clear that it was going to need to be trained puppeteers in that group, but then how do you have a shape or a form or a puppetry language whereby the singers and the puppeteers can collaborate, animate the physicality and the voice of this dog. So I suppose that the moment of decision was trying to find, was partly about whether you have a timpani on stage, but also more interestingly was it about how do you find a theatre language for making that happen.

Mandy: And how did you come to the end conclusion, the end solution?

Max: Simon's process is constantly and endlessly trying new things. And so the things develop quite slowly and quite organically. So, you know, it's not necessarily a matter of decision, it's a question of just something evolving. So that gradually the drum was in fewer and fewer improvisations, until the point where you see it wasn't there. Gradually the singers were more close and close to the puppet until they were moving around and lying on the floor. So it's not a decision. And there's this thought people often talk about, and it's a very American thing, talking about choices. You hear you know, people in the theatre, American actors and actresses, say I think that actress made really original choices, or strong choices. But you always think that actually, maybe, you're never quite choice it is a choice in that sense. And it often feels in this sort of process if you do the work and do the research and try everything that's possible, the kind of decisions that makes themselves. And it just keeps on evolving into, and keep on trying to work out what's clearest, what makes things most alive, then the sort of choices kind of make themselves in a funny way.

Mandy: And is that a group process, or is that something that is really clearly top down instructed?

Max: I would say it's both. So I would say that Simon absolutely leads all the work. And it's a very orphaned style of directing. But at the same time, it's a style of directing that hugely involves, relies on the creativity and the group imagination. So it, people, it's not, there are, they are the same. So Simon is in charge and he leads the work very strongly and very charismatically, but a lot of the inventions and a lot of the propositions, and a lot of the skill, and a lot of the making, and a lot of the understanding happens through a group of people understanding things together.

Mandy: And does that cause tensions?

Max: Not hugely, no.

Mandy: Everything goes smoothly and compliantly?

Max: Compliantly? I suppose, there's never any, there's never any question about who is making the decisions, or who's in control, or who's leading the work. So the process that's demanded of you is a process of offering up ideas and possibilities. And then the ones that seem to work are the ones that stay. And of course it's Simon choosing that, and that's not up for discussion or up for debate, so it's not a democracy in that sense. It's a, an act of, it's still an act of collective imagining, I think.

Mandy: And for you, is that the best way to work? Is that the way you like to work and that brings the best results?

Max: That's a very hard question.

Mandy: I'm sorry.

Max: No, no, no. I'm 25 years younger than Simon and so that kind of charisma and authority is not something you can have until you have a track record of making some of the best theatre in Europe, I think. As a younger director you have to work, you have to get people's respect and collaboration in a slightly different way. If I behaved in that way with my groups of actors they'd all tell me to fuck off, because I'm not Simon McBurney. I think a lot of people misunderstand what creative collective creation is and you see a lot of a young groups think that democracy is really a possible model for theatre making. And it kind of isn't. maybe you can have democracy of two, you can have partnership probably, but then once you have a group it's very, very hard for it not be lead very strongly. Especially if you're making work on that scale. I suppose however the idea that the performers in your group of various creative artists are, is important and has always been important to me, and that what you're asking of people is their imaginative commitment to a project. And how, what you're doing as a director amongst other things is feeding their collective imagination, has always been central to how I've wanted to work.

Mandy: I would like to ask you about a second situation. This time during the rehearsal period.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: And again it doesn't matter if it's a big or small decision, as long as you can just talk about it. Do you know of any kind of situation during the rehearsal period?

Max: A situation?

Mandy: A decision making moment or situation, process?

Max: Well, I mean, I think the problem is that's it's very hard to know. There are no big decisions. It's a kind of, it's a sort of every, every day there are hundreds of decisions. It's kind of, for so, like that it's every moment, trying lots and lots of different ways. So that, you know. In the opening how the dog gets wounded. The puppet dog get's wounded in the opening. So how do you represent that wounding? Do you swap it for a dog with a wound on, do you stick a patch on, do you put red tape on, and I suppose, the decision is really trying things lots and lots of different ways, until you find the what's the one that has the most life to it, I think.

Mandy: And how do you know when it's the one with the most life. Is that when everyone agrees, or is that when Simon agrees that this is the one to follow, or is it something else that you cannot describe?

Max: Well it's Simons choice. It's not a group choice, because it's led, the work is led, as I think is in most processes that work on that scale. I think there's normally a sense when something works people watch. So I suppose a lot of the way that Simon works is that he likes a lot of people watching. And then he does talk to them and ask for what they think, a lot. Not necessarily publically, but he kind of want, and has a sense, and I suppose one of the things you're doing is constantly testing the work on people. And you hear whether a scene is working or not by how they react and how they laugh, or how they breath, or how they sit and engage in watching it. And so there's a kind of constantly while being in the theatre, constant, almost constantly performing it in the sense you sort of know when something is working or not working, I think.

Mandy: What was the end conclusion with the dog? How did you solve the problem of the wounding?

Max: The?

Mandy: The wound.

Max: The wounding.

Mandy: Yeah, in the opening scene, how did you solve it?

Max: Oh the wound.

Mandy: Yeah.

Max: Have you seen the show?

Mandy: No, I wish I had, but...

Max: You should get it on, you could ask to see it on, it exists on DVD.

Mandy: Really?

Max: Do you know Sonja Heyl at the Netherlands opera?

Mandy: No.

Max: If you wrote to her and said you're writing about, I imagine you could see a copy of it. They have a DVD of it

Mandy: Okay, I will ask her. Sonja?

Max: Heyl.

Mandy: Heyl, I will ask her, thank you.

Max: Jesus' assistant, she is, I don't know, an administrative something or other.

Creative collective creation

DH: Wound of the dog

Mandy: I'll ask her. But, it's still then for me the question how did you solve it.

Max: Well, it's, it's solved, they get, he gets red tape stuck on, the puppet get's tape stuck on it. So it's a very declared thing.

Mandy: And who was the one who thought of that? Do you know that, do you remember that?

Max: No I don't.

Mandy: And was everyone glad with that decision or was there anyone who said no we actually should have done something else but because Simon says, it's his decision, so we'll do it?

Max: I don't think it works like that. I think there's a lot of trust in Simon. I think everyone's happy, I think it seems to work, mostly.

Mandy: I've worked with some directors and some are very open for comments, and in some cases people really disagreed with the director, but then the director said no, I really want it like this and then people said okay, if you really want it like this we'll do it and we'll go for it for 100% and they trust him and they do it anyway, but there can be some kind of idea that sometimes they disagree with the director. And I'm not sure how Simon worked, because I've never worked with him of course. So that's what I'm asking.

Max: Yeah. I think, I think a lot of it is still of having enormous charisma. So that you lead a group very happily and very strongly. I think what Simon is very good at is making a company feel like they're constantly researching an discovering things, so there is a continued sense of excitement. And I suppose, when you have a room that is genuinely engaged to imagining and discovering things, it's often very hard to know where the ideas come from, or who's idea it is.

Mandy: Yeah.

Max: Because idea's aren't just individual per people. The ideas come out of conversations, improvisations and mistakes. And they do come out, in a room that is working they come out of a kind of collective imagination, I think.

Mandy: Yeah, sometimes they do, sometimes... I remember a moment during a show where I worked on where someone just stood up and said 'I've got it'. So it was a really clear moment where someone had the idea and everyone worked from that point on. I've also worked on shows where everyone was just talking and putting something in, and in the end something completely new was made that wasn't from one person.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: So it really depends on the process and I'm trying to understand what process you've been through with Dog's Heart.

Max: It's not a talking process. So it's not sitting down. It's almost entirely practical and it's sort of endlessly trying things and endlessly revising things. And kind of revising patterns. So Simon works really by giving people shapes, in a way. And then the shapes have filled up with detail and changed and molded. So it's working from, very strongly from a form that then kind of gets filled with meaning and contents, rather than the way in which a lot of English directors work, is working from a kind of psychological interpretation of the text.

Mandy: Yeah. So he works from, from the broader structure to the content, instead of the other way around.

Max: Well, the structure, no, the structure is, I think the way Simon would put it, he would say the structure is a way of lowering the content.

Mandy: Okay.

Max: So that a shape in space, if you give performers a very simple shape or what you're really doing is you're investigating, you're trying to unlock the content of the scene. So you're trying to understand the content of the scene by giving it a shape that's visible. So it becomes comprehensible and it becomes really clear what's happening, and what's going on.

Mandy: That's also a very demanding and active way of working. Is that hard for the actors and the puppeteers and singers.

Max: It's demanding yes, but it's done with intelligence and charisma and joy, so normally, mostly people are very, very responsive to that.

Mandy: So everyone is exhausted at the end of the day, but happy, that kind of..

Max: Yeah, yes. And you know, Simon doesn't switch off. So a day, he just keeps on going, and he wouldn't have breaks, and he'd keep on working all day and all night if anyone let him. It's just sort of relentless. I think, he's managed, he manages to get this big opera singers to just not do all of these breaks, and work later sessions and longer days, through kind of charm, really. Which is extraordinary.

Mandy: Yeah, definitely. Especially in opera.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: So, during the run was there something that changed, or was there a moment that a decision was made to change something, or something grew that you had to change?

DH: What was different?

Max: I don't know, I didn't see the run of it. I can't really tell you. The second, the revival was much better. It was much better the second time around when they came to London. And it will be hard to tell you what was different. There were lots of very small things that were changed and tweaked and there was more time to work on the lighting. And much more things were able to grow and expand, but nothing sort of major, or nothing that someone from the outside would probably know, or notice, other than saying oh it sort of feels like it's a better, more confident show.

Mandy: And so all the little things made it one big whole.

Max: Yeah, I think so.

Mandy: Yeah.

Max: I mean, I think, certainly for Simon the thought is that what you're trying to do is not make, kind of, massive decisions, about that you're about to put in a concept on the piece, or conceptualizing, but that what you're trying to do is from moment to moment make the story clear and engaging. And alive. So that what you're trying to do is that you're making something that people can kind of journey in and be with the story and be with the people, and kind of imaginatively involved in. rather than something that's sort of thought, or is an idea on stage. If that makes sense.

Mandy: Yeah, it does. Was this your first time and Simons first time to work with puppetry?

Max: No. Simon's been working with puppets all his life, I think, and I have worked with puppets before myself.

Mandy: And how do you feel about the use of puppetry in the performing arts in general, so not just, not specifically in one of the cases you've worked on, but in general.

Max: I think in like anything it's, it has the potential to be very exciting and the potential to be not so exciting. So, I suppose really what I think is that because puppetry is so declared as a theatre thing and you take, it is theatrical, it works best in a theatre language that is able to cope with non naturalistic things. Whether in a heightened theater language, or a language that declares it's theatricality. And the puppets are tricky in more naturalistic pieces. Which is how a lot of English theatre works. And so they can often look a bit out of place. A puppet takes quite a lot of time to make, time and money to make and develop and quite a high skill. So it's quite a big investment to do it. I suppose really, if it's about, sort of like anything, the question is does it make the scene or the situation more alive and more imaginatively engaging. And so then that's a kind of, sort of, it's not really about the puppetry, it's about that particular moment and to that particular character.

Mandy: And how do you feel about the use of puppetry in Dog's Heart? Because Dog's Heart is not very naturalistic, so it might add to the, to your idea of the use of puppetry.

Max: Yeas. I mean, I think it's very exciting the puppet in there. I think it's very skillful. It's very beautiful. It gives non-opera people something exciting to watch. It means that the character of the dog, which is central to the story, becomes believable, and likable, and engaging. I think it works extremely well in that.

Mandy: And do you think it was the best option for Dog's Heart?

Max: Yes.

Mandy: Puppetry is obviously an ancient art form, but lately it's been up and coming again. Especially in the more *bunraku* kind of shape.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: What are your thoughts on the future of puppetry? Do you think that it's just the start of the hype, or is it going down again?

Max: I hope it's, I don't think it's a hype, I hope it's a, without saying... Put it like this. This is a longer answer for you. The, in painting, in the 20th century, there was a, and engagement with modernism as a reaction to photography, so when people realized that you could take a photo of a person's face in more detail than you ever could paint from naturalistically, painting responded to that and realized that what paint can do is capture the truth of someone's face in a way that a photo never can. It can capture more abstractions. Now theatre has not yet engaged through the fact that film and television can tell those sorts of stories better. Stories about peoples sitting around in a kitchen, talking about life and stuff, are actually often more exciting and more engaging on film or on TV, where it's what theater can offer is a level of, just like a Picasso painting can distort a face, it can offer a level of stylization an theatricality that can sometimes have access to a truth or level of poetry, that complete naturalism or complete realism finds very hard to get to. So I suppose, for me, puppetry is interesting and exciting because it's part of those

Dispositional
Questions

Invest in a puppet [More
further down]

No naturalism

broader range of techniques or styles of theatre, or languages that are non-naturalistic. And I think it's sort of proper to the tradition of theatrical performing. As opposed to the sort of tradition of a kind of naturalism that is done in film.

Mandy: And do you think that theater makers will see this more and more, that they will understand that they should use the theatricality of their work more, than films?

Max: I think, I don't know. I mean, it depends, doesn't it. Some group, popularity of groups like Complicite are, should, are, sort of test.. a show like War Horse seems to be testimony that people do enjoy an experience that is about it being life and offering something that you can never get on film. It's about the person, sort of their performers actually literally making it happen in front of people's eyes. I think that is happening more and more. Although of course a lot of commercial theatre still operates on a nice set, with a nice door and a nice window going into a balcony and all that. That still seems, more here than in Amsterdam, I think. In England there is still a large market for that sort of work.

Mandy: Is there a large difference internationally in what markets well, in your opinion.

Max: I think so. I mean England is one of the, a country in Europe with a large commercial scene, that makes commercial theatre. Of course there is some commercial theatre in the Netherlands, a few musicals, but not quite the equivalent of the west end, where well known actors and plays, there are like 50 theaters full of well know actors and plays happening on a commercial basis. And in England that's a very double edged sword. It means we have some fantastic actors, people want to go to acting, that means that theater has quite a high profile in the country. But it does mean that somehow that the commercial side of it, that attitude goes through the whole of the industry. Because the commercial and subsidized sector are quite close, a lot of actors move between the two sectors, more than they do in the European world, it means that the subsidized sector is actually making work that's a little bit more conservative than it is in Europe. So our national theatre and your *Toneelgroep Amsterdam*, which I suppose is the closest thing, are very, very, very far apart in terms of experimentation and modernism and kind of flavor.

Mandy: Yeah. Commercial theatre in Holland is usually musical.

Max: Yeah

Mandy: And that's it.

Max: Yes.

Mandy: That's where it ends. But if it's, if the commercial sector is so large in England, and it's also a lot about the money, does it influence the decisions a lot?

Max: what, sorry?

Mandy: Does the money, the economic choices, do they influence the artistic choices a lot in England.

Max: Of course. Although there is a variety of quite a lot of work, we know that on average we have to sell 70% of all our tickets to break even. And in our space, which is 750 seats, in Manchester, the main theatre in Manchester, you know that if you put on a new play by a writer no one's heard of and if you don't put a star in it, however good the play is, and with the best use possible, you're not really going to be able to get more than 30% of the house full.

Mandy: Really?

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: Wow.

Max: So that's, in order to fill theatres on the whole you need a title people have heard of or an actor people have heard of or you need to be one of the very, very few boutique theatres in London, which is like the Donmar where they can sort of put on anything and anyone goes. It's a kind of tourist, a trendy touristy place to go and see things.

Mandy: May I ask what the budget for the dog was during Dog's Heart.

Max: Absolutely no idea. The dog is quite expensive to make, but I'm afraid I can't, I don't know.

Mandy: And it's also expensive to operate, because you need 3 puppeteers to operate one dog.

Max: Four, there were four.

Mandy: Four.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: So, and with two opera singers also singing the part.

Max: That's six.

Mandy: So six persons for one dog.

Max: Yes.

Mandy: Plus the, just the building costs and the, that's quite a lot.

Max: Yeah, it is. I told you, puppetry is expensive. It's expensive in terms of time as well. So you probably

had 3 or 4 weeks of workshops which were basically looking at the dog and developing different puppetry models and we tried making dogs out of rubbish, we tried making dogs out of cardboard. We tried a dog with no legs, we tried a dog where the head and the leg weren't attached. So you know, the whole development of that, these things don't just sort of the shelves as here's your dog puppet. It kind of comes out of a process, which takes time and therefore money as well.

Mandy: Where you able to break even, do you know that?

Max: Opera.

Mandy: Never breaks even, right?

Max: Opera is huge amounts of money?

Mandy: So you were subsidized?

Max: Yes, the production was produced by the Nederlandse Opera.

Mandy: Which is heavily subsidized. But you also performed in Milan and London.

Max: Yes.

Mandy: And was that also subsidized through the Netherlands opera.

Max: No. so the producing structure for opera is if the Netherlands opera invested in the development of it and the building of it and the Dutch productions of it, but it's then their production. They then own the copyright if you like. So when another opera house buys it or puts it on. They then pay the Netherlands back a rental fee of whatever it is to be able to use their production. So the more opera houses put it on, the more money the Netherlands opera gets back. Quite how many revivals it has to be before it breaks even I don't know.

Mandy: And every time it's put on again even though they only pay the fee for the Netherlands opera house, they still loses a lot of money just because it's opera, and so they always lose money.

Max: Yes, but you know, almost all theatre does, all subsidized theatre loses money in a way. So at the royal exchange I say break even at 70%, but that's breaking even with 30% of the theatres finance being covered by arts council funding. So, yeah.

Mandy: So only the West End productions are able to make it commercially.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: Sorry, I don't know a lot about the English way of financing theatre.

Max: That's okay.

Mandy: The Dutch way is quite familiar, but every country has its own system and I'm not completely familiar with the English one. I've got some Salomon's choices for you.

Max: Okay.

Mandy: I'll give you two concepts and you have to choose between one or the other, but you can elaborate your choice if you want to.

Max: Okay.

Mandy: The first one is money or art?

Max: And who am I, am I asking this as myself?

Mandy: Yeah.

Max: Well. It's art, is the answer. Yeah. Yeah, if you wanted to make money, I have a good degree, I could have gone worked at a bank.

Mandy: Risk or security?

Max: Well, I could, hahaha, risk. But the trouble is, yes, it's hard, isn't it, because if you take too many risk then you're not allowed, then they not let you take any more.

Mandy: You keep what's right or progress at all costs?

Max: I don't know. When I make work I tend to not change things that much. Simon changes things much more than I do. He doesn't fix things until very, very late.

Mandy: So you're more inclined to say to keep what's right.

Max: Yeah.

Mandy: To specialize or to broaden?

Max: God. It's hard isn't it, it's like, I suppose if you're an artist, just let's say specialize, because you have to kind of work out what you're actually doing and what's your way of doing things. Like Louis Armstrong said: it takes years and years and years of hard to actually found the sound that you're self.

Mandy: A permanent team or fresh input?

Max: A permanent team.

Mandy: That one was easy.

Max: Yeah, that's much easier.

Mandy: Contract or trust?

Salomon's Choices

Max: Contract, because otherwise you won't get paid.

Mandy: Is it that bad in England?

Max: Yes.

Mandy: A few long term projects or a lot of short term projects?

Max: We make better work if we have a few long term projects, don't you. So it's very hard to know, I think one of the reasons Simon is so successful is he managed to create a structure in which he can work on projects in the longer term. So the English theatre scene tends to work very fast and we produce many shows a year and we have four weeks rehearsal and that's the most we can afford. And that puts, that's probably the biggest, that time pressure is probably the biggest cap on the quality of work were able to achieve I think. But how you can get people in a room and paid for a longer term project is very, very illusive.

Mandy: A positive audience or positive critics?

Max: Positive audience, fuck the critics.

Mandy: Love that response. Contemporary or for eternity?

Max: Well, you'd say contemporary because nothing else really exists. All there ever, if you think about it, the past and the future literally don't exist. All there ever has been and all there ever will be is a session of present moments,

Mandy: Definitely. But still some people like to go on forever. To use you're, the large part of your budget on a star or to use the budget on many, many other things?

Max: Many other things.

Mandy: Even though you just said that you actually need a star or at least a headline?

Max: Well, it's a divide in theatre isn't it. Cause a lot of people go to the theater to see someone famous from telly. And I don't really give a fuck about that. That sort of, kind of part of the same culture that buys magazines about celebrities. And sometimes these people are wonderful, you know. Sometimes you go and see them and they can be amazing, but that's not really what theatre for me is. Theatre for me is a communal act, much more like football team. And that it's a group of people doing something together, of course it's meaning is partly about what their saying, fundamentally it's meaning is also due to the, what a group of people are capable of imagining together, what it means for a group of people to make something together and that's kind of a political act. Ensemble collaboration I think.

Mandy: But in a football team there's always one that gets paid more, or transfers for more.

Max: Correct. And the reason every company, the most companies too, but it's still the team that makes it function.

Mandy: Before I want to start thanking you for your cooperation I would like to know if there's anything that you want to readdress of if there's anything that you want to address because you think I've missed it.

Max: Just to say, I think, if you're thinking about War Horse and Dog's Heart it's worth thinking about this notion of playfulness. And childhood play. So Simon and I and all the people who made War Horse, trained at the Lecoq school in Paris. And there was a teacher called Philippe Gaullier who would say to us if you've forgotten what it's like to play like a child, you're not entitled to be on stage. And so the English psych analyst Winnicott wrote that culture comes out of the use of transitional objects. So a transitional object is the toy that the kid won't let go of, or kind of is both inside and outside us, as a kind of way of playing, and so that's first form of play is or first form of kind of testing reality and telling what's real and how you tell stories, and how we kind of make sense of the world. And that is a sort of puppeteering. So that actually from the very heart of, the origins of culture in development to the infant is a kind of notion that an object is both a piece of rubbish, but also something inside you, or imbued with animate life. So that puppetry is not, can find a little extra, but is also central, the puppeteering of objects and the animation of objects and the shamanistic life of objects is in all cultures at the root of the imagination, the root of storytelling. And especially those theater traditions that Simon and the War Horse team working, comes through a kind of playfulness and a sense that what you're doing in theatre is recreating that playing and that actors are playing to imagine induce that state of imagination in the audience. So there you go, that's my thought, that's my academic thought for you on puppeteering and War Horse and Dog's Heart.

Time vs. Quality

Finishing Up

Lecoq School
&
Playfulness

Appendix H – Interview Sascha van den Tol – 23-05-2013

Section titles	Interview transcript
Start-up	<i>Exchange of pleasantries.</i>
Background Questions	Mandy: Hoe ben jij uiteindelijk bij Stage terecht gekomen? Sascha: ikke? Mandy: Ja Sascha: Jeutje. Dat is wel heel lang geleden. 15 jaar inmiddels. Nou, ik zat bij Endemol, dus ik zou naar de kunstacademie gaan. En, maar toen besloot ik dat een jaar uit te stellen, toen ben ik gaan werken om een jaar gewoon te werken. En ik kom natuurlijk uit het Gooi, dus je zit daar, mijn moeder heeft haar hele leven eigenlijk voor televisie gewerkt. Je komt heel snel, laat maar zegen, op het Mediapark terecht, dus daar ben ik eigenlijk terecht gekomen bij John de Mol producties. En daar heb ik drie maanden een klusje gedaan, zeg maar. En toen ben ik bij, naar Breekijzer gegaan om daar ook productieredactie tijdelijk even aan de slag te gaan. En toen werd ik eigenlijk gebeld door Endemol, die zaten toen in Hilversum de holding, zeg maar. Op de Bonairelaan. En die hadden mijn naam weer doorgekregen via John de Mol producties. En die hadden ook tijdelijk ondersteuning nodig op de HR-afdeling. En nou dat wilde ik eigenlijk niet, want dat leek mij heel saai. En uiteindelijk ben ik toch gaan praten en dat was eigenlijk een heel leuk gesprek. En toen ben ik een week later daar begonnen, nou ja, en <i>the rest is history</i> , dus dat is 15 jaar geleden. En toen ben ik zeg maar een jaar later ging Endemol splitsen, dus alle live entertainment activiteiten gingen er natuurlijk uit en daar werd Stage Holding destijds mee opgericht, naar Amsterdam. En toen ben ik meegegaan. Nou ja, en na tien jaar HR ben ik gevraagd om hier op de productie. Mandy: Om over te stappen. Sascha: Over te stappen, ja. Tsja.
Situational Sketches	Mandy: En Mermaid. Je hebt het eerste stukje van Mermaid gedaan. Sascha: Ja Mandy: Weet je nog wanneer dat ongeveer begonnen is? Sascha: Nou, dat is, ik heb, uiteindelijk heb ik er. Ik zat natuurlijk toen in de opstart van zowel Droomvlucht als Wicked. Mandy: Ja. Sascha: Dus ik heb weinig op dat moment heb met, met Mermaid nog gedaan. En eigenlijk toen ik uit de opstart kwam moesten wij meteen aan de slag met Mermaid. En dat is november 2012, zeg ik dat goed? Mandy: 11. Sascha: nee, 2011 geweest. Ja en, november, december. En, dus toen ben ik begonnen, zeg maar, om, en toen was er ook nog heel weinig. Dus toen zijn we ermee begonnen en volgens mij zijn we in februari gaan repeteren. Mandy: Maart. Sascha: Maart zijn we gaan repeteren. En ik ben er eigenlijk in januari al afgegaan, omdat ik Ghost toen moest gaan doen. Mandy: Ja. Sascha: Ook op hele korte termijn moest gaan produceren. En ik kon niet allebei doen. Dus toen hebben we een keuze gemaakt en ook omdat Mermaid waarschijnlijk was toen al bekend ook naar Moskou zou gaan, was het een hele logische dat Rijk het van mij over zou nemen. Omdat hij dan ook Moskou kon gaan doen. Mandy: Ja. Sascha: Dus uiteindelijk ben ik er maar, nou laten we zeggen twee maanden mee bezig geweest. Dus vrij krap en kort. Mandy: Ja. En datgene, je zegt dat er heel weinig was. Dat was puur licenties en het contract met Disney en verder nog helemaal niets eigenlijk? Sascha: Ja, dat was er wel, ja. En de creatives waren er, dus die, dus het team was er wel, maar er was nog geen goedgekeurd kostuumontwerp, er was nog geen goedgekeurd decorontwerp, de, ze waren nog aan het workshoppen in New York. Martine was wel al bezig met de vertaling, dat was eigenlijk het enige wat liep. De cast, die, daar waren we, zeg maar, die onderhandeling hebben we toen helemaal gedaan. November december, of december, ja eigenlijk in die periode, was ook allemaal vrij laat, want we hebben nog <i>finals</i> gehad in november uit mijn hoofd, december zelfs nog. Dus wat dat betreft zeg maar, zaten we nog best wel in een ja, best wel in een heel pril stadium. Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: We gingen natuurlijk naar Duitsland om daar te monteren. Nou dat heeft ook best wel een impact, als het gaat over, nou ja, dat weet je, uiteindelijk.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Je was er uiteindelijk zelf geweest. Maar dat heeft, ja, dat heeft best wel wat consequenties als je gaat, als je een hele productie zeg maar naar Duitsland moet gaan brengen.

Mandy: Ja, absoluut.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: En in dat stadium, is er een moment geweest dat er iets over de poppen is besproken en dat daar een beslissing is genomen dat je iets van de creatives hoorde van dit gaan we doen, of we willen per se die persoon erbij hebben, of.. mag een hele kleine, nutteloze beslissing zijn, mag ook iets zijn wat uiteindelijk helemaal nooit is doorgegaan, maar gewoon een beslissingsmoment met betrekking tot, tot die poppen. Je hoeft hem niet zelf genomen te hebben, het mag ook iets zijn waar je.

Sascha: Nou ja kijk, weet je, kijk, Bob Crowley is natuurlijk de, de, de designer van Mermaid. Zowel van kostuums als voor de set. En hij heeft ook met als je kijkt naar de workshops toen de, destijds in New York, natuurlijk een heel ja, je gaat een onderwaterwereld creëren. En ja, dat moet je visueel maken en dat kan je doen met mensen die gewoon heen en weer lopen over een toneel, maar je wil natuurlijk ergens een illusie creëren dat je onderwater zit en dat de bewegingen ja, dat de, ja dat je dat uit die bewegingen ziet. Dat hebben ze ooit in de eerste Mermaid die ooit op Broadway heeft gestaan hebben ze dat gedaan door middel van rolschaatsen. En Glenn, eigenlijk is Glenn degene geweest die het idee had ik wil vliegen. Ik wil met het vliegen wil ik die illusie van die onderwaterwereld creëren. Nou dat, en dat, daar is Bob Crowley uiteindelijk op doorgegaan. En heeft uiteindelijk voor een Ursula, want dat is dan denk ik de, de, de grootste...

Mandy: De grootste pop.

Sascha: Pop.

Mandy: Ja, je hebt natuurlijk een aantal vissen nog, de kwallen, de school vissen en dat soort dingen.

Sascha: Ja, ja, maar die worden natuurlijk op een ander manier dan als je kijkt bijvoorbeeld naar Ursula, als ik dan de vergelijking maak tussen een Ursula en bijvoorbeeld een War Horse.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Dan zie je heel erg dat dat, dat mensen bewegingen maken, hé, de, de het ensemble in Mermaid heel duidelijk de tentakels van Ursula.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Die uiteindelijk die octopus creëren. Dus het is ooit een idee, het is ooit een, ja, begonnen met het idee vanuit het vliegen, vanuit Glenn Casale, de regisseur. En Bob Crowley heeft daar vervolgens zijn ideeën op gemaakt.

Mandy: en weet je hoe dat proces gelopen is? Dat, want Glenn zal, zal zeer waarschijnlijk gewoon gezegd hebben van nee, dit gaan we zo doen.

Sascha: Nou nee, hij heeft dat idee gehad. Kijk het begint natuurlijk uiteindelijk altijd bij een regisseur. En op het moment toen Glenn aan boord was, dat wisten we al in een heel vroeg stadium, dat dat het idee was. Want bij het allereerste casting, bij de auditie zeg maar, die we hadden, wisten we al dat de zeemeerminnen zeer waarschijnlijk zouden gaan vliegen. Nou, daar ga je dan ook rekening meer houden in je auditieproces. En vervolgens is het aan Glenn om dat idee met een Bob, die op dat moment was aangesteld als de designer, te bespreken. En ja, die maakt dan, komt dan vervolgens met ideeën van nou ja, de zeemeerminnen gaan vliegen, Ursula laten we niet vliegen, met uitzondering dan van het, in de tweede akte zit daar natuurlijk, doet ze dat weer wel. Ja en heeft eigenlijk bij elk karakter, elke pop of elk dier zeg maar of elke vis in de show een idee bedacht van nou ja, Botje gaan we op een skateboard zetten, en de alen gaan we wel op rolschaatsen zetten, ja en dat is iets wat hij uiteindelijk zeg maar, die ideeën met Glenn bespreekt en met ons en wij dat vervolgens dan gaan uitwerken.

Mandy: Gaan waarmaken.

Sascha: In financiële zin en in, en Glenn in de uitvoering van hoe krijg ik dat uiteindelijk allemaal werkend op het toneel.

Mandy: En weet je waarom ervoor gekozen is dat Ursula niet zou gaan vliegen?

Sascha: Nou, ik denk dat Bob, de, nee, ik denk dat hij, wat hij heeft gedaan en wat, dat vind ik zeg maar Mermaid goed gelukt, is de diversiteit in het, in het, hè, je kan, je kan een hele cast op rolschaatsen zetten om zo bewegingen te kunnen creëren zeg maar, die impliceren dat je onderwater zit, en wat ik heel leuk vind wat hij heeft gedaan in, wat zij hebben gedaan, is dat er een diversiteit is. Dat ze het op verschillende manieren hebben gedaan, dat er poppen zijn die op rolschaatsen zitten, dat je een skateboard hebt, dat je, en dat je mensen hebt die vliegen. Dus dat het niet eentonig is, je kan ook iedereen in de lucht hangen.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: En dat hebben ze bewust niet gedaan, en dat vind ik heel leuk, omdat dat uiteindelijk denk ik mooier is.

Mandy: Ja, echt de diversiteit van een onderwaterwereld.

Sascha: Ja, ja, ja, ja. En ook heel erg passend bij het type hè. De, het krabbetje dat ja dat schuifelt een beetje, wat, wat, wat, ja wat lijkt op een echt krabbetje, want die zijn ook niet heel soepel in bewegingen als je ...

Mandy: Nee, die zijn lang niet zo vloeibaar als een vis of een kwal.

Sascha: Nee, precies. Ja.

Mandy: En ik heb gehoord dat Ursula dat dat eigenlijk best wel laat geaccordeerd is, dat ontwerp. Dat dat al in de repetities was. Heb jij daar toen nog iets van meegekregen? Want dat, bij jou moet ie ook niet geaccordeerd zijn geweest dan.

Sascha: Nee, dat is niet, nee, dat, nee, dat weet ik niet. Volgens mij was dat wel zo. Want wij hebben destijds alle tekeningen van zowel de set als en daar is Ursula eigenlijk bij mijn weten altijd de Ursula geweest zoals ze is geworden. Even los van bepaalde details wellicht die nog zijn aangepast. Het enige is, is dat je op een gegeven moment de vertaling gaat maken naar een begroting.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: En dat de eerste opzet van de begroting voor de kostuums best een hele pittige is geweest. Ja, en dan moet je dat uiteindelijk wel, dingen oplossen om uiteindelijk het financiële plaatje ook zeg maar rond te kunnen krijgen.

Mandy: Ja, uiteraard.

Sascha: En dat is eigenlijk net het moment geweest dat ik eruit ben gestapt, dus wij hadden een eerste opzet voor de begroting, kostuumbudget zeg maar. En, en die, daar, die hadden we al teruggebracht tot, nou ja, een aannemelijker, een aannemelijker bedrag. En, maar toen, toen is het nog niet in productie gegaan, dus kostuums waren nog niet gemaakt.

Mandy: Nee.

Sascha: Dus misschien dat dat het is, dat je dat bedoelt, dat het kostuum uiteindelijk laat, later zeg maar erin is gekomen.

Mandy: Ik heb gehoord dat de uiteindelijk in de repetities met een soort van prototype van Ursula hebben gewerkt en daarmee ook zijn begonnen met de tour. En daarom ging ze ook vrij snel stuk, natuurlijk, want ze was in Heerlen eigenlijk, begon ze al wat slijtageplekken te vertonen.

Sascha: Hm, hm.

Mandy: En ik geloof in Eindhoven uiteindelijk heeft ze nieuwe tentakels gekregen.

Sascha: Oke, nou dat weet ik niet. Want toen was ik er al af.

Mandy: Nee, maar dat had ik gehoord dat dat dus een prototype was, omdat het proces daarvoor net iets te lang geduurd had en dat daarom ze ook helaas snel stuk ging.

Sascha: Ja, het enige wat ik me kan voorstellen wat gebeurd is, maar dat, nogmaals dat antwoord moet ik je schuldig blijven, is dat ze natuurlijk, ze hebben geworkshopped hè. En het kan best zijn dat ze op dat moment hè, dat er op dat moment voor die workshops al een prototype gemaakt is, volgens mij is dat ook zo, en dat ze die uiteindelijk hebben gebruikt in de repetities en dus kennelijk ook doorgezet hebben voor de voorstellingen, om hè, wellicht met de hoop dat ze het wel zouden

Mandy: Dat ze het wel vol zou houden.

Sascha: Dat ze het vol zou houden, wat dan uiteindelijk voor een, ja, niet extra kosten zou kunnen zorgen, maar ook te maken met het proces is sowieso allemaal heel laat geweest. Dus ja, voordat je zo'n, zo'n pak maakt.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Ja, dat kost tijd.

Mandy: Veel tijd.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: En, en nu we het toch over de begroting hebben. Heb je een *ball park* waar je aan moet denken bij zo'n, zo'n pop? En mag je dat vertellen?

Sascha: Nou ik denk dat ik het je schuldig moet blijven, want ja, weet je uit, wij werken andersom hè. Het is bij ons heel erg zo van ja, de begroting is *leading* en daar hebben we kosten in opgenomen en dat is een x-bedrag voor de kostuums en dat is een x-bedrag voor de set en dat is een x-bedrag voor nou ja, noem het maar, hè, alles wat in de begroting is opgenomen. En ja, ik of Rijk in dit geval later zijn natuurlijk in staat om op een gegeven moment te zeggen van nou ja, hier gaan we overheen, omdat dit nou eenmaal dit kost. En proberen daar uiteindelijk wel de beste deals zeg maar uit te halen. Het

nadeel ook zeg maar denk ik in het geval van Mermaid is dat je heel, op een hele korte termijn moet produceren, dus dat je, ja als jij zegt, als jij een onderhandeling kan voeren met een leverancier van die, he, ik heb dit nodig en dat hoeft over een jaar klaar te zijn, heb je een heel ander gesprek dan dat het volgende week klaar moet zijn.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Dus dat zal, dat heeft uiteindelijk ook invloed gehad.

Mandy: Ja, zonde hè.

Sascha: Ja. Ja. Ja.

Mandy: Denk je dat er, als je meer tijd had gehad, dat er dingen anders zouden zijn gegaan?

Sascha: Ja, das altijd heel lastig om te zeggen. Ja en nee. Uiteindelijk denk ik wel, maar niet omdat dat per definitie beter was geweest. Kijk als je langer de tijd hebt, geeft je ook meer tijd om langer na te denken en beslissingen die genomen moeten worden voor je uit te stellen. En dat gebeurt natuurlijk heel snel, zo van nou deze beslissing hoeven we nog niet te nemen, dus laten we het er nog een keer over hebben, laten we er nog een keer naar kijken. En laten we nog, weet je, dat is het, dat is het nadeel van de lange termijn. Dus ja, ongetwijfeld waren er dingen anders gegaan, maar nogmaals niet omdat dat per definitie, dat het dan per definitie beter was geworden.

Mandy: Ik kan me voorstellen dat als je zo weinig tijd hebt, dat het ook spanning oplevert in een groep, in onderhandelingen, bij de creatives, en misschien tussen jullie en de creatives wel.

Sascha: Nee, dat, dat, dat, dat, dat ervaar ik in ieder geval niet zo. Wij zijn natuurlijk sowieso heel erg gewend om heel snel te kunnen produceren. En het is ook wel een uitdaging, om dingen op korte termijn zeg maar voor mekaar te krijgen. En wij, en dan heb ik het even over hier, over onze afdeling, zeg maar, of over mij persoonlijk, laat ik het daar dan even over hebben, ja, ik werk, ik vind dat prettig om die druk te hebben. Ik bedoel Ghost hebben we uiteindelijk, hè, ook in twee maanden wat ook echt een megaproject was, in twee maanden eigenlijk van de grond gekregen.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Waarvan je eigenlijk bij voorbaat zou zeggen, ja, daar moet je echt een jaar van te voren moet je daarmee gaan, moet je, moet je mee gaan beginnen. Maar uiteindelijk zijn we in staat om op, omdat we bij de, Wicked zijn we anderhalf jaar daarvoor mee begonnen. Maar goed, ik denk niet dat dat, dat dat, ons wereldje vind ik is gewend om op hele korte termijn dingen te doen. Als je het hebt over een maken van een nieuwe show, wat Mermaid natuurlijk gedeeltelijk wel was, is het soms wel beter om meer tijd te hebben, omdat je meer, omdat je dingen meer kan onderzoeken.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Maar goed, wat dat betreft vind ik het, ja, weet ik niet of het beter was geworden als we langer de tijd hadden gehad.

Mandy: Nee, nou ja als je kijkt nu naar Moskou en naar Japan, de veranderingen daar zijn niet heel groot.

Sascha: Nee, bijvoorbeeld

Mandy: Dus ik denk dat dat een indicatie is dat het heel goed is gegaan hier, toch.

Sascha: Ja, ja, ja, nee absoluut. Dat denk ik ook. Zeker, want, kijk ik bedoel dat kunnen ook keuzes zijn geweest. Dat kan ook zo zijn geweest van nou het is goed, het werkt, dus wij gaan het zo overnemen, maar het is inderdaad zo dat op het moment dat een productie doorgaat dat dat vaak ook inderdaad de momenten zijn om aanpassingen te gaan doen.

Mandy: Ja. Ja, en zeker in Japan zijn ze daar natuurlijk wel over bezig geweest. Die zijn ook bij ons langs geweest om te kijken en te vragen en er zijn wel wat aanpassinkjes, maar het is niets groots.

Sascha: Ja, ja, nee. Nee.

Mandy: Het is niets, dus dan, en die hebben gewoon meer tijd, die hadden meer tijd, die hadden meer budget.

Sascha: Ja, ja.

Mandy: En als ze dan toch met redelijk hetzelfde eindresultaat komen dan denk ik dat dat een goeie indicatie is van wat het hier ondanks dat het kort was toch perfect.

Sascha: Ja, ja, ja. Ik denk ook dat dat de kracht is van ons bedrijf.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Om op, om, om op korte termijn, ja, op korte termijn.

Mandy: Kwaliteit te leveren.

Sascha: En goed te kunnen produceren, ja.

Mandy: Zou er iets zijn wat je anders zou willen doen in een volgende situaties als je weer zo kort de tijd hebt; dat je bij Mermaid nu iets gezien hebt van oh ja, nee dat moet ik de volgende keer niet meer doen, of dat moet ik de volgende keer juist wel doen, dat was echt de uitvinding, of..

Sascha: Wat ik denk, wat het lastig maakt, ja, wat het soms lastig maakt als je een dergelijk project produceert met zo'n groot team is dat wat het lastig maakt, is dat men, dat de creatives, dat veel mensen uit het buitenland komen. Wat maakt dat je niet een moment hebt dat je met je hele team bij mekaar zit en afspraken maakt en ja brainstormt zeg maar over van dit is de kant die we opgaan, even los van de workshops die in New York zijn, die hebben daar, die daar hebben plaatsgevonden. Wat ik heel erg bij Ghost heb gemerkt is dat wij, Henk en Ed en ik, Ghost, het team zat toen in New York, want die waren Ghost in New York toen aan het voorbereiden. Is dat wij naar New York toen ook zijn gegaan en daar met het hele team ook hebben gezeten, alle mensen die naar Nederland zouden komen. Nou is Ghost een bestaande, een bestaand project en het was dus echt 1 op 1 overzetten zeg maar.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Dit is wat het moet gaan worden. Dat maakt het makkelijker, omdat je dingen niet meer hoeft uit te vinden, wat met Mermaid natuurlijk wel weer het geval, dus elk project is zo anders. Maar dat heeft heel erg gewerkt.

Mandy: Ja, die communicatie.

Sascha: Dat wij zeg maar een moment daar hebben gehad waar we met zijn allen waren en vanuit daar zeg maar zijn gaan werken. Dat, dat is in ieder geval het grote voordeel bij Ghost geweest, vind ik. De lijnen werden dan, worden daardoor ineens heel kort en ja, je hebt even een moment dat je met elkaar zeg maar dezelfde kant op kijkt. Dat hebben we bij Mermaid niet gehad, dat moment. En ja, dat zou een volgende keer wel een voordeel kunnen hebben.

Mandy: Ja. Want bij de workshops waren jullie niet aanwezig?

Sascha: Ik was daar niet. Pieter was daar wel, en Maritska was daar, en, dus, dus we waren daar zeg maar wel aanwezig.

Mandy: Een paar.

Sascha: Maar er is niet een moment gecreëerd van zo nu zitten we met zijn allen aan tafel en dit is het.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Weet je, met alle divisies. Er waren natuurlijk wel deelbesprekingen, zeg maar. Dat zou en, plus workshops, een workshop is natuurlijk uiteindelijk, ja je bent daar om te workshoppen.

Mandy: Ja, tuurlijk.

Sascha: Dat heeft ook weer, weet je, daarna zou een moment moeten zijn, van oké dit zijn de keuzes die we nu hebben gemaakt en, maar goed, nogmaals, uiteindelijk is het bij Mermaid wel heel goed gegaan. Dus ik vind het heel lastig. Elk project zeg maar, wat zij doen, dat is wel weer het leuk, het is altijd anders, het is altijd...

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Je kan geen productie zeg maar, licentie, niet-licentie, je eigen productie, aanpassen, weet je wel, alles, tenminste wat ik tot nu toe allemaal heb gedaan, alles is anders geweest, alles is weer een andere situatie.

Mandy: Ja. Maar dat maakt het werk ook zo leuk.

Sascha: Nee, absoluut, ja zeker, vind ik wel in ieder geval. Ja.

Mandy: En je zei net al, je bent met War Horse bezig. Is daar, zijn daar al momenten geweest dat je ergens een beslissing hebt genomen over, over een pop, of een moment dat je besloten om toch War Horse naar Nederland te halen, of..

Sascha: Nou nee, kijk, War Horse en inhoudelijk is het, is wat het is. En, hè, wij hebben een licentie, het is een licentieproductie, wat natuurlijk betekent dat wij gewoon 1 op 1 de productie zoals hij gecreëerd en bedacht is naar Nederland gaan halen, dus dat maakt dat je inhoudelijk geen discussies meer hebt. Je hebt geen discussies meer over, ja, dat paard moet er anders uitzien, of we gaan er, ja, kijk het enige waar wij nu mee bezig is, zijn met tekeningen van de set. En hoe wij die in de verschillende opties voor theater zeg maar, wat daar het effect van is. Heb jij War Horse gezien?

Mandy: Ik heb hem op beeld gezien, ik ben niet in het theater geweest.

Sascha: Je bent er niet in het theater geweest. De set of eigenlijk het stage komt heel erg de zaal in. Dus ja, dat kost je stoelen, dat heeft natuurlijk weer invloed op een *business case*.

Mandy: Ja.

Sascha: Dus daar worden nu, zeg maar, zijn we nu heel erg mee bezig van... en daar zou een aanpassing in kunnen komen, maar dat is uiteindelijk aan de designers, om te kijken van nou ja, hoe kunnen we hetzelfde beeld creëren, maar toch het aantal stoelen wat we daardoor verliezen zo minimaal...

Mandy: Ja. En het wordt de Amerikaanse tourversie, toch?

Sascha: Ja, ja.

Mandy: Dus zonder *revolve*?

Sascha: Uhm, nou, nee, volgens mij niet. Volgens mij krijgen wij die namelijk weer...

Mandy: Weer wel.

Sascha: Weer wel. Maar we zijn nu heel erg bezig met die tekeningen en ieder geval voor de, hoe zeg je dat, ja..

Mandy: Hoe het podium er uiteindelijk uit komt te zien.

Sascha: Ja, ja. Dus zitten we, en we zijn nog, ...

Mandy: Je hebt nog de tijd.

Sascha: Heel erg.

Mandy: Dit is weer een lange termijn.

Sascha: Dit is weer een hele lange termijn, ja. En dat is voor de, dat is voor het castingproces is dat wel weer heel erg fijn, omdat het een hele andere, ja, het is natuurlijk een hele andere, ander soort productie, en daardoor ook weer, vraagt ook weer om andere mensen.

Mandy: Ja. En gaan jullie opleidingen doen in het werken met de poppen?

Sascha: Nee, dat zit allemaal in het repetitieproces, ja.

Mandy: Dat wordt een heftig repetitieproces.

Sascha: Ja, dat is het ook. Het is langer dan wij normaal gewend zijn. Normaal is een, vanaf het eerste moment, de eerste repetitiedag tot de première is altijd zo'n week of acht. En dit zijn twaalf weken, dus dat is een maand langer dan normaal.

Mandy: Ja, heftig.

Sascha: Waarvan de eerste twee weken alleen poppen zijn, echt alleen de paarden, beginnen.

Mandy: Ja, gewoon oefenen en werken.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: Trainen.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: Ja, het is ook zo groot natuurlijk. En in Duitsland, want daar zijn jullie er natuurlijk ook mee bezig, gaat het daar goed, is het daar, dat jullie daar naar kijken hoe ze dat daar hebben gedaan of laat je dat helemaal los, ondanks dat het hetzelfde bedrijf is?

Sascha: Ja, dat laten we wel redelijk los, maar dat komt omdat Duitsland heel anders werkt dan wij. Op een andere, op een andere manier. En, tuurlijk ook op heel veel delen vergelijkbaar, maar, ja, ja, anders. Ja.

Mandy: Ja, dus het wordt weer, toch op jezelf en zelf...

Sascha: Ja, en het is een replica hè.

Mandy: Ja, dat helpt.

Sascha: Dat is, dat is altijd weer, je hoeft het allemaal niet te bedenken. Je weet, uiteindelijk weet je hoe het eruit komt te zien. Tekeningen worden gemaakt van hoe het erin gezet moet worden. Die creatives komen over om de mensen te, om met de mensen te repeteren van hoe, hoe het er uiteindelijk, hoe de acteurs het moeten gaan doen. Ja, dat is toch, dat is toch anders.

Mandy: Ja. Ja, je hoeft niets meer uit te vinden, dat scheelt.

Sascha: Nee.

Mandy: Behalve dan inderdaad het toneelbeeld en hoe het precies op de locatie gaat, maar..

Sascha: Ja, ja, ja.

Mandy: Dus dat scheelt wel. Ik wil nog wat algemene vragen over puppetry stellen. Want jij hebt vast wel het een en ander al gezien met poppen wereldwijd. Wat zijn jouw gedachten over het huidige gebruik van puppetry in de *performing arts* in zijn algemeenheid, dus niet per se in de cases die ik beschrijf of in wat jullie zelf hebben gedaan, maar gewoon over het algemeen?

Sascha: Ja, ik vind het, als ik zie zeg maar hoe het, en niet bij elke voorstelling, maar in, in, in de, in een situatie, dan noem ik wel effe War Horse, hoe dat gebruikt wordt en hoe, ja ik vind dat uniek. Ik vind het ongelooflijk knap dat je iets kan creëren wat een pop is, waarvan je ook heel duidelijk ziet oké daar zitten twee mensen in en de derde houdt het hoofd, doet het hoofd. En dat je na vijf minuten niet meer de, de mensen niet meer ziet, maar naar een paard kijkt, dat vind ik knap. Dat vind ik zo briljant gedaan. En je ziet, je ziet gewoon een ontwikkeling dat men daar inventiever in wordt. En, en, ja, poppen worden echt. He, ze, ze, ze, ze hebben, zeker bij War Horse gewoon uiteindelijk gecreëerd dat, dat ze iets tot leven hebben kunnen maken. En dat vind ik, dat vind ik te gek om te zien. Kijk een Ursula, als je dan naar Mermaid kijkt, ja het is een pop en het is prachtig hoe dat gedaan is met die tentakels, maar uiteindelijk is het natuurlijk een sprookjesbeeld wat je ziet. Wat je bij Ursula, heb je, maar dat heeft, dat is natuurlijk de hele, het hele visuele plaatje van, van, van Mermaid wat op een hele andere manier natuurlijk ingezet, het is minder realistisch hè, de bewegingen zijn realistisch en het is prachtig uitgevoerd, maar een War Horse, ja, dat, dat, het is gewoon heel knap dat je daar een heel realistisch gebeuren neerzet. Dat vind ik er heel,

Dispositional Questions

heel gaaf aan.

Mandy: En nou komt War Horse naar Nederland, we hebben Mermaid net gehad, het is, het is natuurlijk begonnen met Lion King hier, eigenlijk.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: Er zit een soort opmaat in. Denk je dat dat blijft? Of denk je dat dit nu wel het topje van de ijsberg is en dat..

Sascha: Ja, geen idee. Weet je, ik denk dat in de tijd van Lion King, dat we allemaal ongelooflijk enthousiast waren over hoe dat bij Lion King gedaan en en ja, op dat moment kan je, heb je misschien ook wel gedacht van nou ja, weet je wel, dit is zo knap en uniek wat nu gedaan is, daar gaan, daar kan je niet meer overheen gaan. En uiteindelijk, op een hele andere manier, want ik denk dat je dat ook totaal niet met elkaar kan vergelijken, komen er weer nieuwe dingen. En ik denk dat die ontwikkeling altijd door zal blijven gaan.

Mandy: Ja, puppetry is natuurlijk, is, is letterlijk eeuwenoud.

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: Maar het is wel iets wat net als veel andere dingen met golven gaat.

Sascha: Ja, ja, ja.

Mandy: En er is wel discussie over of dit nou het begin is of dat dit nu alweer, soort van het topje is en daar houdt het mee op voorlopig.

Sascha: Maar is dat interessant? Ik denk van ja, weet je, uiteindelijk gaat het om een voorstelling. En wil jij een voorstelling maken en kies je voor inhoudelijk, maak je inhoudelijke keuzes bij een voorstelling wat daarin past. En ja, ik weet niet of de vraag zo interessant is waar, is dit het begin van puppetry of is dat het einde. Ik denk ja, uiteindelijk vraagt een voorstelling of wat dan ook, vraagt erom of vraagt er niet om. En op het moment dat het erom vraagt ga je het dan toepassen. En op welke manier ga je daar inventief in zijn. Ik denk dat dat, ja, dat het daarmee begint en niet met van, nou, dat puppetry. Ik denk ook dat je het, in mijn ogen, maar dat is heel persoonlijk, een foute keuze zou maken, als je een show nu zou ontwikkelen met de keuze van we willen een puppet show gaan maken en daaromheen ga je dan bedenken ja maar wat moet het dan zijn en wat is dan een geschikte titel, om, voor, puppets te maken.

Mandy: Want jullie werken niet vanuit de trend.

Sascha: Nee.

Mandy: Van oké, puppets zijn nu heel erg in, dus dat gaan we ook doen.

Sascha: Nee, en ik denk persoonlijk dat dat ook een foute keuze zou zijn. Want ik denk uiteindelijk dat je titel en het verhaal en wat, uiteindelijk zijn dat natuurlijk ook marketingvraagstukken, wat, wat, hè, wat, wat, wat is je doelgroep, en, en, en waar ligt een vraag. Maar ik denk uiteindelijk vooral wat wij willen als bedrijf is mooie titels brengen met kwaliteit.

Mandy: Ongeachte de trend.

Sascha: Ongeacht wat de trend is, ja.

Mandy: Of je maakt de trend.

Sascha: Ja, dat kan je ook stellen. Zeker, ja, maar goed dan heb je het heel erg over Nederland. En, ja.

Mandy: Ik heb nog een paar Salomonskeuzes voor je.

Sascha: Hm, hm.

Mandy: En het idee is dat je moet kiezen, maar je mag ze wel toelichten, dus dan, dat verzacht de pijn een beetje. Ze vallen mee hoor. Geld of kunst?

Sascha: Kunst.

Mandy: Risico of zekerheid?

Sascha: Risico.

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Sascha: Of, wat was de eerste, de tweede?

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Sascha: Tjeetje. En je moet een keuze maken..

Mandy: Maar je mag hem toelichten.

Sascha: Ja, nee. Ik zou nooit kunnen stellen vooruitgang ten koste van alles, want ik denk dat ten koste van alles het niet waard is. Ik denk wel dat vooruitgang, dat je vooruit moet gaan, maar ik denk niet ten koste van alles. Dus als ik dan een keuze maken, dan zou ik behouden wat goed is.

Mandy: En dan vooruitgaan met wat goed is.

Sascha: Ja, dat denk ik, dat dat uiteindelijk...

Mandy: Specialiseren of verbreden?

Sascha: Ja, dat is ook weer, waarvan ik zeker denk dat beide. Er is voor beide wat te zeggen. Ik vind het,

Salomon's Choices

het, nadeel van specialiseren is dat je soms, in sommige gevallen niet meer in staat bent om overkoepelend na te denken en als ik zou moeten kiezen zou ik verbreden. Maar dat is persoonlijk, voor mezelf.

Mandy: Vast team of een frisse input?

Sascha: Ja ook dat heeft allebei voor- en nadelen. Frisse input.

Mandy: Een contract of een vertrouwensrelatie?

Sascha: Ha, ja, nou een gevleugelde uitspraak alles wat fout kan gaan moet je vastleggen. Ja. Ik denk vanuit ons vakgebied doen wij heel veel op basis van vertrouwen. Maar als een producer moet je uiteindelijk altijd zorgen dat, dat je een contract. Dus vanuit mijn, vanuit mijn, ja, vanuit mijn functie zou ik voor contract moeten gaan, terwijl ik denk dat wij ons werk niet kunnen doen op de manier zoals we het doen zonder vertrouwensrelatie. Maar vanuit mijn functie zeg ik contract, ja.

Mandy: Enkele lange termijnprojecten of meer korte termijnprojecten?

Sascha: Korte termijn.

Mandy: Had je eigenlijk al aangegeven. Positief publiek of positieve recensenten?

Sascha: Positief publiek.

Mandy: Hedendaags of voor de eeuwigheid?

Sascha: Hedendaags.

Mandy: Een groot gedeelte van het budget besteden aan een grote naam of een ster of juist aan heel veel andere dingen kunnen besteden?

Sascha: Ha, [*lange bedenktijd*] andere dingen.

Mandy: Dat waren ze alweer, viel best wel mee toch?!

Sascha: Ja.

Mandy: Zijn er nog dingen waar je op terug wilt komen of die je wilt bespreken omdat je denkt dat ik ze over heb geslagen; heb ik iets gemist?

Sascha: Nee, nee ik geloof het niet. Nee. Jij?

Mandy: Nee, nee, ik ben, ik ben helemaal blij.

Sascha: Ja?

Mandy: Ja, ik ben helemaal blij.

Finishing Up

Appendix I – Interview Toby Olié – 12-04-2013

Section titles

Starting Up

Interview transcript

Pleasantries and getting the computers and everything ready.

Toby: Go on, hit me than. What do you want, what do you need to know?

Mandy: I've set up an interview that's partially structured, so I've got kind of a structure with some questions, but it's also partially open so that you just can elaborate on things you want to elaborate on.

Toby: Yeah, cool.

Mandy: And it will start with just some personal information about you and about more specifically about your jobs at War Horse and Mermaid.

Toby: Hm, hm.

Mandy: Than the three moments that I've already e-mailed you about. Just some situational sketches, where you can tell me what happened and maybe I will interfere with a little question or something..

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: But it's really the idea that you just talk. And then some general puppetry questions and some Salomon's choices so that you really have to pick. So it's not that difficult and it's mainly the idea that you're gonna start talking and that I'm gonna start analyzing.

Toby: Haha. Yeah, cool. Sounds good, sounds very good.

Mandy: So let's start with the..

Toby: Basil, Basil from Handspring will love this. He loves to talk.

Mandy: yeah? Oh great! I love people who love to talk, because I really... the interview is based really on the analysis of what everyone is saying. So not on the questions, because than my answers, uhm, it would influence the analysis too much. So it's really based on what people volunteer on information.

Toby: I see.

Mandy: So I don't steer anyone into saying something.

Toby: Okay, yeah, yeah.

Mandy: So, but first I want to just go to specifics on Little Mermaid and War Horse about your function there which I already know and about your contract form and how long you were involved.

Toby: Yeah.

Background Questions

Mandy: So, if you could just tell me a bit about your job, in both cases.

Toby: Yeah. So, with War Horse I was hired for the first workshop in June 2006. It was the first workshop using a puppet. They'd made prototype cardboard things, but it was the first time handspring was brought in. and from than I was the hind of Joey the horse for the two runs for the national theatre. Which ran from October 2007 to February 2008. And then it ran from September 2008 to march 2009. And then it transferred to the West End in march 2009 and I went on to play the head of the horses and the goose and I did that to march 2011. And then from then up until march this year, so two year, I was the associate puppetry director.

Mandy: And what kind of contract form did that entail?

Toby: In what way, sorry, what do you mean?

Mandy: Are you freelance or did they actually, or was it a job?

Toby: I guess I was still freelance, I was still working on other things.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: It's, you sort of basically get paid.. once you rehearse new people in and the show is open, you're on a retainer with you know a retainer that covers phone calls and things, and then if you're called in it's sort of a paid by the session basis.

Mandy: And so for Mermaid was that any different?

Toby: So for Mermaid I was, let me think, I was asked to get involved in October, what year are we now? In October 2011. And I was asked by Bob to get involved and then 2011?

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: Yeah, 2013, the show was last year, 2011. I was asked to get involved, oh my gosh, I was asked to get involved and then I did a workshop for it in December of 2011 in New York. And I came over to Holland in march 22nd as the puppet designer and the puppetry creator, designer, director, that kind of job.

Mandy: And you did very well.

Toby: Good. And that was kind of the same thing I guess. It was a contract and it was full time when I was out there, but from October up until leaving for Holland I was still doing other jobs.

Mandy: Yeah.

Situational Sketches

Toby: Hm, hm.

Mandy: Good, that's just some background information so that I can place everyone in the right position and what they do and how long they were involved and stuff like that.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: So, I really want to ask you about three situations where a decision was made that you were directly or indirectly involved in.

Toby: Hm, hm.

Mandy: And the three situations have to be from three time periods. The first one is from the preparation phase..

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: ..the second one is from the rehearsal phase..

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: .. and the third one is during the run.

Toby: Okay.

Mandy: And since you've worked on both War Horse and Mermaid, it would be convenient if you would say like two situations from War Horse and one from Mermaid.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, okay, cool. I'm trying to think the best, sort of the best. And it's literally a decision making process. Not in terms of, I don't need to, you don't want a particular kind of decision? You just want a personal decision that involved my work.

Mandy: No, I just want a decision that involved you yeah. And it can be anything, it can be something really big, it can be something really small, it just as long as there was a decision made and that you know some particulars about and that you can tell about.

Toby: Okay.

Mandy: So again, I'm just giving you an opening to just talk.

Toby: Okay, I'll do the, I'll do the first, I'll do the pre rehearsals and rehearsal one from Little Mermaid and then I'll do the performance one from War Horse.

Mandy: Yeah, fine.

Toby: Yeah. So, I'm trying to think about what pre-rehearsal Little Mermaid was. Yeah, okay, so. Pre-rehearsal Little Mermaid. I was presented with a sort of design concept. A sort of drawing and a model of how Bob would imagine Ursula would look. But how the tentacles would move, and how many, and who would animate them was still up for grabs. So my big thing with puppets is, so the design of the puppet is totally dictated by the people power, about how many hands you've got and Bob's model had, oh god, 8 or probably had 8 or 9 tentacles on it, around her waist, and straight away the conversation, in the conversations we had Glenn was saying, well all the puppeteers need to be inside her skirt. There's probably room for three people and that, and he said, so three people and a tentacle they operate from each hand, so that's yeah, yeah that's 6 tentacles. And I went a tentacle in each hand, what do you what do you mean. And he said well you know, if they're at the end of the tentacle and they're pulling strings to move it and so straight away somebody who didn't know about design or technical design or structure was sort of calling the shots on how this thing would be build. And I said well there's, there's how you operate a whole tentacle, the weight of the whole sort of you know four foot long tentacle at the base I said that sounds like robotics, that's totally not me. If you want me on this project for the reasons that Bob has liked working with me I said there has to be something where you're in direct control. Handspring puppet company.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: Are called handspring because they believe the closer you are to the puppet, the more contact you are, the more life there is.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: So they very rarely work with marionettes or rod puppets because that distance dilutes the movement of the puppet. And I am, I definitely have taken that from them and use that a lot. So I said if you want the tentacles to act, you have to be on them, you have to have the puppeteers outside, you have to have them visible. So I, the decision I sort of really pushed was about having the puppeteers on the outside of the frame making them part of Ursula's aesthetic, which is sort of Bob's department of that costume, but having them on the outside of the frame and having them directly operating a tentacle, so at that point all six male ensemble members were then employed, that became part of their track. And I think, you know, it does sort of, it was about deconstructing it really, not trying to make an illusion. And the sort of, you know, the request of having life and mobility in the tentacles meant that the design needed to be a lot more open and a lot more honest.

LM: Ursula with strings attached?

Mandy: Yeah. Did Bob follow you straight away with this, because..

Toby: Yes, very much so. He followed me straight away because the reason that he got me involved was because of the, the, big cheshire cat that I designed. I did Alice in Wonderland ballet with him and the cheshire cat's tale was the simplest sort of toy snake kind of mechanism. You know, sort of cut into sections, like, hang on, like ... like this guy [*shows toy*].

Mandy: Oh gosh! Haha .

Toby: So it's similar to him and Bob, Bob had seen how articulate that was and, you know, straight away we'd met with the makers in a meeting and straight up that, and the mechanism to, to create, to create movement in a tentacle from the base, you know, it's thousands of pounds to have strings running down each side, you could pull and dictate, was just expensive and it meant that you would have really robotic movement, and we wanted it to be fluid and be able to have lots of possibilities, so Bob was really, really behind, yeah, having that sort of open, that open sort of aesthetic that will allow for the most movement.

Mandy: So the consequences of this decision were aesthetic, but also in terms of personnel...

Toby: Hm, yeah, yeah. It meant that the, it meant that the, yeah we went from, I mean I don't know why three people was offered up straight away anyway, why, why would. I think it had to do with the room inside the skirt, so that Bob's design, well similar to the puppet, had that sort of structure she was in from the waist down. And I think that they just thought oh we'll hide three people in there, to make 'em push her around. And yeah, so it was about, it was an aesthetic choice, it was a sort of puppet acting choice, for the puppet to act as much as possible, than the people had to be freer, which meant they were visible., and then, yeah, people power wise that meant that six, all six male ensemble were involved rather than three.

Mandy: And did that cause for tension? Because three extra people involved could cause some problems elsewhere.

Toby: Yeah I think so, I mean, I know that we didn't, the reason Ursula flies in the show is because the 6 guys weren't available for that point in the show. In planning Ursula had to fly because the 6 guys were gonna be singing in kiss the girl, so they couldn't be used in that scene and, so I think they would, from the beginning they would try to keep the number of people on Ursula down to a minimum. I mean the cast number was decided, but I think, just sort of a ease of mind set I think they just wanted as few people as possible, but actually the smallest number she could have was always six, because you wanted at least six tentacles and it was one person per tentacle.

Mandy: And if you would face a similar situation next time, that someone offers you a design and you feel that it wouldn't, it won't work with that design, because of aesthetics, or because of personnel, or anything like that, would you change your approach from, because of what you've learned this time, or because everything went so smoothly that you would say, like, no this was the right approach.

Toby: I think it was, I think, I think the way I dealt with it in terms of saying like if you want that, that's not what I do probably wasn't a helpful thing. so I said that you know when they, I said it sounds like robotics and that's not my department, I think, I think the tactic that I certainly have deployed since then is talking about what, what is expected from the puppet, what people want from the puppet, so in terms of, you know, if you want, I feel like I would now say, if you want Ursula to be that articulate and to act, it's about getting as much movement as possible and that movement means direct contact. I think that talking about the outcome, and making sure everybody wants the same thing. because the director might want just random movement. He might not have wanted the specificity that we had.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: I mean the choreography that we had. So I mean as, my big thing is about clarifying the outcome, making sure everyone in on the same page and then sort of working backwards from there.

Mandy: and this really was your perfect solution right? You've got the six.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: It worked out fine this time.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, I think as soon as, I feel like as soon as people throw money and technology at puppets to solve puppets, it doesn't work. I think you have to start as simple as possible and build up and then when you get to what you want, you actually find that it's not that far from the beginning, usually.

Mandy: And that is actually again what you already said that's working from the solution and ...

Toby: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mandy: Not from your budget.

Toby: Yeah, working from the, yeah, the solution, the optimum of what you'd expect rather than by yeah what's dictated by numbers.

Mandy: Unfortunately they always matter, right.

Toby: Yes, exactly, not dictated by numbers and finance but of course it always is.

Mandy: It's always at least a part of what's happening, right.

Toby: Definitely.

Mandy: Let's go to the second situation, because otherwise it will take forever this interview and although I would love to talk with you a lot, but let's not take that much of your time. So, during the rehearsal period.

Toby: So, during the rehearsal period we'd had been it was decided that we would use shadow puppetry to, for, let me think, well it was initially shadow puppetry for four sequences in the show. It was gonna be the prologue, it was gonna be Daddy's Little Angel, Ursula's first song we would show how she killed all of her sisters using shadow puppetry, and then when Ariel turns back into a Mermaid and Ursula brings her back into the sea, that was gonna be, sort of the descent was gonna be shown through shadow puppetry. And then when Ariel was given legs and was taken back up to the surface by her father that was gonna be shadow puppetry. And which was gonna be my department. And before we started rehearsals and Daddy's Little Angel, the puppetry in Daddy's Little Angel was cut because we couldn't, we couldn't back project, was that right? Yes, we couldn't back project. And we didn't have enough money for two projectors, so it was decided that anything else was gonna be front projected. But Daddy's Little Angel would have had to be back projected and due to space and finance we couldn't have that, so that was cut straight away. And then we filmed the other three sequences. In Utrecht in, in the end of week two, something like that, we filmed the sequences and the day after the sequences were filmed there was a meeting between Glenn and the producers and myself and it was decided that it would be too strange very late on, cause we had the prologue, which would be fine, and then it would be very strange later on, to sort of bring down the screen like a movie and play a bit of shadow puppetry and then bring the screen back up and carry on with the show. It felt like it was changing the sort of aesthetic. Which I completely agreed with. I thought as soon as we'd cut out Daddy's Little Angel, we'd taken a good chuck of puppetry, of shadow puppetry out of the first half, which meant that you wouldn't see anything until, you know, 10-12 minutes from the end of the show, and it just felt like, it felt like too much of a shift in, in, too much of a shift in aesthetic and you know, for me the worst kind of puppets are the puppets that don't need to be there, really. And, and so I was very quick to go yeah, you know, I agree, let's cut it, and Glenn was very quick to find a solution using, you know, the idea of the Ariel double, so when sane started to play Ariel in those scenes that was sort of a means to keep the storytelling going. Even though we didn't have the puppetry and all. So mean, yes, it was sort of, they suggested it and it was sort of my dec[ision].. they were worried that I'd might be offended at cutting my work. But I was, you know, like I'm always up for letting something go if it's you know if it's not if it's a distraction from the story, if it's not as clear as possible and if there's a more efficient way to tell the story, then I'm happy for stuff to being cut.

Mandy: Yeah, but I mean it's a bit of kill your darlings so I can understand why they..

Toby: Haha.

Mandy: But I remember that weekend actually.

Toby: Yeah. I've got a bit of the shadow puppets on my wall, just there.

Mandy: Yeah, I love it. I already saw it, I love it!

Toby: Yes, so I've got some souvenirs out of it, that was okay.

Mandy: Now, but I remember that weekend and you were out there for quite some time with quite a lot of people and it must have cost a bunch. So, cutting this was also a very costly decision.

Toby: I think so, I think also the cost of them renting the projector and the screen was something that they were, that was very much in pending, and they didn't want to hire that and then for us in tech to realize that something that was a bit risky, and the video needed editing obviously, and special effects and post production, I think it was sort of, they were trying to assess before the big turning point where they would then spent more money, they had to say is this really gonna work, is this gonna be something we're gonna keep? Because it had a knock on effects. Oh, it was all about costs. It was definitely all about costs. If it was something that we could have tried out and seen, than it would have been okay, but it was definitely put across as a look before we go ahead rent the screen and find out that something the other, this is what it's gonna be like.

Mandy: And if there was more money available, would you think that it would have added to the show if we'd would have done the shadow puppetry instead of the current solutions?

Toby: I think it would have, no, the current solution is definitely the better solution. I think, if there had been more money that would have been the opportunity to have seen it on stage, as an option.

Mandy: Yeah. But then, you feel that still it would have been cut?

Toby: It might not have been cut. I just think that it wouldn't have been the best way to've told the story. I

think it would have been a very strange change in aesthetic or a very strange change in style of the show.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: And it might have, you might have needed a little bit more shadow puppetry instead of less.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I think. I think it would sort of need, it would need Daddy's Little Angel and it would need Ariel's transformation the first time into a human to have been shadow puppetry. You need to set up the language of swimming up and down to the surface as shadow puppets.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: For it to have worked, yeah. Or when she rescue's prince Eric you see it, or something, some little journey, shadow puppets for journey's really would be, would have been the thing.

Mandy: Yeah, but I mean she goes to the surface quite a lot, so than you could have also added the travel of Ariel and Botje at the start, and stuff like that, but that would have been a lot more than the original four ideas.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Mandy: And, did everyone accept the decision? I mean, because you obviously did accept it and it was mostly your work, but there were plenty of other people involved. The Utrecht weekend was quite an extended weekend with a lot of people involved.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: And I can imagine that some people weren't too happy about this.

Toby: Haha. I think, I think people were, people were pleased with what we filmed, but I think the, I think once Glenn had got it clear in his head how he could tell the story using actors, it meant a few script changes I think, I think things were sent back to Disney because Ariel the scene when Ariel was given legs couldn't start with her on stage straight away you'd have to imment a bit more dialogue between Eric and Grimsby to cover the fact that Ariel would have a wig change and that costume change, no costume change was the same. It was a wig change from the under the sea into normal hair. And so a few kind of, the knock on's were, were I guess weren't too substantial, that people could get enthusiastic about the change straight away. I don't think there was any resistance to it from anybody no.

Mandy: For next time, because this time everyone had already shot the shadow puppetry and I mean it was quit an extended plan already and they shut it down after a lot of work that had already gone into it. Do you think maybe a next time that could be foreseen or something?

Toby: I think, yeah, I mean, I'd .. it always for me it always comes down to the communication of the creatives really and what, what, I think especially with then, what happened then, the technology side of things, there wasn't somebody who represented the projection side or the filming side. It was always talking, me and Glenn, talking to the producers and occasionally Jeff would pitch in with his technology advise that he knows from shows, but it's that thing when you have actually quite a big element in the show that doesn't have a representative, you all begin to talk and theorize about what might be and actually that's when dangers.. I mean that's when, that's when risks are taken I think. Because you go oh front projected and then someone says well yeah, but what we've got right now in the show is a gauze that you can't project on, because you'd see the image behind. We need to rent a big expensive screen but of course Glenn doesn't know about projection screens, so he just didn't, I didn't know about it, I thought oh you project on the gauze, fine, yeah, yeah, great, great, great. And so it's, it's that thing of having, having select specialist expertise in other fields that you can't, everybody can't theorize about one field. You need to have make sure that everything is equally represented in the room when you're talking about it, otherwise I think you're setting yourself up for a lot of misunderstandings, which is what we, I mean, eventually what we had.

Mandy: Yeah, definitely.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: And so for next time is there anything you would do personally to prevent such a thing from happening, because for you after all it was a lot of work and a long weekend of hard work and that could have been prevented and that you could have spent on other things that needed work on.

Toby: Yeah, you're right, you're right. I think, I think for me, I, I certainly learned that, that unless I can visualize how something is gonna look and how it's gonna work, than I shouldn't put my energy towards doing it. It think. Even things like the, we had, the animal shadow puppets in kiss the girl, that were in the set, that were eventually cut as well, but they were a similar thing, that they'd been, I was asked to make animals that moved in the threes, but I was, didn't know why, or what kind of movement and sort of what scale they were. We were just looking at the size of it could fit in the piece of set, rather than what size would look good from the stage. And it was something that I didn't have clearly in my head how it would

work. It was being fitted around other things, similar to the film shadow puppetry. And I think it's that idea that unless the path is really clear, yeah, unless the intention and the means is really clear, and that you can't execute an idea that isn't fully realized, really. I suppose, like, that I said you've got that sort of person with the expertise missing.

Mandy: And.

Toby: So than he, yeah.

Mandy: So did you run into something like that afterwards again, like..

Toby: Not since, no, I mean some of the projects I'm doing now that's exactly what I'm trying to do. We're theorizing now about a puppet, a big elephant puppet disappearing and reappearing. And I've just said, we can't theorize about it, we have to test ideas. If we don't know about inflatable puppet technology we have to find about it, otherwise let's find out about something different and find a different way of doing it. And I think it's that means of, of guessing and thinking the answers will appear from somewhere isn't right, you have to practically explore it or know it from the beginning. You know, you plan an idea based on your own knowledge or do some research and development, which is what we're doing now, we're doing two weeks of research on this elephant show.

Mandy: Cool.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: A reappearing elephant.

Toby: Yeah, he's a ghost elephant and he appears and reappears and we're doing it in a tiny studio space with no wings to hide this elephant in.

Mandy: Great! Sounds very practical.

Toby: Yeah, ha, ha.

Mandy: Let's continue to the run, because otherwise it will take too long. From the, uh, War Horse.

Toby: From War Horse, so in the middle of the, so we were about, let me think, we were probably half way through the second run in the national theatre. I was the back legs of Joey the horse and at these... you've seen the show, haven't you?

Mandy: I've seen bits and pieces online, but I haven't been to London yet.

Toby: So there's a scene, there's a scene where he, quite early on, where the horse, the baby horse is growing up into the big horse. The big horse has bonded with the boy and the boy's put the horse in the stable, meanwhile the horse, the boy's father has made it back, so the horse will plough. And the man, the farmer comes in and tries to put a ploughing collar on the horse and the horse is like, is partially thoroughbred so it doesn't do thumb work. It's not like that kinda horse. So it rears up and it kicks him, it's quite, it's sort of the first sort of intense sort of physical bit of choreography the horse puppet does in the show with the opposite. And the mother comes out and the family has and the horse standing in the stable very kind of restless and there's a line where the father says that horse won't plough and at that very point the two legs, the two back legs of the horse go, on this night, boeshjijj...

Mandy: Ooohhh! Oh gossh!

Toby: And I was left with this big leg shaped opening on the side of the body like that, looking out at the audience.

Mandy: Haha.

Toby: Holding on to the control rods, cause the control rods attached to like his ankle and they pivot, so the legs could fall off and I was still holding the control rods and you can't bend down and pick up the legs, so I was sort of left there standing and the decision to sort of, the decision really whether you attempt to remedy the situation, whether you, well yeah, whether I thought do I kneel down and try to pick these up.

Mandy: Let's pick up a leg.

Toby: Or do I just keep on doing what I'm doing, because I could still move the tail with the triggers. And I mean that, for me that decision as a puppeteer to carry on to like, to act exactly like I would have, and just not pretend to move the legs, because they're lying on the ground, was a decision I made just to keep my focus as it would have been if the legs had been on, because actually the two other puppeteers didn't know what, certainly the guy in front of me didn't know what had happened..

Mandy: Haha.

Toby: Haha.

Mandy: Sorry, I have a vivid imagination.

Toby: Well no, and apparently this instance, my friends have done theater degrees or theater modules about the liveness of theater and this instance has been used well the lecturer was in that night and has used it as an example of liveness in theater, so it's quite good.

Mandy: Perfect, brilliant.

WH: Back legs Joey broke down

Toby: But yeah, the decision to go on and not to attempt to remedy it was something that I was very aware of, of just thinking actually the whole act of puppetry is giving focus to something and making the audience believe in it and I thought yes his legs have fallen off, but they know that and they know it's not a real horse so if I you know, if a certain amount of trust in stage management and other people in the show that they would remedy it. They'd see how stuck I was and I there was no attempt for me to fix the problem. I thought they'll wait to a certain point in the scene where they can stop the show they'll come on they'll help. And rather than rather than me trying to remedy the situation I thought all I can do is carry on giving focus to what I'd done if the puppet was still intact. And carry on to a suitable point.

Mandy: And afterwards did the stage management agree with you or did they say like oh my god why didn't you pick up his legs.

Toby: No, they agreed, I mean, part, a little bit, a little part, part way into the scene someone came in and put the legs, attached the leg back on to the body, so we could carry on a little bit longer. Which they just did kind of subtly. And then, a certain point in the show the stage manager came in, it was just, I mean we never had such a significant break, we had sort of a hoof snap every now and again, but you could just sort of, they'd still be attached, so it would just be loose, so you could still carry on. But that was a very, very big significant break over time, so I think everybody in stage management was just aware that it was a big repair that had to be repaired properly for the show to carry on.

Mandy: The audience, how did they respond? I mean, ...

Toby: Interestingly they, the upstage leg went first, which they probably didn't notice. And then the downstage leg went and I think I seem to remember there being a couple of gasps. It's such a big theater anyway. I was only really aware of these people here, the couple of gasps and then you could see, I don't remember people laughing. I don't think I remember people laughing. And the you just, I just remember restless energy, which you can imagine.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: Just the audience going tapping each other on the shoulder and doing that. You felt the focus from the scene *vroemmm* all along to me.

Mandy: Haha.

Toby: Made my little window like that hi! I'm the puppet.

Mandy: 'Hi, I'm the puppets ass'.

Toby: Yeah, I'm the horses ass! So I think yeah, I was very aware of that all of a sudden happening. Although I think, well you felt the energy and the sort of shift in attention in the room, that change. But I don't think in terms of reaction wise, I don't think it got anything particular load.

Mandy: And did they get into the story again?

Toby: They yeah, yeah whenever we had breaks in the show, but especially that time, Joey would go off. The stage manager would say Joey needs to go to the vet because.

Mandy: Haha.

Toby: Yeah, because he had an accident. And then when you came back you know. We came back on and we and the audience would love it. They'd get a huge round of applause when we got back on and we'd start the scene maybe like you know 30 seconds previously from where we left off and you carry on again. And I think it's just that. I don't know I think if something like that happened in a very naturalistic kind of acting play if a horse fell down I think maybe the audience would see the actor a bit shaken and would may I don't know. I always feel like it takes longer to get back into it. But I think that with puppetry and the style of puppetry in *War Horse* is very open and very honest. With the visible puppeteers and the aesthetic of the horse not being, sort of copying realism in its movement, but not in its aesthetic, I think the audience are very quick to go oh yeah okay where were we, what were we doing and believe in it again.

Mandy: That's brilliant.

Toby: Luckily.

Mandy: Yeah, luckily. Oh my god, you must have been terrified, I mean..

Toby: It was okay, I think, I was just, I just couldn't believe it because the upstage one went first and I thought, oh well, at least the audience can't see it and then I just heard this noise in the back of the horse and then the downstage one went. You just froze, you don't really know what to do. You just think all I can do is carry on and pretend nothing has happened. And maybe pretend that my legs are the horses legs. Like trying .. I don't know.

Mandy: Haha.

Toby: I became a bit more active in the picture maybe than I was before yeah very strange very strange mentality but you just realize that the other two guys can't do anything about.

Mandy: No, of course not.

Toby: And I can't, I couldn't, it was just about carrying on, and committing to the moment that the puppet was engaged in and trust that someone else could come in.

Mandy: Haha. Well luckily you had a good stage management, that actually did.

Toby: Yeah, exactly, yeah.

Mandy: But, I could imagine that afterwards you must have felt quite differently in that scene.

Toby: Yeah, you certainly, you certainly felt very appreciative of how stable the puppet was all of a sudden. And how contained I was. You know, it's my little safe haven and it was very open again and all of a sudden it was like okay well back in the rhythm, back in there, yeah, yeah. It's all, all, okay. I'm fine.

Mandy: And that you're really dependent on the technology of the puppet and that is also influencing you, I would say that it wouldn't influence you as long as everything goes well, but after something like this maybe it would influence you more?

Toby: Yeah. It makes you aware of, it certainly makes you aware of other bits of the puppet. When I worked with other puppets and they broke in certain moments, or control rods are snapped, you realize you just have to grab it from a different point, of as soon as those legs had fallen of, I realized I could still move the tail, which was sort of half of my job really. You know, really, the legs and the tail. And you realize, I kind of realized, okay I've got still one of the, my kind of acting tools here, so I'll keep going with that. Rather than shutting down. But you very often if the puppet breaks, you become very hyper aware of another bit of the puppet all of a sudden or a bit of the puppet maybe didn't notice before. Because you have to cling to that bit or use that bit in a way. So all of a sudden I thought oh actually I'm aware of my contact, my human legs. Running from the top of the horse to the floor, because the horse's legs aren't there. You know. Normally I just wouldn't think about myself, I think about the horse, the weight going to the horse's legs. And straight away I thought all this audience has now when they look at the horse is the body and my body as a silhouette and the tail. So I kind of thought the kind of engagement and the focus I'm giving it with my body all of a sudden becomes a bit more important than it would have been if the puppet legs were still there.

Mandy: Yeah, definitely.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: And did it also influence you in shows afterwards? So when Joey was fixed again, did you change?

Toby: Yeah, no I did. I think it definitely did. I think you, I think the, I think as far as having confidence in knowing that whatever happened in the show the audience would always be sort of on your side, really, you know what I mean, the audience aren't there to judge, the audience revel in that sort of thing. or at least that, them being tested and when we used the audience of the show with the baby horse as a means of testing the audience. Cause the puppeteers are obviously a lot bigger than the baby horse. The sort of puppeteer puppet ratio is a lot harder to, it's sort of a challenge in the first scene to delete the puppeteers and I think once something like that happens with a puppet on stage, similar tests for the audience, but one that the puppeteer is not in control of, so it's, it's knowing that the audience, if you're committed enough beforehand and committed enough during some trouble, that actually they will, only they'll, they'll keep meeting you half way. They'll keep reading meaning into it. You just have to, you have to give it the most amount of focus and life that you can at that present time.

Mandy: Yeah, but I think that's also the, one of the strong points of War Horse of course. That they keep testing the audience.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: The audience really has to do a lot of work.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, very much so. And I think the, War Horse makes very good use of, I mean in all of it, the staging, the way fences are made out of people holding a sort of stick, I think as soon as War Horse you get people, you get the audience used to deleting performers on stage who are acting a certain way or giving focus a certain way, I think War Horse is really good at building, building and distorting the convention. So the perform, when we perform the second half, when we have the second cavalry charge four extra people role into position and they move the horse's legs in slow motion, because we couldn't get that level of slow motion out of our arms and bodies; we needed four extra people. And the audience are totally willing to believe, willing to ignore these four people, because they're so used to that convention. I think the show makes really good use of sort of building, building and distorting that kind of, that kind of, yeah, that test for the audience. Or trust I guess, trust in the audience. Using that trust to switch the conventional, or mess with the conventional a little bit.

Mandy: Do you think that's different with Mermaid? Because with Mermaid most of the, musical is obviously just acting and there are only a couple of puppets.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: In the fish and in Ursula. Do you think there's a difference?

Toby: I think there's, I think the confidence I had with Mermaid is that Bob's design is so, is so, I'm trying to think, so clear and concise. As soon as you have a blue, you know, the stage is such a big blue box, that as soon as you put anything else blue in there theatrically you're saying to the audience, this is nonexistent. This is part of the environment. So I feel that that first moment, once you've seen Ariel, that first moment of having somebody in blue with silver fish on a blue frame, is a means of saying you know, this is us being as honest as possible. And if the person in blue is doing a good enough job of keeping their body neutral, not distracting with their own body, keeping that, the puppeteers movement being secondary to the puppet, which Basil I'm sure will talk to you about, and then I think, as long as you're clear from the beginning, then it gives you license to keep bringing the blue people into the story. Well, to keep bringing them in, but the audience won't focus on the person, they'll always focus on the puppet, so I think Little Mermaid isn't more, isn't really testing the audience, it's more going this is what we're working with, this is what we're doing, here it is. You know, some people might not like it, some people might always look at the blue person because the puppets aren't, I guess, around long enough.

Mandy: That's the difference I think.

Toby: Yeah, yeah.

Mandy: Between Mermaid and War Horse.

Toby: Yeah, and you don't sort of emotionally invest.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: In those puppets in the same way as you do Joey the horse. Ursula maybe a little bit. But I think with Ursula it was a case of she was sort of big horrible monster that actually making her puppeteers part of her and making them purple and tentacles making her more, just made her shape bigger. I think if we put her, if all of her puppeteers would have been blue, I'm not sure, I began to think about that in Japan after my friend watched the video's of Holland and asked why are they purple, why aren't they blue? And I think she has to be her own entity. She has to be something disgusting and weird and I think part of making her puppeteers purple and making them like sort of her other victims.

Mandy: Yeah, but I mean, the masks are creepy as hell!

Toby: Haha. You know they're my face, right?

Mandy: Really.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: Sorry, haha.

Toby: That's okay, I had to pose like this for forty minutes, they took a cast of my face. But I think that they add, they make Ursula more of an event and make her different to the rest of the aesthetic. And I think that she, you know, she talks about her other victims, and I think having them there is a sort of weird unspoken reference, just helps make her more alien to the rest of the world, the rest of the world of the show.

Mandy: And you don't need to really start to love her because she's the bad guy.

Toby: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly.

Mandy: Not like with Joey, you have to really start loving him.

Toby: And also she has a very, her most active part is part actress. You know what I mean, the rest of the puppets, all blue control rods are very small, and swim and move around, while actually Ursula's focal point, the bit that's in the follow spot, is singing moving, you know, naturalistic person. So you have more of an event. You can make more of the puppeteers, because I feel like the audience is much more drawn to the sort of human entity of her. So the rest of her can be embellished a bit more, whereas I think about the school of fish, you need to have, you need to blank out everything else, so that people really, really focus in on those little fish and make everything else as easy as possible. We didn't dress the puppeteers in seaweed, we dressed them in plain blue, match them against the background. To try and get them as clear, to give a message as clear as possible to the audience.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: To get them understanding of the rules.

Mandy: Look at the fish!

Toby: Look at the fish! Don't look at the person! Look at the fish! But yeah, yeah, but I think what that person does, physically, is very small little differences between a good Little Mermaid puppeteer and a bad Little Mermaid puppeteer in term of you know making sure their body is doing less movement than the fish, or their body's more efficient and you know makes a big difference. I don't think the audience, maybe not all the audience would get that, but I think subconsciously they would, you see the puppet more if that's the case.

Mandy: Yeah, definitely.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: Let's wrap this part up.

Toby: Okay.

Mandy: I'm really, really happy with your examples, because you've given three really different examples.

Toby: Cool.

Mandy: And I can really work with that.

Toby: Oh good.

Mandy: I cannot per se tell you already what I'm going to do with it, because then I'd might influence your other answers.

Toby: Yeah, of course, of course.

Mandy: But this is really, really brilliant.

Toby: Oh cool.

Mandy: So thank you very much for this. I've also got three general questions about puppetry in the performing art, where you can just elaborate again and give your viewpoints and you can choose your own direction, which way you want to go, and maybe I'll steer you a bit, but not too much, again.

Toby: Yeah, fine.

Mandy: So the first one is how do you feel about the current use of puppetry in the performing arts in general? So not these two cases, but overall.

Toby: Yep. So I think, I'm obviously enjoying the influx in puppetry, in my job. I think it's stemming from, I wouldn't say like a backlash, but I think things like technology, everybody has technology at their fingertips now, you know, with phones and any of that kind of think. I think everybody is so expectant of technology that it should work and that it, and how immediate it is. And especially when I go and watch films with lots of sdi, I'm just used to it. I don't find it interesting anymore. You know explosions and big monsters and that sort of things are very rarely, I'm really drawn to them. And something like Jurassic Park where you can see the live puppets, or the people in suits, things like that I find I relate a lot more to. And I suppose that involvement of the audience in something like puppetry makes puppetry in itself you know an extremely, the act of puppetry is the act of theatre, of believing in something that's not real. And I think the, the, the ability for an audience to see, to sort of look at things, I mean, Basil will probably say this, but puppetry can make people look at normal things for the first time. So people come to us and go 'oooh, the puppet was breathing! I saw the puppet breathing'. And it's really emotional for them and they sort of, a little epiphany for them. Whereas you would never go and see a play and go oh my god that actors breathing really, really got to me. Because you know an actor is gonna breathe, you expect him to breathe. Because everything that the puppet does is an intentional decision from the person operating it. I think basil says it's like you're seeing things for the first time. It's like seeing life begin for the very, very first time, like you've created it, the audience have made this thing come alive. And I think it's quite often when people, I've seen shows with very serious puppetry and people giggle at it. Giggle at it sometimes, with serious moments. Because they're sort of acknowledging their own like 'oh my god, that's make me feel something ha ha ha' like, they, it sort of like they're making up for that. That bit of uncomfortableness, I don't know. And making up for it by sort of 'ha ha' giggling at it. But I think the current trend and influx in puppetry, the only way it's gonna get stronger is if story and emotional weight are carried by puppets. I think a lot of jobs are done, even in the past couple of years, you know, Little Mermaid for a certain extent, the puppetry is very decorative and is used to you know used to suggest things on stage that you can't suggest. Sort of more a kind of illusions or to suggest and environment, or to have an animal on stage. I've done lots of dog's, I've done lots of children puppets, so often puppetry is sort of a problem solver, rather than being as in War Horse something that has the story, that influences the story.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: That dictates the story and that requires an extremely large amount of emotional investment from the audience. So I personally now in a lot of projects that I'm doing is trying to get the puppets to get them more proactive basically. Both in story, both in character, but just to get them present in the scene, or to get them to dictate a part of the story or to get a reaction from another character. And to make them much less passive within the piece.

Mandy: And do you think that's something that happens overall, or is it something that really from you, and maybe also from handspring puppet company?

Toby: I think handspring definitely do it. I think it's, it's, it's that thing of wanting, having puppets for the right reason. I think all the people here who sort of are working with puppets very proactively right now are very good at it, but I think it's more about the people who don't work with puppets making the right

Dispositional Questions

What does puppetry add?

decisions or real..wanting the puppet for the right reason. I've done a couple of shows recently where the director's wanted puppetry but hasn't really know why. Or been very good at working it in. so it does just becomes decorative.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: And you actually, you know, it's about, it's about people knowing what work it takes. And what they're capable of. Again that thing of knowing the outcome. If somebody things you know I want to show this scene with a puppet, it's sort of like well why? Why do you want to do it and what do you expect from the audience to get out of it, when a puppet does it thy wouldn't get out of it if a human did it or someone in a costume or something like that?

Mandy: Do you think that the why-question is getting answered more nowadays than it was before?

Toby: It's starting to, it's starting to. I think, I think it's about, for me personally with my, in my line of work and the jobs I'm being offered, for me it's about speaking up more, not, I always feel like quite apologetic for puppetry sometimes, because it's usually a sort of additional thing that's brought in. and sometimes I feel very guilty for taking up rehearsal time or asking questions, so I'm being much more proactive in asking questions. And being more proactive in saying no to jobs where people have gone oh we're doing the jungle book, but they don't know why. Or they're doing Peter Pan and they want the dog that looks after the children to be a puppet. You know, anything where people would expect it there to be puppetry, of when they're using it out of convenient sake, I'm sort of saying that's great, but that's not something I want, you know there's somebody else who would be really, really, you know, really, really interested and up for making a puppet like that, but in my life, you know, I've done 2 versions of Peter Pan, where I made the dog and you know, they've been fun, people have liked the dog, but in terms of pushing puppetry forward it has to come down for me, it has to come down to saying no to other jobs, and saying yes and to pushing other people to make the puppets more, more proactive in the storytelling really.

Mandy: So not like Paul 75 versions of Peter Pan for you?

Toby: Yeah, no, definitely not 75 versions of Peter Pan for me, no. And I think talking you know, talking to scriptwriter or the dramaturge and actually getting them to realize... I think people don't realize what a puppet is capable of. You know, I still discover new things out on every project, certainly. But maybe I'm willing to put a little more faith in them straight away. Finn's very good at talking about when he approaches a human character, and he does, in just normal straight acting, he starts with a characters bad points and works from there. And so when he played the goose, he originated the part of the goose. And the goose was just made because Adrian who was raised on a farm with like a guard dog goose, but it wasn't in the script. And actually in the show she has this whole funny little sequence of getting in the house, getting in the farm house, and the door keeps closing in her face. And that is purely from Finn's personality and from him playing around with her in the scene, improvising. There was nothing in the script about it. And I think, you know, she's a really sweet proactive little bit of farm life that goes on. She's decorative and she's just suggesting other animal life in the show, but she's got the focus and she get's attention. She has a story and the audience really reacts to it. Sometimes too much, sometimes you have to tell the goose puppeteers to pull less focus, because they're getting too good at it. But it's interesting that it's about that sort of thought and intention in a puppet that can effect a story. But I hope in time you know, the more people see good puppetry, the more people will want to include good puppetry. Or people will be asking the right questions or involving the right people.

Mandy: Do you think that happened with Mermaid? Because Mermaid, the puppetry is mostly decorative and not very instrumental, maybe in Ursula, but...

Toby: I think it happened with Mermaid because, I think more puppetry could have been in Mermaid if Glenn wasn't the director. I think Bob was very, very willing to have puppetry and to sort of throw the gates right open, I think, you know, I was, I you know, if someone had approached me and said put puppetry into Little Mermaid, I would have definitely made flotsam and jetsam, the eels, two puppets.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: I mean, Sebastian and Flounder and Scuttle might have made nice puppets. It might have made the show a bit more like a theme park version of the Little Mermaid maybe. But I think flotsam and jetsam are very weird, they're eels, they move in a very eel, they move in such a specific way that the human body and the costumes of those characters don't suggest that for me in that show. I think their very begin in that show comes down to their movement and them being creepy and sinister, and I think them being puppets would have added to that. Would have created that far more, but I think you know, as soon as the characters spoke or moved or sang on stage for Glenn, not for any criticism, just for his background, what he's trained in and what show's he's done..

Mandy: Yeah, of course.

Toby: He says no, that's an actor, that's a person. That's fine. It's not that he doesn't trust puppets. He's worked with puppets quite a lot. He did a version of Dr. Doolittle where all the animals were puppets, but I think in terms of him knowing that he had to put the show on in four weeks and to do this, he was putting on the show that he knew that he could put on and that he could visualize the end of, in the same way that I say that if I can't visualize something it probably won't happen, I guess he did the exact same thing.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: But I think, you know, if he was to approach puppetry again, of if I was doing another Little Mermaid with him in the future, I'm sure our working relationship would be very different having gone through the situation in Holland together. I'd hope, I mean.

Mandy: The use of puppetry in War Horse? There have been some changes with the little girl that first was a puppet and then became an actress. How do you feel about the puppetry use there?

Toby: I think the, I think the way the puppet was made was very beautiful, I thought the way it was operated was very beautiful. I thought it was too, I think the 2 reasons it was cut were really valid. And I was sort of totally behind them really, in that you, it was very late in the show to introduce a human puppet. We had puppet soldiers in the cavalry charge, but they are in the background to 2 human's on stage. You know, they're sort of like a visual echo of a cavalry charge, whereas to introduce, I mean Emilie appears probably 15 minutes, 20 minutes into the second half. And so to certainly introduce a central character that is a puppet and on the big stage that War Horse was a very small puppet with 3 people crawling around, to use this human character as a puppet, I felt it was too late in the show. It felt as too much of a test, too much to ask for the audience. Actually we've set up this world where there is humans and there's puppet horses, and these puppet horse are amazing. And then how does this work? How does this human relate to this human puppet? It felt like too much for a shift too late on. And I think the main thing for the character Emilie in the show, the main thing is it has to be like Joey has found another Albert, he finds another kind of very close bond with somebody that doesn't treat him like a, someone that doesn't use him like an object of work, like the cavalry who buy's him loves him, but rides him into battle. And Emilie is a character who doesn't. Emilie is a character who just worships him because he's a beautiful, beautiful horse. And I think Mary Ann, one of the directors was really keen that Emilie for the audience is another Albert. That bond they have is as strong as the Albert bond. And I think having her as a puppet, you just didn't have that. This sort of the act of her being, the statement of her being a puppet, you know, sometimes the audience thought she was a little ghost, or that she was sort of, sort of made her to scary, made her to out of the moment. You know, and the difference between a human person, a human touching the puppet and a little wooden puppets hand touching the puppet is a very different statement. And if you want to invest in it as much as Albert, you'd have to make Albert a puppet or...

Mandy: Let's not do that!

Toby: No, or change the puppet girl. And as soon as, the second year we did it, as soon as Brinie, the actress who played Emilie, I don't think, I mean, in America they use a little girl because of employment laws so different. Which again is a beautiful whole other statement. But as soon as Brinie got scared of the German cavalry, the German soldier with the gun, and run across the stage 10 times as fast as the puppet could run, because it didn't have somebody on his feet, you just went oh my god, this is amazing, this is amazing, you got, you know, you got the energy of another child on stage, a child on stage. Which is such an interesting thing opposite a puppet horse.

Mandy: and, so, War Horse continues to improve, and to learn from itself.

Toby: Very definite.

Mandy: And there are still new versions of course. One is coming to Germany, finally one in the neighborhood for me.

Toby: And then Holland next autumn.

Toby: No, but the interesting thing is, there was a tour in America, which wasn't on a big thrust stage, where all our other versions had been. And it actually became a lot more theatrical. There was a lot more action of the horses on the spot, a lot more, it made a lot more of the theatricality of it. It's the most theatrical version of the show, I think. And that is now the version that gonna happen everywhere. There's been a sort of big conversation, you know, and they said, we need to lock this down now. We need to have a version of the show and a version of the script that we do. And I think that the plan is that the USA tour version is the version that happens everywhere else. And it has more puppets in it, or sorry, the same number of puppets, but they use them more. You know, more on the spot stuff, the screen in the set is used a lot more to tell the story, it feels a lot more proactive in its storytelling, the USA tour version. It asks more of the audience to invest. Which is exciting.

Mandy: Yeah. Is it better?

Toby: I think, yeah, I think the puppetry technique in the USA tour isn't as good as London [*chuckles*].

Mandy: Haha, of course not, of course not.

Toby: Because we've always had, we've always had ex-puppeteers passing on that knowledge and interestingly in London now they just had a really, really big cast changed. And I think the puppetry probably has suffered from having just 12 new people, there is no one there to raise the bar, to get better, to get better, to get better, to lead by example. But I think yeah, the show itself, the storytelling in the show is, enjoys itself more with the USA tour version, definitively.

Mandy: I've got one more open question for you.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: So, puppetry obviously is an ancient art form. But lately it's been coming, it's in flux again.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: But more in a either mechanical or technological form. You've got walking with Dinosaurs, which is more robotics than puppetry of course.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: and War Horse set a tone for a whole new field of puppetry of course, that's been repeated and copied, and sometimes badly, but, at least it's up and coming.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: So what do you see for the future of puppetry.

Toby: I always talk with Finn about this. Is this the prime time and is it gonna be downhill from here, or is it the, you know, is it gonna get better. And we always say that it's only gonna get better if the people who are good at it use it for the right reasons. You know, as discussed. And I think, sorry, what was your question again? I sort of talked myself out of your question.

Mandy: The question was how do you see the future of puppetry?

Toby: How do I see the future? I hope, I suppose my hope for the future is that people begin to write stories, or write plays, put on plays, that need puppetry. Where puppetry is not brought in to solve a problem, but where they sort of go I'm writing this because I want a puppet to tell the story. You know, even the difference between when I've left the university, I was usually halfway, sometimes a week before the rehearsals started to solve a problem. And now with Little Mermaid I'm asked six months before rehearsals to come in to design something. Or with lightening princes I was brought in, in may 2010 and were gonna start rehearsals in July, you know. It's about, I hope, that yeah, plays will be created to exploit the art form really. To make the most of the art form. I think that's why War Horse was so successful. Because we knew we were gonna tell it with a puppet. And the whole, I mean we were fortunate to have workshop time and the budget to workshop a show like that. But I think everybody in that room, be they the lighting designer, the set designer, the script writer, the director, everyone, everybody was totally willing to let the puppet tell the story. If that meant cutting texts, if that meant adding a scene that had no dialogue in it whatsoever. I think everybody was really behind that. And I think hopefully the future of puppetry will mean that people are more willing, you know, that people will make work with puppetry at the core of it. If the right people are involved.

Mandy: That's what happened of course with War Horse. I mean, they actually knew that they wanted to do something with puppetry and they searched for the right story.

Toby: Yes, exactly.

Mandy: But it was an already existing story of course.

Toby: yeah, yeah, very definitely. And I think I would be interesting the relationship between I mean and even in shows that don't have puppets where they haven't involved in puppetry, the relationship between the writer and the creative team. Because very often the writers work feels very sacred and can't be changed. And yet you cut a piece of costume, you change a piece of this, and actually a big part of this lightening princes musical the story has changed, or actually the story hasn't, the words don't have to, the words or stage directions are dictating the visuals too much. You should trust that visual language can emote a lot. Or can tell a story very quickly. The aesthetic of the set can indicate a whole prologues worth of dialogue if it needs to. And I think people having that trust in puppetry will mean that it's more the centre of the storytelling.

Mandy: And in the meanwhile, when I saw Up from Disney Pixar, the first 5 minutes or so are silent and it's the best part of the entire movie.

Toby: Yes. Totally.

Mandy: And that was when something in me said like, oh, this is what he meant. Ah, now I get it.

Toby: Definitely. I think, even the film they did afterwards, have you seen that? Wall-E?

Mandy: Wall-E, yeah.

Toby: The bit where he is by himself and there is no dialogue.

Mandy: No, none at all. I mean he only says 'Wall-E' and 'Eve'.

Toby: Yeah! And that is so beautiful. And then when he goes into space and has an adventure and tells a story with those humans and things, you just like 'Nooo'.

Mandy: No, done!

Toby: Yeah, yeah, it loses it. Where there is something so brilliant about making your audience so proactive by doing less, by inviting them in a lot more, that I think that's yeah, that's when.. I cried at Up so much, and I mean, I never cry at a normal movie so much, let alone an animated movie. And exactly, it's for exactly those reasons that it involves you so much more, by not having dialogue, by having music, by letting you emote and go *[makes sopping noise]*.

Mandy: Yeah! And it is heart breaking. The first five minutes of Up really are heartbreaking.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: I don't wanna keep you for very much longer. So I've got two more things. Firstly is some objective information. Do you have, I mean, you must have had a budget with Little Mermaid, or something like that. Do you have any information that you can share or that you can send me, that's allowed to send me of course....

Toby: Of budget?

Mandy: Something like that, yeah.

Toby: Ai, to be honest, I was never given really a figure. I was told by, let me think. I had a feeling that Lizzy was told she had 80.000 pounds to do Little Mermaid and that was puppets and props together. Again, that's not a reliable source. Lizzy is away at the moment, but I'm sure I can maybe find that out. But I have a feeling the figure was 80.000 pounds, but the problem was that I wasn't told that figure. I mean, Bob was told the figures of certain things until we designed it.

Mandy: Really convenient.

Toby: And I think it was designed also as a sit down show in Utrecht and then it became a tour and obviously it didn't, it went back to Utrecht. But it wasn't designed as a touring show, so the whole set being transported in the way it was, wasn't very practical, because it was initially designs as a sit down production. And there were a lot of decisions made either with budget or with touring that felt certainly quite impractical for Little Mermaid.

Mandy: Yeah, of course. But if you could find some of the, just objective information, the budget or something like that, that would be really, really helpful.

Toby: Yeah, of course.

Mandy: But only if you're certain that you are allowed to use it and that you're not getting into trouble or something.

Toby: No, I'm pretty sure I'm not, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be. No, for the minute let's say it was 80.000 pounds to do puppets and props. And then if I find something out different from Lizzy, I will let you know.

Mandy: Thank you.

Toby: Yeah.

Mandy: So, I wane end with some nasty choices. They're Salomon's choices, so you have to choose.

Toby: Okay.

Mandy: But you can elaborate why you choose something or why don't choose the other, but you have to choose, so really nasty.

Toby: Okay.

Mandy: Money or art?

Toby: Oh!

Mandy: I told you they're nasty, I'm sorry.

Toby: I know, yeah, nasty! Money or art. I'm gonna go Art, Art.

Mandy: Do you want to elaborate?

Toby: I think circumstance can dictate which one. I, you know, if I had a very slow years of work and someone offers me a version of Peter Pan to make the dog, than I would do it. But given the choice, what would make me happy and what would probably give me the most integrity is making something, is making work that affects people, rather than feeding myself. I can feed myself by getting a job around the corner, in a shop, earning money. You know, I can, that bit, earning money is a practical task, but why would I work, I wouldn't work in theatre if I wanted to get rich, but do something else.

Mandy: I know, I know.

Toby: I should sell drugs, for god's sake, probably. But I, no, art, definitely. It's about, you know, it's about making people feel things. I do what I do because I went to see shows, when I was younger, and so I often

Salomon's Choices

say that to people, if they're in a long running show and they get bored. Think about the children that come watch the show and whether you start them on the journey that you know, everybody who works in theater has gone on.

Mandy: Yeah. Risk or security?

Toby: Oh, difficult, difficult, difficult! Hm. I would always go for risk, but I would only go for risk with a certain level of security. I'm gonna go with risk, because I feel like as a person I always have a certain level of security in what I go into. I think I would almost certainly be prepared to take a risk, because I as person, my base level of existence has quite a high level of security. I think risk, risk means, risk means breaking new ground. And you know, from the answers I gave you before, I think something can only develop if new ground was broken really. And like you said, puppetry is been around for a very long time. And I'm sure Basil and Adrian will say no technique is a new technique. It's only really there to be rediscovering itself. So I think partaking a risk with something that's really familiar is a way of making progress.

Mandy: Which gets me to the next one. It is progress at all expenses or keeping what's right?

Toby: Oh! So progress at all expenses or keeping what's right?

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: Keeping what's right. Definitely. I think, despite of my, musical is a very good example of progress at whatever the cost. I think they're going really, really wrong. Yeah, I think keeping what's right. I think as soon as, you can throw money at a project and it can go all other problem. And that doesn't necessarily make it right. I think everybody needs to be on the same page and you have to have a clear understanding of what's wanted and expected. Otherwise, yeah, it's, I think money can make problems grow and thinking and planning can contain a problem and can solve it. I think money just creates more options, which doesn't guarantee success. Sometimes I'm sure it does, I'm sure it can do, but I think knowing your parameters and knowing what you want is probably much better than having the possibilities of money. You can make a puppet out of brown paper and it would emote as much as some beautiful sophisticated thing, probably, on average, most people will like the brown paper thing a lot more. I'm sure, I'm sure they would.

Mandy: Specialize or broaden?

Toby: Specialize. Specialize because I think if you specialize and make an impact with a fewer number of people, that will have a better knock on effect in the long run than broaden. Again something basil and Adrian will say, but they say: if you're performing a puppet, if you perform a detail, if you're performing in front of 1200 people. If you perform a detail small enough that only four people see, and the excitement of these four people passing onto the surrounding people at the interval, is more exciting that giving such a, that all 1000 of people go: oh yeah, I saw the horse do that. It's much more interesting to entice four people in, with something very specific. And, and, and specialist and enticing, in giving out a very closed signal. And I think similarly with puppetry, rather than giving something out to the masses, creating something that's got very high artistic creativity or integrity is gonna make it, I think is gonna make it a better art form I think. I hope, again I hope.

Mandy: I hope.

Toby: Otherwise I'll become a photographer.

Mandy: A permanent team or fresh input?

Toby: Say that again, sorry?

Mandy: A permanent team or fresh input?

Toby: Oh, good one, very good one. Well, I'd say, I'd say a permanent team because I've always worked for myself and then on jobs like Little Mermaid I worked with other people in terms of makers and things. And so the jobs I'm doing now, I'm trying to think, I'm thinking about strengthening existing contacts between other people. I think fresh input is always good, but actually, I myself now, I'm looking at trying to find, I know how I work, so now I'm thinking about how I work in groups, so finding strong bonds between people, I found strong bonds between people on other projects, and now I'm looking at maintaining something. Maintaining it, really.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: So, where were we. Fresh input and?

Mandy: Permanent team.

Toby: Permanent team. Yeah, I think, let's go with permanent team for that one.

Mandy: Were almost done, so you can attend to you friend.

Toby: Yeah, permanent team because I think especially on something like puppetry that changes from job to job. It's about that trust and bond and kind of willingness to experiment. That actually means that having those bonds that are reaffirmed for a permanent team each time.

Mandy: A contract or trust?

Toby: Oh gosh! Well, contract. I think, I think it has to be a contract. I didn't have an agent for a very, very long time. I've only had an agent since the start of Little Mermaid and while there was a lot of trust, I think the actual black and whiteness of, certainly commercial theater, Little Mermaid, War Horse, things like that. I think there's so much that I would be unaware of, or knowing about things of security, financial security I guess. You know, I'm not in theater to get rich, but you certainly want to make sure that your contribution is respected and you're earning what you should be earning, so I feel like contract's pretty important. Especially with Stage Entertainment Holland.

Mandy: I'm no longer working with them.

Toby: Good, so you can put that in your thesis. Yeah, I think, I think contract is, contracts are very crucial. You know, that shadow puppetry got cut and they tried to cut my fee, because they cut my work from the show.

Mandy: Yeah.

Toby: You know. And if they cut costumes, I'm sure they wouldn't cut Bob's fee. But because I was a bit of a newbie they tried to reduce my fee because they cut the puppetry out of it. And I think, you know, contract is just a black and white baseline that everybody works from. Yeah, no, contract, definitely.

Mandy: A few long term projects or a lot of short term projects?

Toby: A few long term projects. I maybe wouldn't have said that last year, but now I'm gonna say a few long term projects. I think I feel like I'm still learning my, you know, given my age, people are always very surprised how old I am in the job that I'm doing. But I still feel like I don't have a process, as a designer. I feel like I start of as a performer and I've always made in my own tie. And now I begin to find, well, you know, I still don't have a clue. When I went into Little Mermaid, chatted to Bob saying of this is how I do fish, and this is how I do that. And he went great, cool, yeah, brilliant. But I feel like I don't sit and research enough. Or again influenced by other artists, and being so, especially on light Princess now, you know I met the designers today since I've been away in Japan and she has designed the set along the lines that I knew she was designing it. And I said I just wanna sit down and talk with you about stuff. I just wanna get inspired by something else. Because we're not rehearsing until July and I don't have another project on, at least nothing major, so to have that time to be able to research and explore and you know prototype things feels like the long term is just gonna mean that the work is stronger. 'cause it's about the collaboration and I think the more time you've got to collaborate the better. Rather than being dropped in at the second week of rehearsals and being told we want a puppet and make it work right now.

Mandy: A positive audience or positive critics?

Toby: Oh positive audience, definitely! Positive audience, there's lots of people who don't read reviews. I'm definitely not one of those people, I read reviews. But I feel like the, yeah, I think the opinion of one person who's at the, you know, who's voice can be heard, it doesn't stand for anything. I think so many shows and really liked, critics, haven't been critically well received. And also I think especially in this day and age now with any sort of social network and what not, the response of an audience can be as important and is as available, if not more available, than the opinion of a critic. You know if I don't by a newspaper in the morning, then maybe I don't read the review. But if I go on Twitter and search the title of the show, I'll be able to what at least 10% of the audience thought probably.

Mandy: Yeah, probably yeah.

Toby: To me, it's so ready available and so yeah, positive audience.

Mandy: Contemporary or for all eternity?

Toby: Say that, soy, contemporary or?

Mandy: Contemporary or for all eternity?

Toby: Contemporary or for all eternity? What are your definitions of those?

Mandy: You can fill that in.

Toby: Okay. contemporary or for all eternity. contemporary or for all eternity. I'd say for all eternity, because puppetry has its roots in its heritage. You know, that's where it came from. I think to say that you're making contemporary is a bit of a, or that puppetry should be contemporary is a bit of a false statement. I think you have to make it relevant to what it is. But it's such a historical art form, not particularly in English culture, but certainly within its context of the world, I think it has to be for all eternity.

Mandy: Use the budget, or a large part of your budget on a star, so that you get a big name, or use it for many other things, but no star?

Toby: Many other things, but no star, definitely. I think names are too, a name or what somebody brings to a show is way to objective. I think one person can think something and another person can think

something else. I think you gotta have the creative means, or the artistic means in telling the story, rather than putting it on somebody's personality outside of the theater.

Mandy: That were all your Salomon's choices.

Toby: Whoohooooo!

Mandy: Yeejjj. Wasn't that bad, was it?

Toby: No, they were fine, they were good. Money or creativity, that was a good one though!

Mandy: Is there anything that you want to readdress or something that you want to address, because you think I've missed it?

Toby: No, I think, I know the focus of your thing is on the creativity, finance and creativity of a sort art puppetry. I think the interesting thing is that I very rarely, even now on Light Princess, I have no idea what the budget is. Maybe the budget is not decided. But you know, I'm, we started to design the show, and theorize the show, and planning what were gonna have, and I haven't set down with the production manager yet, or been told, or, you know, I think very often the parameter, the strict financial parameters aren't spoken about. Maybe because they're not known. Maybe because they're being kept a secret, I don't know, but I think it's very interesting how, certainly as a creative in the process, I'm very rarely told what's at my disposal.

Mandy: And how do you deal with that?

Toby: I guess you just carry on dreaming big and seeing what happens. And then some things, if you're told you have to cut something, like Little Mermaid, you cut back to the essence of what's needed to tell the story really. And then you go to Japan and you're offered more money and you can put it all back in again. Yeejjj!

Mandy: Is the shadow puppetry back in?

Toby: The shadow puppets not, but we have six giant tentacles that gate crush the contest not two.

Mandy: Really? Oh, brilliant!

Toby: And we have a lot of new species in Under the Sea, which is very cool.

Mandy: Cool!

Finishing Up

What's at my disposal?

Appendix J – Interview Wendy Dries – 20-05-2013

Section titles

Starting-Up

Background Questions

Interview transcript

Pleasantries

Mandy: Ten eerste, hoe is het zo gekomen dat jij de poppen mocht gaan onderhouden hier?

Wendy: Het was eigenlijk, ik, ik vind het heel leuk, ik vind het mijn leukste, het leukste aan dit werk vind ik eigenlijk gewoon het knutselen en het verven en de kleine tierelantijntjes en ik ben een ontzettende perfectionist. En in de opstart is dat eigenlijk zo ontstaan, dat ik naast gewoon de opstartdingen die ik al deed merkte dat daar mijn interesse lag en gewoon een beetje ben gaan kijken van oké hoe werkt dat, hoe zit dat. En dat beviel zowel bij de ontwerpers en het creative team als bij mij heel goed. En het was best veel want we hebben in deze productie heb je puppets en je hebt props. En als je dat in een zou doen is het gewoon heel veel voor een persoon. Dus toen is het zo ontstaan eigenlijk dat ik dat zou doen. Ja, vooral de puppets zijn nou mijn ding en ik doe een deel props. En Pavel doet vooral props en een deel puppets. Dus we doen het een beetje samen, eigenlijk.

Mandy: En is daar op je contract iets op aangepast?

Wendy: Nee, nee, op mijn contract niet. Is puur gewoon een mededeling geweest van joh vanaf dit moment ben jij verantwoordelijk voor dat. Oké.

Mandy: Oké.

Wendy: Oké.

Mandy: Het is dat je het leuk vindt.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Dat is fijn.

Wendy: Dat scheelt, ja. Ja, toen wist ik nog niet wat voor gezeik het zou opleveren, maar goed, ja. Ja.

Mandy: Dat kwam er later pas bij.

Wendy: Dat kwam er later bij. Ja toen dacht ik, ah ja, hierom, aha, oké. Nou ja.

Mandy: En, als je nou een volgende productie gaat doen, hoop je dan dat je dit soort werk er weer bij kunt doen?

Wendy: Ja, altijd.

Mandy: En ga je dan wel proberen voor je contract of iets te regelen of gaat hem dat gewoon niet worden?

Wendy: Dat gaat hem sowieso niet worden. Nou kijk, in mijn contract staat ik heb verschillende functies. Dus eigenlijk is het een soort swingpositie, want officieel in mijn contract ben ik spotter, props en DSM. Bij deze productie komt dat effe net niet helemaal uit, dus is mijn DSM positie, heb ik wel, maar voer ik niet uit. Maar mijn props en mijn spotten doe ik wel gewoon. Dat is het enige, maar in salaris zit er helemaal niets bij, nee. En dat zal ook niet, dat hoort er gewoon bij.

Mandy: Ja, maar ja, je bent wel verantwoordelijk.

Wendy: Ja, maar dat, ja, het is, ik weet niet waarom dat eigenlijk is, maar ik denk dat ze dat zien als een soort klein onderdeel; het hoort erbij. Het hoort gewoon bij je werk.

Mandy: Ja, en er staat al props, dus..

Wendy: Ja, ja, het hoort er gewoon bij. Kijk en dat je rest van de jongens natuurlijk overal, kijk iemand die verantwoordelijk is voor het vliegstelsel, hoort het onderhoud hoort er gewoon bij. Dat zit gewoon in je functie.

Mandy: En, even denken hoor, de stage manager, is dat jouw directe verantwoordelijke voor de poppen? Ga jij naar hem toe als er iets aan de hand is, of haar?

Wendy: Nee, eigenlijk niet. Het ligt er ook aan wat het probleem is. Is het kapot of wat dan ook, ligt het er ook weer aan. Kijk, kan ik het zelf maken, heb ik daarvoor spullen nodig? Zodra ik daar spullen voor nodig heb moet ik inderdaad naar mijn stage manager om te overleggen van joh, dit en dit heb ik nodig. Kan ik dat zelf kopen in Nederland, of moet dat ook echt uit het creative team uit Londen komen of gaan we iets anders verzinnen qua budget ook. Soms is namelijk de creative duurder dan dat je het door iemand anders in Nederland gewoon laat maken. Dus dat hoort ook, en dat is allemaal een geldkwestie en dat ga ik niet over. Dat is puur mijn stage manager die weet dit is mijn budget en dit kunnen we dus doen. Dus het ligt eraan, of ik ga als ik het zelf op kan lossen met gewoon de spullen die ik heb, nee dan hoort ze er niets van. Tenzij het de show niet in kan voor een of andere reden, dan hoort ze het wel.

Mandy: Ja. En dat budget heb jij geen enkel inzicht?

Wendy: Nee.

Mandy: Jij hebt geen flauw idee wat je uit mag geven of wat er totaal beschikbaar is?

Wendy: Nee, totaal niet, nee totaal niet, nee. Ik weet eigenlijk altijd je moet het zo goedkoop mogelijk

houden.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dat is het, ja. Ja.

Mandy: Maar wel duurzaam graag.

Wendy: Ja, ja.

Situational Sketches

Mandy: De situaties, dat had ik je al even gestuurd. Wat ik graag wil is dat je twee situaties beschrijft, te beginnen met eentje tijdens de repetitieperiode, waarbij een beslissing werd genomen over de poppen. Maakt niet uit welke pop, maakt niet uit of het een grote beslissing was, of dat het iets heel erg onbetekenends was, als het maar een beslissingsmoment is.

Wendy: Hm, hm.

Mandy: Waar jij genoeg van weet om over te kunnen vertellen.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Weet jij een beslissingsmoment uit de repetitieperiode dat je kunt beschrijven?

Wendy: Het is, het is een, er zijn heel veel beslissingen genomen, sowieso, in deel 1, in de repetitieperiode. Het is heel moeilijk om het toch te beschrijven, inderdaad ook omdat je zei of je hebt er wel mee te maken, of je hebt er niet mee te maken, weet je wel, dat. Maar ja, er zijn meerdere beslissingen geweest bijvoorbeeld in Ursula. Dat is gewoon een heel fragiel ding, hè. Dus de beslissingen die soms worden gemaakt het is eigenlijk gewoon puur gaat het om hoe is dit werkbaar en wat hebben acteurs nodig om het voor hun ook werkbaar te maken en daar worden zoveel keuzes in gemaakt, in de opstart. Eigenlijk met alles. En voor mijn deel, dus de puppets is het vooral ook de keuzes hoe maken, deze acteur heeft daar een probleem mee, hoe gaan we dat oplossen en welke keuze maken we daarin. Gaan we het zo oplossen, gaan we het zo oplossen, gaan we het die oplossen. En er zijn zoveel mogelijkheden met..

Mandy: Beperk je maar op een klein probleem, of een moment dat iemand iets zei van nou dit werkt voor mij niet, wat gaan we eraan doen, of misschien..

LM: Ursula's feet

Wendy: Ja, nou ja, dat is bijvoorbeeld geweest dat de voetjes van Ursula die bewegen. En zijn nu voetjes die om de wielen heen zitten. Die hebben speling nodig, helemaal in de tourperiode toen we wisten tijdens de repetities dat we heel veel theaters hadden waar geen ruimte was, wisten we ook dat als we ze vastzetten kunnen ze gewoon in sommige theaters op het zijtoneel niet door. Dus je moest ze op een bepaalde manier toch loslaten, maar is het heel gevaarlijk omdat daaronder platen zitten gewoon met wielen en zodra die jongens ermee rijden en ze komen met hun scheenbeen ertegenaan, dan heb je gewoon een probleem. Dan moet je dus een keuze maken van jongens wat doen we en hoe is dat handig. Uiteindelijk hebben we ze vastgezet en toen later, ging natuurlijk kapot, en toen moest het weer anders, etc. maar dat is een keuze die je maakt van ja, gaan we het, maken we ze vast om die poten heen, maken we iets heel anders, maken we ze zacht, maken we ze hard? Die keuzes worden gemaakt. En uiteindelijk hebben we ervoor gekozen om het hard te maken, van hard materiaal, een soort glasvezel zeg maar. Zodat je er doorheen kon boren en het vast kon maken aan de plaat. En ook dat de we de schroeven eruit kunnen halen, zodat in het volgende theater en het past niet, kon je de schroeven eruit halen en dan is het inderdaad helaas in dat theater niet heel mooi. Want dat betekent ook dat als ze los zitten dat ze tijdens de show ook bewegen. Dus rij 1 t/m 5 zal de wielen dan beter zien, maar dat is dan een keuze die je maakt.

Mandy: Ja, en waarom is er dan gekozen om ze vast te zetten? Puur esthetisch?

Wendy: Puur esthetisch en puur ook gewoon qua zien, ook vanuit het publiek. Omdat, ja, je wilt natuurlijk gewoon die illusie creëren. Dus je wilt gewoon dat die mensen natuurlijk het liefst niet die wielen zien. En dat ze het gaan zien als een groot geheel en dat ze het gaan zien als..

Mandy: Een levend wezen.

Wendy: Een levend wezen, ja. En als je dan dat hele kleine conceptje dat je toch die wielen ziet, dan heb je toch van bleh, dat toch net jammer.

Mandy: Ja, het breekt het plaatje.

Wendy: Het breekt toch het plaatje, ja.

Mandy: En waarom is er dan gekozen voor hard materiaal i.p.v. bijvoorbeeld zacht materiaal?

Wendy: Omdat we zacht materiaal hebben geprobeerd en dat kwam tussen de wielen te zitten. En dan heb je een groot probleem, want dan gaat het ding gewoon niet vooruit.

Mandy: Ursula die omkukelt.

Wendy: Ja, ja, ja.

Mandy: Hilarisch, niet de bedoeling.

Wendy: Nee.

Mandy: En wie waren er betrokken bij die beslissing?

Wendy: Lizzy, dat is de propsmaakster uit Londen, het creative team. Ross, dat was de assistent van de

decorontwerper, en Toby dat is eigenlijk de maker en ontwerper van de puppets. Dus met die drie hebben we dat eigenlijk besloten. En met open overleg met de cast, wat voor hun fijn is en wat voor hun.. want je gaat natuurlijk eerst doe je zacht materiaal en dan zeggen de jongens van ja, dat werkt niet, want kijk, nu komt het ertussen. Dus doe je dat, ja doe je dat samen met de ontwerpers en het creative team, en samen ook met de cast want die moeten ermee werken, zoveel shows.

Mandy: En wie heeft dan uiteindelijk het laatste woord?

Wendy: Op dit moment had Toby het eindwoord. Het is zijn ontwerp.

Mandy: Maar was daar dan geen spanning in? Dat iemand anders misschien een andere mening had?

Wendy: Ja, er is wel discussie, tuurlijk is er discussie. Ook vanuit mij, omdat ik ermee moet werken. Kijk, deze mensen zijn er heel leuk t/m de première en gaan dan weer weg. Ik zit er nog een jaar mee. Dus het is ook natuurlijk een discussiepunt van ja, wat is ook voor mij fijn om te werken. Maar ook vanuit, maar zijn, zijn call is het belangrijkste, want hij is de ontwerper. En als hij dat plaatje in zijn hoofd heeft en hij wil het zo, dan gaan we dat doen, hoe dan ook, en hoeveel werk dat ook voor mij oplevert. Je kan het proberen aan te sturen, maar ...

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Soms heeft dat ook geen nut.

Mandy: En als zo'n spanning ontstaat, is dat dan een onderhuidse spanning of is dat echt een felle discussie?

Wendy: Nee, is geen felle discussie. Nee, het is, in deze situatie in ieder geval niet, nee. Nee. Nee, dat is gewoon goed overleg. Nou waren dit ook wel hele fijne creative mensen om mee te werken, omdat ze ook luisterden en ook wel dat er naderhand problemen zijn geweest waarbij ik kon zeggen, maar waarom doen we het niet op die manier. Oh wacht, zo heb ik het nog niet bekeken, we doen dat. Het ligt aan het punt, het ligt aan het probleem, of je daar felle discussie over gaat krijgen ja of nee, hoe erg houdt de ontwerper zich aan zijn idee en plaatje vast. En dit creative team was wel meegaand en stond open voor andermans idee of oplossingen. Terwijl ik bij andere producties sommigen dat helemaal niet zijn. Dit is mijn idee, dit is mijn plaatje, en zo gaan we het doen punt.

Mandy: Ja, en deze waren meer flexibel.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En de oplossing die uiteindelijk is gekozen met de harde vaste voeten, is dat dan ook de ideale oplossing of denk je achteraf nee, iets anders was beter geweest.

Wendy: Met heel Ursula was alles veel beter geweest, iets anders. Heel simpel, ja.

Mandy: Maar even puur op de voetjes.

Wendy: Ook op de voetjes, ja.

Mandy: En wat was een betere oplossing geweest?

Wendy: Als het in een keer gewoon in het ontwerp al had gezeten en dus niet een apart onderdeel. Want dan was het een geheel geweest, dus was de kans op breken, kapot gaan etc. minder groot geweest dan dat het nu apart er later is opgezet, wat gewoon fragieler is en kwetsbaarder is. Ik denk ook, maar dat is, je zit met een tijdsdruk in een opstart, dus heel vaak de ideeën die dan ontstaan zijn niet de beste. Dat is gewoon zo. Het is, je moet, het moet snel, snel, snel, want de regisseur of etc. of de decorontwerper wil het dan ook meteen het liefste gister al zien, dus je doet, je maakt keuzes op die moment dat je eigenlijk later denkt, ja we hadden het anders moeten doen. Nou hebben wij dan wel de vrijheid om dat soms ook te doen, soms ook niet. Soms is het ook gemakzucht dat je het niet doet, omdat je denkt ik heb het zo vol andere dingen te doen, dus komt dit op een laag pitje. Ja, maar als we het geheel, als ze het geheelontwerp erbij hadden betrokken die wielen, als ze er eerder over hadden nagedacht, was het beter geweest, had je het ook mooier kunnen maken.

Mandy: Ja. En gegeven de situatie, het werd er later opgezet, was dit de beste manier waarom het op dat moment kon gaan?

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En voor een volgende productie, als je daar dan weer betrokken bent bij zo'n proces, is er dan iets wat je anders zou doen dan dat je nu hebt gedaan?

Wendy: Ik zou meer nadenken, dat is niet alleen de voetjes, maar dat is eigenlijk geheel de puppets. Ik zou meer nadenken over wacht even ik moet hier nog een jaar mee werken. Ja, in sommige situaties heeft het geen nut, want het ontwerp is er al, de dingen zijn er al, dus het is zoals het is en daar moet je het me doen, maar ik moet er nog een jaar mee werken, jullie zijn na de première weg en er zijn heel veel dingen waarvan je denkt, die gewoon nu onhandelbaar zijn. Hoeveel tijd, hoeveel energie je er ook in steekt, het heeft geen nut meer, omdat het materiaal gewoon, omdat de keuzes die in het begin zijn gemaakt, en in het ontwerpproces al niet goed zijn geweest.

Mandy: Ja, je hebt nu nog een kleine twee maandjes te gaan.

Wendy: Hm, hm.

Mandy: En nu is het redelijk dramatisch, heb ik gehoord, met hoe alles erbij staat.

Wendy: Ja, ja, zeker. Maar het is niet meer te doen.

Mandy: Nee.

Wendy: De tentakels, die suckers die erop zitten. Dat had zo'n ander idee moeten zijn. Dat had zo veel beter over na moeten, daar hadden ze veel beter over na moeten denken. En de oplossing is namelijk heel simpel. De oplossing is zo simpel, voor ons nu niet meer te doen, ook niet een half jaar geleden, of ook niet driekwart jaar geleden, want het is heel veel werk. Maar als zij in het ontwerpproces, en het mag ook niet. Ik bedoel, wij mogen niet zomaar een ontwerp aanpassen.

Mandy: Uiteraard.

Wendy: Dat ook. Maar als zij daar beter over hadden nagedacht, was het een stuk beter gegaan. Maar nu is er zoveel kapot al gegaan, er is zoveel gelijmd, er is zoveel gestikt, geleverd, ge ding, alles, dat het, het bouwt zich op. En op een gegeven moment na de 30^e lijmlaag, ja.

Mandy: Het blijft niet meer echt zitten.

Wendy: Het blijft niet meer echt zitten, dus het raakt vervallen. Daarbij komt ook dat wij natuurlijk januari en een soort van tussen aanhalingstekens onverwacht nog een half jaar doorgedaan. Persoonlijk ben ik van mening dat deze set, dat de puppets in ieder geval sowieso niet zijn ontworpen voor een tourproductie, omdat ze daar gewoon te fragiel voor zijn. En ook niet zijn gemaakt om zeker weten meer dan een jaar zo te zijn, zo te blijven zoals ze zijn gemaakt.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Wat je er ook aan doet.

Mandy: Zonde.

Wendy: Heel erg zonde. Ik irriteer me kapot.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Het is een heleboel werk voor jou geweest.

Wendy: Ja, nog steeds.

Mandy: Straks bij de laatste staat daar toch een beetje slap aftreksel van wat het ooit geweest is.

Wendy: Absoluut, dat is het nu al. Maar je kan er, het is letterlijk onmacht. En ook mijn meerderen zeggen op dit moment Wen, ik weet dat je eraan werkt, maar geef het maar op, geef het maar op.

Mandy: Het is niet meer te doen.

Wendy: Het is niet meer te redden, nee dat is het ook niet meer. En misschien had ik het kunnen redden, een deel. Nou nee, ik had het niet kunnen redden, ik had het kunnen uitstellen, maar er is geen budget. Alleen maar een doos suckers en ik heb 4 verschillende maten. Een zo'n doos qua *spare* kost gewoon ongeveer 7-800 euro, vanuit Londen, gemaakt en wel. Dat is gewoon te veel geld.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dus moet ik ze zelf gaan merken, wat heeeel lang duurt, het is heel intensief proces.

Mandy: Goh.

Wendy: Dat is, dat is bijna onmogelijk om dat te doen.

Mandy: Ja, naast je andere werkzaamheden.

Wendy: Ja, dus verzin je wel andere dingen. Ja, ik had het misschien meer kunnen uitstellen, misschien had ik het wel gered t/m het einde van de productie, als het budget er was geweest.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Als ik gewoon die suckers had kunnen bestellen en dan had je er misschien andere dingen op kunnen verzinnen, maar ook de *spare* spullen die ik nog steeds heb. Het is gewoon, het is zo fragiel, het is al zo vaak gelijmd, al zo vaak, dus het is ook bijna onhoudbaar, nu.

Mandy: Zonde hè.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Is er tijdens de run een moment geweest, wederom mag het heel klein zijn, gewoon een specifiek moment waarom een beslissing werd genomen waar jij over kunt vertellen.

Wendy: Nou ja, we waren eigenlijk op een gegeven moment. Even kijken hoor, nou we zijn in maart begonnen, we stonden eind juli, augustus nog stonden we in Breda en dat waren onze eerste versie tentakels van Ursula die we hadden en die gaven het toen al op, na 3-4 maanden. Heel veel geprobeerd ook, mensen extern erbij gehaald uit Nederland om ernaar te kijken. Het was niet alleen de *suckers*, maar gewoon de tentakel zelf. Hij brak, de handvaten waren niet goed, de jongens konden er niet mee werken,

er was heel veel gezeur. En op een gegeven moment pleeg je dan overleg nadat je er zo vaak naar hebt gekeken, maar het gaat weer stuk, je probeert wat. En zoveel oplossingen, je probeert wat te bedenken, maar niets werkt. Dat de beslissing is genomen om hele nieuwe tentakels te laten maken. Of het een verbetering is geweest, dat is een tweede punt, maar de beslissing is wel gemaakt.

Mandy: Veel slechter kon het niet.

Wendy: Veel slechter kon het niet, nee. Dus hebben we uiteindelijk, heeft Nanko, dat was toentertijd nog onze stage manager, heeft toen besloten van oké, we gaan Londen bellen en even vragen hoe dit zit. En eigenlijk onder het mom van joh jongens we zijn net 4 maanden bezig en het werkt nu al niet meer, dus onder de garantie jij moet dit aan ons leveren, want wij betalen daarvoor. En het is kut. Dus verzin maar iets.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dat wij alsnog een hele tijd doorkunnen. En toen hebben ze dus besloten om nieuwe tentakels te sturen. En die zijn wel beter, er zitten verbeteringen in, vanuit de binnenkant. Het materiaal, want wij hebben, ik heb aangegeven wat de problemen waren, waar de zwakke punten zaten en etc. ideeën aangedragen ook van joh wat als we het zo doen dan. Sommige dingen hebben ze geluisterd, sommige dingen niet, maar ja.

Mandy: En dat is met name over de structuur van de tentakels, toch, wat hier veranderd is.

Wendy: Ja, de opbouw van de tentakels zelf, vanuit de binnenkant, eigenlijk. Ze worden heel veel natuurlijk gebogen en etc. en eerst zat er eigenlijk een soort nepleer in wat vanaf boven naar onder eigenlijk het enige houvast was voor alle paarse segmenten ertussenin. Maar doordat ze zoveel ermee sloegen en etc. en de choreografie die erin zit, scheurde dat gewoon. En dan zaten er wel touwtjes aan de zijkant zodat het in ieder geval nog bij elkaar bleef, maar je hele beweging is weg. Sowieso de segmenten zelf zijn van een soort schuimachtig iets en dat was op dat moment zo fragiel ook dat zodra ze het beetpakte het scheurde. De choreografie werkte zo niet meer omdat het dus inderdaad scheurde. De handvaten braken. Nou is mij wel ter ore gekomen dat ze hebben gezegd van er was te weinig tijd, dus dit was eigenlijk de eerste Ursula die wij hadden met de tentakels was het prototype. Daar was nog geen, maar dat is, ik weet niet of dit waar is, maar goed, dat is mij verteld door Toby, dat dit het prototype was en er nog geen akkoord was gegeven om dit ontwerp ook echt te maken, maar omdat er zoveel druk achter zat dat ze eigenlijk al zijn begonnen.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dus dat de aanpassingen die hij had niet meer waren doorgevoerd omdat het product al in werking was gesteld, eigenlijk. Dus ja, dat. Dus uiteindelijk is het wel besloten om toen we de tentakels, de nieuwe tentakels kregen om een autogordel, dat is gewoon steviger, dat was toen de basis van de binnenkant. Dus, het schuim werd van een ander materiaal, war harder en was wat massiever, dat was veel beter. Dus er zijn wel verbeteringen daarna gemaakt.

Mandy: En op dat gebied is Ursula nu nog intact?

Wendy: Op dat gebied, nou, een deel. Sommige problemen die we ook hadden met de vorige tentakels zitten er nog steeds. De puntjes, de uiteindes die laten gewoon los; is te kwetsbaar voor de choreografie en voor wat ermee gedaan wordt.

Mandy: Ja, maar hij scheurt in ieder geval niet meer helemaal radicaal door de midden.

Wendy: Nee, nee, nee, de handvaten breken nog steeds, maar ja, daar doen we dan wel weer wat aan.

Mandy: Nieuwe handvaten, leuk.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En dat is puur op garantie gegaan, dat we die nieuwe tentakels hebben gekregen.

Wendy: Ja, dit is puur, ja.

Mandy: Dus daar is geen enkel budget aan verspeeld.

Wendy: Nou, wel. Omdat we eerst probeerden het zelf op te lossen.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dus is er een extern iemand gekomen om ernaar te kijken. Heeft heel veel materiaal ook meegenomen om te kijken van oké wat als we het zo verstevigen en zo verstevigen, uit elkaar halen en opnieuw, dit en dat. Daar komt, daar gaat gewoon geld aan uit.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: En die mensen zijn niet goedkoop. Maar ja, als dat, als zij die oplossingen aangeeft, dat is ook gebeurt, maar een twee weken later gaat het gewoon weer stuk.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Dan, dan moet je wel. En dat zei Nanko ook. Ja we gaan het proberen en we hebben het ook geprobeerd en het werkt niet. Dus was de enige mogelijkheid. Hij moest natuurlijk ook uitzoeken, hoe zit

dat met die garantie, want misschien dat ze wel gewoon opnieuw zoveel duizend euro vragen voor nieuwe tentakels, dus.

Mandy: Ja, ja, best wel een uitdaging geweest.

Wendy: Ja, ja.

Mandy: En het jij daarin contact met Toby gehad, over die?

Wendy: Ja, ja, en Lizzy ook, ja.

Mandy: En hoe reageren zij dan?

Wendy: Moeilijk. Lizzy wat, wat, wat laconieker. Daar kreeg ik van ja probeer je dr niet te blind op te staren, want ik weet dat het kut is, dus blijf gewoon lijmen. En kijk, spreek met jezelf af dat je er een keer in de week naar kijkt. Ja, zo ben ik niet. Mijn mening is namelijk dat het elke avond gewoon goed moet zijn, dus als er vandaag iets stuk gaat ga ik niet denken van nee ik had deze week afgesproken dat ik er pas vrijdag naar zou kijken, dat slaat gewoon nergens op. Toby was daar wel meer in van oké, geef mij aan wat de problemen zijn. Ik kan er niet heel veel aan doen, maar het enige wat je, wat hij ook kon doen op dat moment, want voor hem is het een soort afronding, de première is geweest, dus zijn deel zit erop en hij gaat door naar de volgende voorstelling. Maar je kan wel weer, en omdat dit de eerste voorstelling Mermaid is geweest met deze puppets kan je er wel weer dingen van leren voor een volgende. Dus hebben ze ervan geleerd voor Moskou en Japan ook, om toch weer die verbeteringen aan te brengen dat het daar weer beter werkbaar is en je niet weer hetzelfde gezeik krijgt.

Mandy: Heb je daarover gehoord, over hoe het daar is verlopen?

Wendy: Ik weet dat Moskou eigenlijk bijna precies hetzelfde is.

Mandy: Met de autogordel of met het nepleer?

Wendy: Dat is met de autogordel, dus dat is wel de eerste aanpassing.

Mandy: De nieuwere.

Wendy: Ja. Japan is gewoon heel slim geweest, want Japan is, Japan is hier zelf langs geweest en heeft mensen gestuurd om te kijken ook te vragen wat zijn de probleempunten en die hebben zelf hun dingen gemaakt. Dus die hebben eigenlijk alle aanpassingen die wij hadden, die hadden, die wij hadden willen zien, hebben zij ook gedaan.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: En dat werkt heel erg goed. Ik krijg nog berichtjes van ze dat het eigenlijk, dat ze er dankbaar voor zijn ook. Omdat je dus niet, omdat je hun eigenlijk ja behoed voor de fouten die hier zijn gebeurd.

Mandy: Ja, nou ja, dat is natuurlijk ook waar wij eigenlijk een beetje voor waren.

Wendy: Ja, daar waren wij voor. We zijn gewoon een grote...

Mandy: Broddellap.

Wendy: Try-out. Ja.

Mandy: Nou ja, dat is waar wij voor waren en het is wel fijn dat er dan in ieder geval wel iets mee gedaan wordt, toch?

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Het is jammer dat jij nog steeds met alle, al het gedoe zit.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Maar het is wel heel fijn dat in ieder geval de kennis die je op hebt gedaan gebruikt wordt.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En niet volledig verspild is.

Wendy: Nee, nee, dat is waar.

Mandy: Dus dat is wel heel fijn. En als jij nu Ursula zou mogen aanpassen.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Wat zou je doen? Je hebt budget.

Wendy: Alles! Nou ja, dat is, ten eerste zou ik zeker weten de suckers van een heel ander materiaal maken en de heel Ursula bestaat uit twee lagen, twee stoflagen. Waarvan de bovenste laag is een dunne paarse laag, gewoon dunne stof, lycra is het. Als je de suckers van een ander materiaal had gemaakt en die stop je tussen die twee stoflagen, dus je stopt ze onder die lycralaag en je stikt eigenlijk om de suckers heen stik je dat vast, hoe je allen maar dat, de suckers zelf te verven en dan valt het er niet meer vanaf, scheurt het niet, is het enige onderhoud wat je hebt is soms even bijtippen. En als dat alleen al gedaan was had dat zoveel geschied. Qua beeld, qua onderhoud, qua alles.

Mandy: Ja, geen rondvliegende pokken meer.

Wendy: Nee, helemaal niet. En de handvaten had ik zeker weten anders gedaan. Van een ander materiaal, geïntegreerd ook in de pop zelf, in de tentakels zelf, in plaats van ook weer een apart onderdeel. Want dan wordt het kwetsbaarder.

**Dispositional
Questions**

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: En eigenlijk als die sucker-aanpassing er was geweest had het zoveel gescheeld. Dat is het eerste dat ik zou doen. Echt waar. En het is zo simpel.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Als ze alleen maar eronder, een harder materiaal, eronder, even stikken eromheen, verven, klaar.

Mandy: Het idee is zo simpel.

Wendy: Geen probleem. Maar ja.

Mandy: Helaas.

Wendy: Maar ja.

Mandy: Helaas, helaas, helaas. heb jij andere voorstellingen met poppen gezien, behalve Mermaid?

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En wat is jouw idee over, over het gebruik van poppen in toneelvoorstellingen in Nederland en Engeland, wereldwijd.

Wendy: Het kan heel, heel mooi werken. Het is, War Horse is daar natuurlijk een prachtig voorbeeld van, dat is prachtig. En bizar bijna. Als je ernaar zit te kijken. Omdat je echt totaal op een gegeven moment vergeet dat het, dat het gewoon eigenlijk twee, drie mensen zijn in een, in een, in een, eigenlijk gewoon vroeger van de carnaval dat ie iemand achterin had, dat was de kont van het paard. Dat is het, maar dan op een heel ander vlak. Maar hoe de choreografie wordt gemaakt, en het is zoveel bij elkaar. Het is en het ontwerp van de poppen, en de choreografie, en etc. En dat je daar, daar, daar, dat is prachtig. Je vergeet gewoon echt dat je naar een paar mensen staat te kijken, maar daar staat een echt paard. En dat kan prachtig werken, ja. Dat werkt het ook. Want ook hier creëert het een illusie die zeker voor kinderen heel erg goed werkt. Sowieso natuurlijk als je kinderen het hele voorbeeld van als je sinterklaas als je vader als sinterklaas neerzet met een baard op, dan is het sinterklaas.

Mandy: Absoluut.

Wendy: En hij doet die baard af, maar hij heeft het hele pak nog steeds aan, dan is het opeens papa, want dan is die baard weg. En dat is hier ook. Het is een vrouw in een karretje op wielen met een paar sukkels eromheen die een paart slierten bewegen, maar het is wel zo. Maar omdat zij paars is en het geheel klopt, geloven zij dat het een, een, een, een octopus is, ja. En dat is wel zo. En dat is hetzelfde bij War Horse, als bij andere voorstellingen, je creëert er een illusie mee. En ik denk wel dat dat heel goed werkt, ja.

Mandy: En denk je dat in Mermaid er het optimale gebruik van wordt gemaakt?

Wendy: Nee, nee.

Mandy: Alleen op Ursula, of ook op andere poppen?

Wendy: Ook op andere poppen, ja.

Mandy: Wat zou je anders willen zien, wat denk je dat het zou versterken, zou verbeteren?

Wendy: Het komt heel erg omdat wij dus inderdaad een grote try-out zijn, ja. Ursula klopt niet, gewoon anatomisch gezien. Pak er gewoon een plaatje bij van een octopus en het klopt niet, daar kan ik me heel erg aan irriteren. Ja, het is gebaseerd op een Disney-verhaal, dat weet ik. Ik had er zelf wat meer, wat ze daarna wel hebben gedaan hoor, trouwens, want in Moskou zit het wel, Moskou of Japan, nee Japan zit het wel. Er zitten meer puppets in. Dus je hebt ook haaien, je hebt andere zeepaarden. De illusie is nog meer uitgebouwd om een onderwaterwereld te creëren en hier is het vlak. Het is net iets te kaal soms, naar mijn idee, naar mijn beleving. Als ik namelijk de tekenfilm opzet zie ik zoveel mogelijkheden. En soms als ik hier kijk dat ik denk, jongens. We hadden er zoveel meer uit kunnen halen.

Mandy: Gemiste kans.

Wendy: Het is een gemiste kans. Je had de illusie nog groter kunnen maken voor het publiek, dat het een onderwaterwereld was. En ook gewoon de opbouw van sommige puppets, dat je denkt ja, als ze het zo hadden gedaan was het misschien, maar ja, dat blijft altijd.

Mandy: En zou je ook van karakters poppen hebben gemaakt? Ik bedoel in War Horse, wat je aandraagt, een Joey is echt, is de hoofdrol.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Zou je hier van karakters poppen kunnen maken? Ik noem een Sebastiaan, ik noem een slijmbal en slijmjurk.

Wendy: Nee, ik denk dat dat zonde was geweest. Ik denk wel dat ze de illusie groter hadden kunnen creëren, wel meer pop-achtiger hadden kunnen zijn qua kostuums. Bijvoorbeeld dat kostuum van Sebastiaan is heel vlak, is een kleur, heeft geen diepte. Ik denk wel dat ze dat hadden kunnen uitbreiden. Dus je had eigenlijk, want het is eigenlijk een mix vind ik het, tussen een pop en een karakter, kostuum op dit moment. Ze hadden wat meer richting de pop mogen gaan, denk ik. Want eigenlijk is het een mix, denk

ik, wat het is, op dit moment. Zowel Ursula als Sebastiaan eigenlijk ook, en slijmbal en slijmjurk ook, het is eigenlijk een mix, en jutter ook eigenlijk.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Het is eigenlijk een mix van een pop en een karakter.

Mandy: En ze hadden wat verder mogen gaan.

Wendy: In sommige karakters wel ja, vooral Sebastiaan denk ik, ja.

Mandy: Poppenspel wordt nu best wel veel gebruikt. Je noemde zelf War Horse al. Hier wordt het gebruik, het wordt in de opera gebruikt, het wordt in toneel gebruikt.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Het wordt voor veel meer gebruikt dan alleen de kindervoorstellingen die het vroeger natuurlijk waren.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Denk je dat dat door gaat zetten of denk je dat we er zijn?

Wendy: Nee, ik denk wel zeker dat het toch gaat doorzetten. En niet alleen voor kinderen. Ik bedoel, je kent de voorstelling Avenue Q, dat is alles behalve een kindervoorstelling met poppen. Het is gewoon sesamstraat voor volwassenen, maar het werkte prima en het publiek hield ervan. Dus ik denk wel dat het doorzet. Ook omdat je er wel op sommige vlakken meer illusie mee kunt creëren dan dat eigenlijk menselijk mogelijk is. Kijk je kan, ze hadden voor War Horse kunnen kiezen voor gewoon 2 mensen in dat carnavalspak, dan had niemand erin geloofd. Dan had iedereen het uitgelachen. Maar omdat het zo goed doordacht is en er poppen van zijn gemaakt in combinatie met acteurs gaan mensen erin geloven. Dus ik denk wel dat het doorzet, want ja, je kan bizarre dingen maken.

Mandy: Ja, absoluut.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En War Horse komt natuurlijk naar Nederland. ben je aan het vissen geweest, of je mee mag werken?

Wendy: Nee, ik ben nog niet aan het vissen geweest. Sowieso komt het ook in een ander theater. Het komt in het Circus Theater en dat is een vaste groep. Ja, ik ga wel aangeven van joh, hè, mocht je nou tijdens de opstart iemand nodig hebben, dan meld ik me aan. Ja, dat ga ik wel doen. Ja, want het is een hele grote leerschool.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: En het, het zou een eer zijn om eraan mee te werken, eigenlijk. Als, ook al is het alleen de opstart, prima. Dat doe ik vaker, alleen een opstart en dat vind ik heerlijk. Opstarts zijn het fijnste om te doen, opstarts. Geef mij die chaos maar, dat vind ik heerlijk.

Mandy: De meeste mensen willen echt dat die opstart voorbij is, zo snel mogelijk.

Wendy: Ja, nee, ik ook. In de opstart zelf wel, echt waar. Maar het is heerlijk om toch weer die geweldige processen mee te maken van totale hysterie en moeheid, en boosheid, en..

Mandy: Wanhoop.

Wendy: Wanhoop inderdaad, echt naar totale euforie en rust die je ook gewoon weer. Je kan het gewoon zo uittekenen wat je stappen zijn in zo'n opstart.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: En toch dat je denkt na afloop oh wat was het lekker. Wanneer weer? Ik kan niet wachten, straks bij jersey boys om gewoon weer twee maanden je op te sluiten en ja hoor, ja.

Mandy: Leuk.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Ik hoop dat War Horse wat wordt.

Wendy: Ik ook.

Mandy: Ik zou wel echt goed een lijntje uitgooien en ook een beetje pushen dat je hier ook al zoveel met poppen bezig bent geweest.

Wendy: Nou ja, als het goed is doet Toby dat ook, dus dat scheelt, dus dan, ik ga wel zeker een lijntje uitleggen. Maar ja, dat is afwachten of daar tijd voor is, of er een mogelijkheid is in wat ik tegen die tijd doe qua productie. Dus dan, maar een lijntje uitleggen zeker.

Mandy: Zeker doen.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: En ik heb al poppen gedaan.

Wendy: En ik heb al poppen gedaan, ja.

Mandy: Ik heb de ergste poppen gedaan die er zijn, dus ik kan dit ook.

Wendy: Ja, ik kan dit ook, kom op. Ja.

Mandy: Ja, absoluut doen. Goed ik heb dan nog wat Salomonskeuzes.

Wendy: Hm, hm.

Mandy: En nogmaals, je moet kiezen, maar je mag uitleggen.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Geld of kunst?

Wendy: Kunst.

Mandy: Risico of zekerheid?

Wendy: Risico.

Mandy: Behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles?

Wendy: Oh jeetje. behouden wat goed is of vooruitgang ten koste van alles? Behouden wat goed is.

Mandy: Specialiseren of verbreden?

Wendy: Verbreden. Ik denk eerst verbreden en dan specialiseren. Eigenlijk.

Mandy: Later.

Wendy: Ja, eerst verbreden wat, wat er allemaal te doen is, te zien is, en je, je, je, zeker je blikveld verbreden. Helemaal in het theater, omdat er zoveel aspecten zijn. En dan kan je als je uitgeleerd bent, ik ben er altijd heel erg voor geweest toen ik dit vak in kwam dat ik heel graag wilde proeven van elk, elk aspect in het theater. En dan pas, als je dat allemaal een beetje hebt gezien kan je gaan denken oké daar ligt mijn interesse en daar niet en dan pas je je gaan specialiseren in iets. Dus ik denk ja, eerst verbreden en dan pas specialiseren.

Mandy: En ben jij nog aan het verbreden of ben je al aan het specialiseren?

Wendy: Beide, beide.

Mandy: Je zit ertussenin nu.

Wendy: Ja, ja. Ik vind te veel leuk, dus dat is wel weer jammer.

Mandy: Ik ken het, ik ken het.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Een vast team of frisse input?

Wendy: Ligt eraan. Tot nu toe heb ik in de vijf zes, vijf jaar, zes jaar, vijf jaar, lang in ieder geval, al een tijdje dat ik bij Van den Ende werk heel veel verschillende ploegen meegemaakt, wat heel fijn is, omdat je steeds die frisse input krijgt. En steeds met andere mensen werkt en nieuwe dingen leert, met mensen leert omgaan, maar dat vaste team is ook wel weer heel. Er is nog steeds een team wat mij bij is gebleven wat nog steeds heel fijn was, het fijnste was om mee te werken. Dus het is wel moeilijk die. Laten we frisse input zeggen, omdat het, omdat je van iedereen wat kan leren en dat je ook wel weer verbreedt in het leren met omgaan met mensen en ook hoe zij met dingen omgaan en etc. dus dan ga ik liever voor ja, denk ik.

Mandy: Toch weer leren.

Wendy: Ja.

Mandy: Een contract of een vertrouwensrelatie?

Wendy: Vertrouwensrelatie.

Mandy: Enkele lange termijnprojecten of meer korte termijnprojecten?

Wendy: Korte termijn projecten.

Mandy: Een positief publiek of positieve recensenten?

Wendy: Positief publiek.

Mandy: Hedendaags of voor de eeuwigheid?

Wendy: Das moeilijk. Eeuwigheid klinkt ook wel meteen echt heel erg.. jeetje. Ik moet kiezen hè?

Mandy: Hm, hm.

Wendy: Oh, sjezus. Op dit moment zeg ik hedendaags, je weet niet wat er morgen gebeurt.

Mandy: Nee.

Wendy: Dus, ja. En vandaag vind ik dit nog leuk, dit vak en ik kan morgen wakker worden en denken van nou, ik ben er echt helemaal klaar mee, krijg de tering met die suckers. Ja, dat kan. Maar, ja, maar, zou ik wel op dit moment, dus hedendaags, op dit moment staat mijn hoofd zo dat ik denk ja, ik wil nog wel heel lang in het theater blijven. Me wel verbreden en specialiseren, ja.

Mandy: Ja.

Wendy: Of ik het tot mijn 60^e volhoud weet ik niet. Dat zijn er niet heel veel namelijk.

Mandy: Er zijn er een paar.

Wendy: Er zijn er een aantal, ja. Maar niet, bijna geen vrouwen.

Mandy: Eén moet de eerste zijn.

Wendy: Dat is wel waar, dat is wel waar.

Finishing Up

Mandy: Het budget besteden aan een grote naam of een ster of het budget besteden aan heel veel verschillende dingen? Dat je dan aan veel meer verschillende dingen geld uit kunt geven.

Wendy: Verschillende dingen.

Mandy: Nou, dat waren ze alweer.

Wendy: Oké.

Mandy: Viel wel mee toch.

Wendy: Ja, dat viel wel mee.

Mandy: Was niet zo heel erg.

Wendy: Nee.

Mandy: Is er nog iets waar je op terug wilt komen of iets dat je wilt aansnijden wat ik heb overgeslagen?

Wendy: Nee.

Mandy: Een voorzichtige nee.

Wendy: Ja, ik ben aan het nadenken. Het nadenken. Nee, eigenlijk niet.

Mandy: Dan was dat m.