

This text is a written documentation, a collection of notes, a list of sources, a performance score and a description of the piece *Opening* by Mette Edvardsen.

The piece premiered in 2005 and was initially staged as a solo performance in large theatres. In the second, longer version taken up in 2006 there was a second performer entering after about 45 minutes into the piece and performing the remaining 15 minutes alone until the end.

Performed by Mette Edvardsen and Nienke Reehorst/ Lights Jan Van Gijssel/ Sound Philippe Beloul/ Production Helga Duchamps/ Supported by Norsk Kulturråd, Fond for Lyd og Bilde, Fond for Utøvende Kunstnere and Les Ballets C. de la B.

Text written by Mette Edvardsen.
First published in 2006

NOTES

Opening.

Curtains are open, stage is almost dark and empty, houselights are on. Audience is coming in. The sound of people finding their seats. Voices. Suddenly the houselights are cut, the stage is dimly lit, and the performer appears from the right with the back to the audience. Slowly moving from right to left, both arms reaching up, body hanging / leaning on the backdrop as if sliding down the walls of a corridor, until disappearing out of view on the other side.

Footsteps. Running. Shots. Fall. Fall. Falls through the curtain of the backdrop. The dead body is half visible, partly covered by the curtain and still in dimmed light. Silence. Lying face down on the floor. Heavy. The body is being pulled away, into the darkness, into the curtain, backstage. Houselights come back on.

Performer appears from the back corner on the left side, crosses the almost dark empty stage along the side, reaches into the wing downstage to pick up a microphone, and walks to the centre up front addressing the auditorium.

(My Eyes See Your Faces. There are many of you.

Now a light is put on me as well, from the front, and You can also see my face.

I am still catching my breath from the running in the opening scene.)

PERFORMER: *(announces)* Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sorry to tell you that Miss Page is unable to dance tonight, nor indeed any other night. Nevertheless, we've decided to present the piece [The Red Shoes]. It is the ballet that made her name, whose name she made. We present it because we think she would have wished it.

The performer places the microphone back in the wing, and turns around.

SLOW 1EATH. (slow feet) I count to 42, a minute for me. Leaving the same direction I came from.

Houselights going up in 3 seconds to full.

MUSIC: small orchestra softly tuning up.

(In the first version of the piece this was the first opening scene. As the audience had entered, houselights on and front curtain closed, the orchestra would be played from a CD player, tuning up. Mainly the audience would keep on talking with each other until running was heard behind the front curtain, then shots, the orchestra stopped playing, and a person fell through the front curtain. Later on she was pulled out by someone from behind the curtain.)

(WORDS: Please! [*Tuning. Louder.*] Please! [*Tuning dies away.*] How much longer cooped up here in the dark?)

House lights off. (Darkness at last. The piece is about to start.)
Lights on stage. Cross-fade to General light I.

Scene: for the time being, an indeterminate space,

Looming. (A vague first appearance of an object seen in darkness or fog, especially at sea.)

(I crawl under the dance floor from behind the wings making my way towards the opening I have prepared for my entrance on stage.)

Performer appears from a crack in the floor, centre stage left. From a small tunnel underground, seeking the light from outside, out of the dust, sliding and pulling the feet up close. (She seems a little bit smaller in size than the previous one.) Sitting. Leaning back onto hands. Comfortable. Looking. Or thinking. Waiting. She stands up, as if from an impulse, and walks determined over to the wings, crossing the stage. Picks up microphone and stand, and places it downstage right. With a quick glance out on the audience, holding the microphone and stand with one hand, trying to speak convincingly and matter-of-factly:

PERFORMER: I've never been more ready in my entire life to do this right now. Never.

Quick turn back, running upstage. Stop. Enter stage right towards centre, turn towards audience, and stop with feet coming together, right hand settling the whole movement of the body at last. Contained. Open. (Looking out at the people in the auditorium at a comfortable distance.)

PERFORMER: The first time - I performed this dance – it was four and a half minutes long – to The Grateful Dead - uncle John's band – the next time – it was 55 minutes long – and in silence –

X (*drawing a cross on the floor*)

Step right – left – right, balance on one foot.

Lights making space tilt slightly. BALANCE. STOP. WALK.

Walking off stage. Sitting at the feet of the audience. In the middle. Really close at their feet. Watching the stage. Audience looking at performer looking at the stage. Performer looking at the performance on stage trying to be one with its audience.

*Enters the dancers! Hands in the air counting five, six, seven, eight!
Ducking down while moving up to the microphone, then straighten to add:*

PERFORMER: This is a true story, I can swear to you. I've changed the names, of course, the places, the time periods, the professions, the dialogues, the order of events and their signification, and still – all that I will tell you is true.

Being on the spot. Standing still. The spotlight hits and blinds the eyes. Face moves. Counting in 'one, two, three' looking side. Face front and count downwards from ten..

PERFORMER: *(narrative tone)* Ten, nine, eight, seven...six.. *Nothing. Go off.* (Gone).

The explosion: BANG!!! *(The sound of an explosion.)*

(Here I have a small moment to myself in the wings while I quickly change shoes from green to black. In the theatre the colour green means bad luck. I was told that in Spain it is the colour yellow.)

Curtain.

1. Faint light on stage [littered with miscellaneous rubbish]. Hold about 5 seconds.
2. Faint brief cry and immediately inspiration and slow increase of light together reaching maximum together in about 10 seconds. Silence and hold about 5 seconds.
3. Expiration and slow decrease of light together reaching minimum together (light as in 1) in about 10 seconds and immediately cry as before. Silence hold about 5 seconds.

Desert. Dazzling light.

The man is flung backwards on stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects. [Whistle from right wing. He reflects, goes out right. Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects. Whistle from left wing. He reflects, goes out left.

Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects.

Whistle from left wing. He reflects, goes towards left wing, hesitates, thinks better of it, halts, turns side, reflects.]

(It used to be the stage technician that really *pushed* me in from the wings on the second 'flung back on stage'. Later I kept only one time. I think next time I will repeat the action again.)

(How long I can hold my breath after an exhale?
First nothing. Water comes into the eyes. Then dizziness. Grasping after air.)

PERFORMER: *(Catching the breath, breathing in several times, after a long holding of breath.)*
 ...hhhaah-hhaahh! hhaah-hhaahh! .. hhaah-hhaahh...

Tries again. Deep inspiration. Exit left wing while holding breath.

Scene. Light shining in a slow build-up reaching maximum at about one minute. The sound of birds singing audible half way into the fade-in of the lights and going for another 45 seconds.

BIRDS: *(the sound of birds singing)*

Cut. Light change. A shoe, one, flies in and hits the floor.

A dog. Crossing stage from left to right on all four.

Raepaer walking on two legs backwards, from stage right, making a curve going front. Stop.

Enter. Blackout. Exit. Lights. Enter. Look out. Blackout. Exit. Enter with lights. Look out. Stop front. Blackout. Exit. Enter. Stop front. Wait. Lights. Blackout stage left. Wait. Lights.

Performer takes out paper from pocket, goes to microphone and reads.

PERFORMER: Some of the [Menander's] text from the early part of the play is missing. In order to provide a continuity of a complete piece, the present translator has filled in the gaps with invented material of about the same length. All such material appears in brackets.

Act one.
Athens. (

SLOW _2ATH. (*dragging steps*) About one minute. (Cued by the music.)

Bells. Echoing voices. Leaving into left wing.

Intro. The band enters through the speakers on stage. Cut. Immediately followed by performer entering directly approaching the audience.

P: I would like to begin at the beginning...

Curtains closing.

Houselights up. Doors open. Bells. Echoing voices. Wait! (Les sonneries du théâtre.)

Track # 10 repeats coming from the foyer bar this time.

Doors are closing. The last person finds his/ her seat.

P: House is open! (*'The technician' enters the stage through the closed front curtains.*)

Houselights down. A moment of quiet darkness before the curtain opens.

(Behind curtain: Replacing the shoe to position upstage right.)

Curtain opens. General light II. A disappearing figure running across, out stage right. Running. Footsteps. Tracing the walls of the theatre. (Putting my stop-wrist-watch on now, because I won't have time later.) Covering the whole backstage area, out of sight from the auditorium. Step, step, step. One more time.

Entrances. Tracing the middle line. Crossings. Facings. Looking. Leaning. Directions. Measuring. Back to front. Sideways step, two, three...four.

(Footsteps are being heard from behind the backdrop crossing from stage left to stage right, then cease.)

You must have made your entries from the rear
,between the curtains, out
of nothing You appear and reappear.

I pass, You vanish necessarily.

Enter stage left, to exit immediately.

Enter.

Stage manager enters front stage left carrying a wooden stick, nods on cue from the house technician and gives three knocks with 'le brigadier'. (One for the Queen, two for the King, and three for the Audience.)

(Now time is tight. At once put the stick down to the ground without making sound, and move from first to third wing in order to make the next entrance.)

Soft but visible light change.

Enter stage left on a diagonal. Arms swing, step, step, skip, look back, fall.

Sitting in 4th position. Followed by a sharp light change.

A country road, a tree, evening.

[Performer], sitting on a low...is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before. Repeat. (Waiting for G.)

The first movement of Beethoven's symphony N°3.

Getting up to leave in 3 seconds. Gong goes GONG! *Immediately followed by a sharp light change, same as before.* Cut. I slip and fall. I pose and correct. I rectify and hold one second. I get up and start stopwatch: Bi-i-ip.

Off jardin.

Heard from the wings: SCREAM!! (*a loud scream*)

Pink light washes over the space.

Enter from stage right. Jumping. (This always makes me smile.) Counting. I am not thinking about time here. Only counting. 100. I jump another 20. Then I leave.

SPECIAL LIGHTS FOR THE LEGS: (6 or 8 pars top down ½ - 1 meter away from leg)

Enter Richard, Duke of Gloucester, alone

RICHARD

Now is the winter of our discontent.. (*as subtitles – projection onto backdrop*)

Elements. Evening light. Dreamer. His dreamt self. Dreamt hands right and left. Last 7 bars of Schubert's *Lied, Nacht und Träume.*

Lights: only backlights, low intensity.

Performer hardly visible standing upstage far left. Breathing.

Stage in darkness. Dark. 5 seconds. 3 steps forwards. Slow motion. Ways of dying. Image to create movements. Black! Lights fade in just enough to hear the sound of projectors buzzing. Then off. Silence.

Removing props quietly in the dark. Long pause.

PERFORMER: "Wait! Wait!" (*whispering from behind the wing*)

Light enter.

GENERAL LIGHT: S – P – A – C – E (*The space appears, stays for 3 seconds, then out.*)

Performer enters the space in darkness downstage right together with lights in a slow fade in, and walks counter clockwise in a circle tracing the periphery of the performance area. Continuing together with the increasing lights 4 to 5 rounds then leaves upstage left.

A hard cut. All the stage lights come on at once. (Performer passes behind the wings from leg 4 to leg 5.)

*THE BIG DIAGONAL. (Drawing a diagonal line running through the building.)
Performer storms from the right corner in the back crossing to the front left continuing into the audience and through the auditorium.*

Entrance: Performer arrives from the main entrance door of the theatre and walks through the audience space and up on stage.

Enters into the lights and looks out on the audience.

PERFORMER: *(casually into the mike)* In order of appearance:

SLOW __3TH. *(dragging feet)* I am no longer there. (I stop counting.)
(Leaves,....then leaves.)

Performer enters from the left and lies down on the floor with head pointing towards audience and feet pointing upstage. Lying on the back looking up into the tower. Pause. Sitting up. Leaning forwards onto hands. Comfortable. Waiting. Or thinking. Looking to the left. She stands up, as if from an impulse, and walks determined over to the wings, crossing the stage. Picks up microphone and cable, and places it down on the floor making a line from the right side towards the middle.

NOTE

~~This [scene] should be played on a low narrow platform at back of stage, violently lit in its entire length, the rest of the stage being in darkness. Frieze effect.~~

~~A is slow, awkward (...), absent.~~

Enter stage left up side down crossing over to the opposite side. Walk the line.

A late evening in the future.

The stage is empty and the lights are out.

SPOT ON. SPOT OFF.

Light. (General light II, a bit lower.)

Performer comes in and lies down with the front down to the floor facing the wings stage left.

Go out audience left.

(Faint from the loudspeakers)

How can I just let you walk away
Just let you leave without a trace
When I stand here taking every breath with you
You're the only one who really knew me at all
How can you just walk away from me
When all I can do is watch you leave
Cause we shared the laughter and the p..

Shortcut. Circle a leg.

Scene: Argos, before the palace of King Agamemnon. The watchman, who speaks the opening lines, is posted on the roof of the palace. Clytaemestra's entrances are made from a door in the center of the stage; all others, from the wings.

When arriving up front, turning away heading for wing upstage left before steps interrupt.

SLOW ___4H. *(Brief drag of feet. Fall dead.)*

(Pause.)

From position lying on the floor upstage left with the front side of the body to the ground, one arm and one leg slightly bend.

PERFORMER: *(loud)* Black! *(Wait.)*

Emerging of small movements, arm preparation to flip around to the back.

Performer stands up and walks to the curtain opening in the middle of the backdrop, enters opening while quietly announcing the remaining time, in a 'last call' kind of manner.

PERFORMER: Five minutes! *(Then disappears behind stage.)*

A large open space. On one side, the door of H' house. On the other, the gateway of the Underworld. Enter D wearing [an orange t-shirt] a yellow costume covered with a lion-skin, and carrying a club. Behind him, loaded with luggage, enter X on a donkey.

Movement: this consists in simple sideways rising of arms from sides and their falling back, in a gesture of hopeless compassion. It lessens with each recurrence till scarcely perceptible at third.

Cross stage to pick up the microphone, making the side of 'cour' be your front (and 'jardin' your back). Place microphone facing your front. Addressing 'cour' for the whole duration of the piece.

Act one

PERFORMER: *Upon entering the theatre, the audience finds the curtains already raised and the stage in the way it is during the day without the scenery in view, semi-dark and empty, [so that from the beginning the audience will have the impression of an impromptu performance.] Two sets of stairs, one at the right, the other at the left, that serve to connect the stage with the theatre hall. On the stage the cover for the prompter's box has been removed and is to one side of the opening. On the other side, towards the front, a small table and a chair with its back to the audience for the director. Two more tables, one bigger, one smaller, with several chairs around, set up in front ready to be used in case they should be needed for the rehearsal. More chairs here and there, to the right and left, for the actors. And in the background to one side, a piano half hidden. Once the theatre lights are dimmed, from the door onstage the technician appears dressed in dark blue. From a corner backstage he picks up a few rigging boards, puts them down up front and kneels down to nail them. While hammering is going on there enters from the direction of the dressing rooms the stage manager.*

Cross stage to enter into wings stage left. (Not visible for the audience.)
Being in the same place at the same time.

P1: pulling a r-o-p-e moving the leg like a curtain closing into space steadily about 1 meter

P2: ready to pull the r-o-p-e detaching a black wrap

Performer enters from wing stage left, walking, looking towards audience, and at the moment she is arriving up front and is about to say her line,

PERFORMER: Good evening,

Ghost Trio

a black wrap falls from one of the projectors hanging upstage right, and there is a

BLACK OUT

An incomplete list tracing some annotations, sources and references, visible and invisible in the performance and in the text Opening. Based on the chronology of the piece.

Alphaville Jean Luc Godard
Vertigo Alfred Hitchcock

The Red Shoes Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger
Words and Music Samuel Beckett
The Clouds Aristophane
Beastie Boys Anthology The Sounds of Science
Accumulations Trisha Brown
Showing Alexandra Bachzetsis
Une Adoration Nancy Huston
Journal de la Creation Nancy Huston
Breath Samuel Beckett
Act Without Words I Samuel Beckett
Chrysa Parkinson
Heiko Gölzer
Woman from Samos Menander
Sigurd Ros Ágætis byrjun (“good start”)
Doubling the Point J. M. Coetzee
If on a winter’s night a traveller Italo Calvino
Eventyr Asbjørnsen & Moe
Sigurd Ros Ágætis byrjun
Solo renversé Sara Ludi / Zoo
Schreibstück Thomas Lehmen entrance Mårten Spångberg
Schreibstück Thomas Lehmen entrance Mette Edvardsen
Ballade van de gasfitter Gerrit Achterberg
Moliere
Schreibstück Thomas Lehmen entrance Christine de Smedt
Waiting for Godot Samuel Beckett
Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony N°3 (N°5)
Welcome Home Philippe Beloul
The Rope Alfred Hitchcock
Akira Kurozawa Les bas Fonds entrance Kabuki actor
Jan Van Gijssel
Richard III William Shakespeare
Nacht und Träume Samuel Beckett
Schubert Lied Nacht und Träume
& Mat Voorter and Thomas Hauert / Zoo
Lilia Mestre

Opening Night John Cassavetes
~~Act Without Words II Samuel Beckett~~
Nienke Reehorst
Krapp's Last Tape Samuel Beckett
You're the only one Phil Collins (Cover version)
Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote Jorge Luis Borges
Agamemnon Aeschylus
Her body doesn't fit her soul Wim Vandekeybus / Ultima Vez
La Sortie Hans Van den Broeck / Les Ballets C. de la B.
Frogs Aristophane
Not I Samuel Beckett
Six characters in search of an author Luigi Pirandello
Time will show (detail) 2004, performance Mette Edvardsen
Ghost Trio Samuel Beckett