HELSINKI FESTIVAL
15.8.–1.9.2019

The visit is produced in collaboration with Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation and Dance House Helsinki.

Gisèle Vienne
CROWD

© Estelle Hanania
Gisèle Vienne
CROWD
New production 2017

Premiere November 8,9 & 10th at Maillon, Théâtre de Strasbourg – Scène européenne in partnership with POLESUD, CDCN Strasbourg

The Company Gisèle Vienne is supported by Ministère de la culture et de la communication – DRAC Grand Est, la Région Grand Est and Ville de Strasbourg.
The company is supported by Institut Français for international touring.
Gisèle Vienne is associate artist at the Nanterre-Amandiers, centre dramatique national and at the Théâtre National de Bretagne

Conception, choreography and scenography Gisèle Vienne
Assisted by Anja Röttgerkamp and Nuria Guiu Sagarra
Lights Patrick Riou
Dramaturgy Gisèle Vienne and Denis Cooper

Music selections from Underground Resistance, KTL, Vapour Space, DJ Rolando, Drexciya, The Martian, Choice, Jeff Mills, Peter Rehberg, Manuel Göttsching, Sun Electric and Global Communication
Edits, playlist selection Peter Rehberg
Sound diffusion supervisor Stephen O’Malley

Performers Philip Berlin, Marine Chesnais, Georges Labbat, Sylvain Decloitre, Sophie Demeyer, Vincent Dupuy, Massimo Fusco, Rémi Hollant, Oskar Landström, Theo Livesey, Louise Perming, Katia Petrowick, Jonathan Schatz, Henrietta Wallberg and Tyra Wigg

Costumes Gisèle Vienne in collaboration with Camille Queval and the performers
Sound engineer Adrien Michel
Technical manager Richard Pierre
Stage manager Antoine Hordé
Light manager Arnaud Lavisse
Special thanks Margret Sara Guðjónsdóttir and Louise Bentkowski.

Detailed music credits
Track selections in order of appearance:
KTL: Lampshade (exclusive, 2017)
Vapour Space: Gravitational Arc Of 10 (Plus 8, 1993)
DJ Rolando: Vibrations mix (Underground Resistance, 2002)
- Underground Resistance: Sweat Electric (Somewhere In Detroit, 1994)
- Drexciya: Wavejumper (Underground Resistance, 1995)
- The Martian: The Intruder (Red Planet, 1992)
- Underground Resistance: Lunar Rhythms (Somewhere In Detroit, 1995)
Choice: Acid Eiffel (Fragile Records, 1992)
Jeff Mills: Phase 4 (Tresor/Axis, 1992)
Peter Rehberg: Furgen Matrix/Telegene (exclusive, 2017)
Manuel Göttsching: E2-E4 (Inteams, 1984)
Sun Electric: Sarotti (R&S Records, 1993)
Global Communication: 14 31 (Ob-selon Mi-Nos) (Evolution, 1994)
Crowd

With Crowd, you are continuing your examination of our fantasmatic universe and the relationship between art and the sacred, something that has characterized your productions from the very beginning. However, isn’t this the first time that you are dealing with this subject in its collective dimension, and with such a large number of performers?

Up until The Pyre (2013) my pieces, regardless of the number of performers, have largely been about private space and superimposed intimacies through persons who are often rather isolated. Now, after The Ventriloquists Convention (2015), this is the second time that I’m depicting a group whose social activity and interactions play a central role. This group is certainly very different from that of the ventriloquists’ convention, since it’s a group of young people who have come together out of a desire for feelings of euphoria and out of a common interest in a musical genre, techno. The context chosen is that of a party. The staging of the group fits in nicely with the question of intimacy and community, are prepared to experience particularly intense emotions of any kind, and reach a state where their senses are already very much heightened. The group becomes excited by a piece where the structure and certain behaviors evoke various rituals. In the face of this emotional rollercoaster, the audience can likewise enter into a physical and emotional rapport with the piece.

What kind of place does music have in this work?

Peter Rehberg, who possesses an excellent knowledge of electronic music, proposed a number of tracks and on the basis of those I arrived at a selection for Crowd. He then did detailed work for the final mix.

I find it interesting that this selection in fact has a genuine historical relevance, since it’s made up of records that are important for the history of electronic dance music – works by musicians that are significant for the Detroit scene, among others, with Jeff Mills and other people from Underground Resistance, plus Manuel Gottsching, for example. The aim was to create a mix that covers an entire range of essential sounds that has been exciting for us over the last forty years.

Besides these tracks, which are used over the greater part of the production, there’s also an original piece composed by KTL (Stephen O’Malley and Peter Rehberg) and another by Peter Rehberg on his own.

And what is the role of Dennis Cooper’s text? You yourself have talked of a “subtext”...

The pieces – as is the world itself – are made up of different layers of texts, though not entirely. Language is not located solely in the realm of audibility. In Jerk (2008) the actor speaks throughout the entire play; with I Apologize (2004) very similar issues arise, although the same actor does not say a single word from the beginning to the very end. What Dennis Cooper and I have been passionate about, right from the start of our long collaboration, is the attempt with each project to reinvent new relationships to the text, to language, to speech, and to narration, and new ways of writing for the stage.

The “subtext” of Crowd is a text that is not audible but is partly intelligible. In Crowd, the fifteen dancers also constitute individual personae whose psychologies, imaginations, feelings, and histories are in each case very different. When you’re observing a party, there’s a huge number of “stories” that are unfolding right before your eyes; in Crowd there are histories and portraits of persons that Dennis has developed based on work done with the actors, which refines and influences the creation of the piece. This aspect of the piece brings to mind the process of mixing in music. It involves a mixing of narrations, as though you have fifteen different music tracks and you’re adjusting their respective volume levels, and thus a composition that allows the audience to have a key role in the way in which they will see and experience the piece.

This dissociation of the various planes – dream vs. reality, real vs. fantasy – that produces a feeling of time distortion is another characteristic of your work.

Crowd has a very rich formal potential. One of the central components of this type of piece occurs by way of the multiple stylization of the movements and their montage. This is not an imitation of the movements reworked, but a very intimate interpretation guided by the emotions and the intentions that can motivate the performers, their attentiveness, and their greater reception of what is unfolding around them. I likewise work with subdivisions – at certain points the dancers are going to all be in the same type of stylization, a common language, and at others they will be in a different type of gesture. This creates a very rich range of rhythmical and musical vibrations resulting in a slightly altered perception that is somewhat reminiscent of a hallucinatory or hypnotic feeling, and still producing meaning. In fact, this musical and choreographic work itself allows a narrative work to be created. This play of rhythms provokes a very strong feeling of time distortion. These distortions are highly dynamic, while simultaneously stretching time, making it possible to observe the persons and situations from close-up, and to dissect their actions in detail. Various temporalities are superimposed, through the same movements, but also in their relationship to the music and lighting, whose relationship to time varies almost constantly.

Interview by David Sanson for the Festival d’Automne à Paris 2017
CONCEPTION

Gisèle Vienne was born in 1976. She is a franco-austrian artist, choreographer and director. After graduating in Philosophy, she studied at the puppeteering school Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette. She works regularly with, among others, the writers Dennis Cooper, the musicians Peter Rehberg and Stephen O'Malley, and the light designer Patrick Roui.

Since the company was founded in 1999, 14 shows have been created. She has choreographed and directed, in collaboration with the writer Dennis Cooper, I Apologize (2004) and Une belle enfant blonde / A young, beautiful blond girl (2005), Kindertotenlieder (2007) and Jerk, a radioplay in the framework of the "Atelier de Création Radiophonique" of France Culture (June 2007), the play Jerk (2008), Eternelle Idole (2009) with an ice skater and an actor. She has also created the music for Kindertotenlieder (2007), This is How You Will Disappear (2010), LAST SPRING : A Prequel (2011), The Pyre (2013) and The Ventriloquists Convention (2015) in collaboration with Peter Rehberg (with whom he founded the band KTL) and also for Eternelle Idole (2009). O'Malley has also worked together with film makers and visual artists in gallery installation work, most notably with the American sculptor, Banks Violette on several pieces between 2005-2008.

More information about his work is available at: www.ideologic.org

MUSIC

KTL is the band of Stephen O'Malley and Peter Rehberg based on the creation Kindertotenlieder. Their first CD has been released in October 2006 (Editions Mego).

Peter Rehberg (born in 1968) is an author and performer of electronic audio works based in Vienna, Austria. Rehberg has given live performances both solo and collaborative throughout Europe, North & South America, Japan and Australia. One of the first batch of artists that turned to mobile computing devices for presentation of live audio performances in mid-1990's. He has collaborated live and in the studio with, amongst others, Jim O'Rourke and Christian Fennesz (as Fenn O'Berg), Stephen O'Malley (as KTL), Gisèle Vienne/DACM (www.g-v.fr), Peterlicker, Z'EV Russell Haswell, Florian Hecker, Meg Stuart, Chris Haring, Marcus Schmickler, Jade, SUNNO))), as well as being a member of MIMÉO. He also operates the Editions Mego (www.editionsmego.com) label since 2006, and was co-leader of the original Mego label since 1995. His collaboration with Gisèle Vienne involved creating the music for I Apologize (2004) and Une belle enfant blonde / A Young Beautiful Blond Girl (2006), Kindertotenlieder (2007), This is how you will disappear (2010), LAST SPRING : A Prequel (2011), The Pyre (2013) and The Ventriloquists Convention (2015) in collaboration with Peter Rehberg (with whom he founded the band KTL) and also for Eternelle Idole (2009). O'Malley has also worked together with film makers and visual artists in gallery installation work, most notably with the American sculptor, Banks Violette on several pieces between 2005-2008.

More information about his work is available at: www.editionsmego.com

Stephen O'Malley (b. 1974) was born in New Hampshire, USA and raised in Seattle. He eventually spent a decade in New York and presently is based in Paris. As a composer and musician he has been involved in hundreds of concerts and performances around the world over since 1993. Stephen O’Malley was a founding member of several groups including Sunn O))) (1998), Khanate (2000), Aethenor (2003), KTL (2005) and others. He is a frequent collaborator of many outsider musicians in various formations, and in studio settings.

With in Gisèle Vienne plays, he has created the music for Kindertotenlieder (2007), This is How You Will Disappear (2010), LAST SPRING : A Prequel (2011), The Pyre (2013) and The Ventriloquists Convention (2015) in collaboration with Peter Rehberg (with whom he founded the band KTL) and also for Eternelle Idole (2009). O'Malley has also worked together with film makers and visual artists in gallery installation work, most notably with the American sculptor, Banks Violette on several pieces between 2005-2008.

More information about his work is available at: www.editionsmego.com
Patrick Riou, After several years spent studying at the Conservatoire de Musique of Toulon and training as a string instrument maker, he first started working in the theatre with choreographer François Verret. He discovered his passion for dance performances with great lighting engineers such as Rémy Nicolas, Jacques Chatellet, Pierre Colomère... Those experiences allowed him to work in various fields of choreography, and has been in charge of lighting for Joseph Nadj, François Raffinot, Karine Saporta, Kubilai Khan Investigation, Catherine Berbessous and Angelin Preljocaj.


LIGHTS

2017

Strasbourg (FR), Maillon, Théâtre de Strasbourg - Scène européenne in partnership with POLE-SUD, CDCN Strasbourg, November 8 & 10, 2017
Reims (FR), Manège Scène nationale de Reims, November 15, 2017
Kortrijk (BE) Next Festival, November 25, 2017
Nanterre (FR), Nanterre-Amandiers, centre dramatique national, December 7 to 16, 2017

2018

Brussels (BE), Kaaitheater, January 26 & 27, 2018
Rennes (FR), Théâtre national de Bretagne, Rennes, February 6, 7, 8 & 9, 2018
Greoneble (FR), MC2, February 27 & 28, 2018
Mulhouse (FR), La Filature, Scène nationale, May 29, 2018
Vienna (AT), Wiener Festwochen, May 31 & June 1, 2018
Berlin (DE), Volksbühne, June 13, 14 & 15, 2018
Amsterdam (NL), Holland Festival, June 27 & 28, 2018
Madrid (ES), Naves Matadero, July 6 & 7, 2018
Venice (IT), Biennale di Venezia, July 30, 2018
Hamburg (DE), Kampnagel, August 10, 11 & 12, 2018
Zurich (CH), Theater Spektakel, August 25 & 26, 2018
Lausanne (CH), Théâtre Vidy Lausanne, September 27, 28 & 29, 2018
Kyoto (JP), Kyoto Experiment, October 6 & 7, 2018
Bergen (NO), Bit teatergarasjen, October 26 & 27, 2018
Utrecht (NL), SPRING in Autumn, November 1, 2018
Cergy (FR), l’Apotrope – Scène nationale de Cergy-Pontoise, November 9, 2018
Athens (GR), Onassis Cultural Center, November 17 & 18, 2018
Lisboa (PT), Culturgest, December 8 & 9, 2018

2019

Poitiers (FR), TAP, January 24, 2019
Sevilla (ES), Teatro Central, March 8 & 9, 2019
Oslo (NO), Black Box festival & Dansens Hus, March 15 & 16, 2019
Forbach (FR), Le Carreau – Scène Nationale de Forbach et de l’Est mosellan, April 4, 2019
Nantes (FR), Lieu Unique, April 23 & 24, 2019
Düsseldorf (DE), Tanzhaus, April 26 & 27, 2019
Frankfurt (DE), Mousonturm, May 2 & 3, 2019
Munich (DE), Dance Festival, May 23 & 24, 2019
Singapore (SG), Singapore International Festival of Arts, June 1 & 2, 2019
Dro (IT), Festival Drodresera, July 27, 2019
Helsinki (FI), Helsinki Festival, August 29, 30 & 31, 2019
London (GB), Sadler’s Wells, October 8 & 9, 2019
Stockholm (SE), Dansnätsverige, November 20 & 21, 2019

TOUR

Toulouse (FR), Théâtre de la Cité, January 31 & February 1, 2020
Annecy (FR), Bonlieu Scène nationale Annecy, March 24 & 25, 2020
The French-Austrian artist Gisèle Vienne (b. 1976) has made the stage her primary artistic material. Deceptively theatrical, her pieces function as tableaux or cinematic shots, hybrid representations of what is inexpressible in human relations. An analysis by Bernard Vouilloux, professor of literature and the visual arts at the Sorbonne.

For over a decade, beginning in 2000 with Jean Genet’s Splendid’s, Gisèle Vienne has been building up a fascinating body of work, piece by piece, that is both spellbinding and disturbing. It captivates us for the very reason that it forces us to examine the unclear connection that we maintain with both our fantasies and with the dark part made up of manipulation, omission, and violence that forms interpersonal relationships. To advance along this perilous course, Gisèle Vienne – who sees herself as choreographer, puppeteer, director and visual artist all at once – uses these means of representation as her medium. Whileshe has recently appropriated the more or less defined working methods of the art installation (“Last Spring: A Prequel”, at the 2012 Whitney Biennial in New York), exhibition (“Teenage Hallucination”, as part of the Nouveau Festival at the PompidouCentre in 2012), and even the book (40 Portraits, 2003-2008, published in 2012 by Éditions P.O.L.), the venue and format to which she has usually devoted herself since her debut are those of the performing arts.

Although very little is verbalized, works such as Kindertotenlieder (2007) and This Is How You Will Disappear (2010) are built on the intricate librettos created by Dennis Cooper, the American writer whom Gisèle Vienne has collaborated with since I Apologize (2004). The “action” of these underlying stories, far from yielding an unequivocal version, makes available all potentialities. What we are shown seems to conform to rules or laws whose sense eludes us.

The subject matter on which each of Gisèle Vienne’s productions has been constructed is not unlike what anthropology designates as “myth”, that unrecoverable narrative whose inscrutable – and even contradictory – variations sustain rituals.

With few exceptions, notably Une belle enfant Ionde (2005) and Jerk (2008), the “theatre” of Gisèle Vienne is a laconic one: the spoken word does not really exist there; to the extent that it does occur, it does so in the minimal form of monologue, often murmured, addressed to oneself or to someone who cannot hear, one who is absent or deceased. Jerk suggests what would be spoken in Vienne’s other shows if it were to be uttered, and at the same time, because it is a narrative, performed by a psychopathic narrator, and containing dialogues (entirely carried off by the impressive Jonathan Capdevielle), the spoken word of Jerk provides access to the underlying framework of the productions conceived by Gisèle Vienne based on the written texts of Dennis Cooper. One should imagine all of Dennis Cooper’s sources of inspiration, from another continent and another culture, when he tells stories of beautiful, ambiguous teens brutally tortured, young women manipulated, lovers gone missing, as though commissioned by Sade and Sacher-Masoch (invoked in Showroomdummies, 2001-2009), revised by Genet and Bataille, and then reworked by the Robbe-Grilletts with, on the horizon, “Freudian psychology in the light of postmodernism” as specifies narrator of Jerk.

Writing that feeds from images of all sorts is itself a powerful trigger of images, whether it be those that develop on the stage or those that the spectator imagines or recombines from what s/he sees and hears, or even from what s/he reads (e.g. the fanzines distributed to the audience at the beginning of Jerk, 2008, or at the end of The Pyre, 2013). In the work of Gisèle Vienne, however, the image on stage is unique in that it is mobile, its plastic qualities have been highly elaborated, and it is coupled to an almost uninterrupted flow of music (by the duo of KTL). Neither opera nor filmed theatre, but rather dream images, images from silent film, and accompanied by music and spoken word as if from off-stage, from “another scene” (Freud), as it were... The “theatre” of Gisèle Vienne primarily deals with all that is neither looked at nor listened to, the silent images that haunt us, flooding back onto the stage.

Gisèle Vienne as well as subsequent critical comment on her work have often cited the genre of tableau vivant: onlookers (you, me) assume the poses, the postures, and sometimes the costumes of the painted figures of a familiar scene. Except that there is no original tableau that can be traced back to, ones whose recognition would reassure us. The actors themselves play along, their displacements having the effect of saturating the performance space, of mobilizing all of its dimensions, by a rigorously constructed total environment. All of the body’s speeds are utilized: quick staccato dance (in The Pyre), quasi-gymnastics (in This Is How You Will Disappear), displacements that are fast, slow, or broken down. But “actor” and “performer” are words that in this case are ill-suited – and not only because most of the figures activate the resources of choreography. In Jerk, the mechanism of representation is reduced to its most minimal state: it is enough that the body of the narrator-puppeteer is doubled, that the mute voice that is designated “subject” is bifurcated and reflected off itself. The puppets are the projections of this process of fission. Gisèle Vienne herself has touched on this in her account of how in sixth grade she began to create marionettes and perform with them. The puppets and mannequins point to a more advanced stage of this process: on the set of Kindertotenlieder, the ten motionless silhouettes, with hoods pulled up over their hair, hair falling down over the face, and heads bowed down (a recurring motif, seen again in the series of 40 Portraits), seem to be those of the young audience at a black metal concert. The final stage is that of living persons who also wear masks. Don’t their gestures and movements sometimes seem to be mechanized, whereas, conversely, the animation of the puppets, and even the mannequins, make them seem alive? The same disturbing thought troubles us when faced with the figures of a tableau vivant, or of wax: the most familiar becomes the most strange. Indeed, under the direction of Gisèle Vienne, there are neither actors or performers nor even people, but figures which are at the same time apparitions, geometrical forms, and rhetorical operations tuned in to the unconscious. The generalized uncertainty plays on this stage set of simulacra. The fantasy material set into motion by Gisèle Vienne as by Dennis Cooper takes this uncertainty to a state of additional complexity: the ambiguity of age, between infancy, childhood, adolescence, and post-adolescence. It is also that of gender – for example the young androgynous boys of Jerk, in contrast to the powerfully sexual bodies of the female dancer and the trainer in This Is How You Will Disappear. But still more disturbing is the uncertainty of the subject itself, above all when it speaks as in Jerk or Last Spring: A Prequel. On this subject, reduced as we are to conjecture, we can only resort to projections.

Gisèle Vienne: Disturbance in Representation
By Bernard Vouilloux