

## Abstracts

### **A Cosmopolite's Utopia: Limitations to the Generational Flemish Dance History Model**

Lise Uytterhoeven (University of Surrey)

Choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's nomadic lifestyle and cosmopolitan attitudes are central to his choreographic work. At the basis of each creation lies a series of intercultural encounters and exchanges. This process is reflected in the staged work, in which elements from different cultures are juxtaposed or layered upon each other, and languages are spoken without translation. For example, one of the scenes in *zero degrees* (2005) includes a Hebrew song with latent Basque origins, which has become Israel's unofficial national anthem. Cherkaoui's eerie performance of the song undermines the notion of purity of origins of nationalistic cultural symbols. Because Cherkaoui's work both facilitates and demonstrates oral and/or embodied transmission of cultural knowledge at work, which can be unpredictable, it has become extremely difficult to evaluate the work within a historical framework that is geographically isolated and based upon an understanding of cultural transmission as happening lineally between generations. Cherkaoui's life and artistic choices exemplify the kind of flexibility and fluidity that is required to overcome the types of nationalism and ethnocentrism with which he was confronted in his youth.

### **Theatre for Survival: Language and Cultural Preservation in the work of the Ladino Players**

Mara Lockowandt (Royal Holloway, University of London)

This paper examines the role of theatre in maintaining and developing a sense of cultural identity. Through an examination of a performance of *Presentando de un Megilah para Muestras Dyias* by the Ladino Players, I consider the production as a form of *theatre for survival* based upon its particular use of language in myth to evoke cultural memory. *Theatre for survival* indicates the impetus for performance to propagate the Judeo-Spanish language, as well as the customs and identities embedded in it. This paper draws upon a number of theorists, including Diana Taylor, Helen Gilbert, and Marvin Carlson, to examine the relationship between performance and the transmission of cultural identity. In discussing how the Ladino Players encourage broad community participation, I show how the production motivates audiences to reactivate Sephardic language and traditions in the present. *Theatre for survival* demonstrates how theatre can function as a means of archiving and reactivating

histories and memories, and emphasizes the imperative of collaboration for the propagation of a cultural identity.

**‘If Music Be the Food of Love’: An Acoustic ‘Fourth World’ in Ong Keng Sen’s *Awaking***

Marcus Cheng Chye Tan (Trinity College Dublin)

Staged as an attempt to ‘bring together Shakespeare’s plays and Tang Xian Zu’s classical Kunqu opera, *The Peony Pavilion*,’ (Ong, Programme Notes) *Awaking* stands as Singapore Director Ong Keng Sen’s most recent and prominent attempt at engaging issues of the intercultural through music and sound. While Ong’s previous intercultural projects sought to explore the politics of intercultural performance through the exchange, layering, confrontation and inter-mixing of Asian performance modes as visual aesthetics, *Awaking* is a performance at the borders of theatrical and musical conventions, as it features the music and musicians as central performative devices of staging the intercultural. Northern Kunqu opera, Chinese classical music and Elizabethan folk tunes from Shakespeare’s plays were re-moved, re-contextualised, and juxtaposed to explore ‘differing yet connected philosophies on love, death, and the afterlife’ (*Awaking*, Publicity). These humanist and ‘universal’ themes found expression in the ‘universal’ language of music. Through a study of the musicalities and sonic expressions of *Awaking*, the paper seeks to explore the implications of such cultural-musical juxtapositions. The paper engages, specifically, with the problematics and possibilities of music as a ‘universal language’ as implied by Ong’s concordance of Eastern and Western sounds in the final act. It further considers the politics of an intercultural soundscape and the acoustemologies of such an intercultural approach.

**‘Which Country Should I Love?’ *Portrait of the Families* by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan**

Ching-yi Huang (University of Washington)

In September 1997, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan premiered *Portrait of the Families*, a one hundred minute long dance which was described by choreographer Lin Hwai-min as ‘a ritual that pays homage to the turbulent past and to those common people who died unjustly.’ At the age of six, Lin saw secret family photos of his ancestors clad in Japanese kimonos, for the first time. Warned by his mother, he soon understood that he was unfolding an untouchable chapter of Taiwan’s past. Forty-four years later, he decided to face the traumatic history of Taiwan, and choreographed a dance threading together the fragments of the past, by unearthing the old family photos of Taiwan over the past one hundred years.

In this paper, I attempt to examine how *Portrait of the Families* showcases Taiwanese people's renegotiation and relocation of their Taiwanese (local), Chinese (national) and Japanese (colonial) identities in a postcolonial situation, through personal story-telling. I will also show how the dance attempts to forge a new narrative of 'home' for Taiwanese people by juxtaposing personal 'truth' with historical 'facts,' through a collage of movements, voices of personal narratives, and slide projections of family portraits. 'Which country should we love?' is the main question in *Portrait of the Families*. It embarks on a journey of not only finding the 'roots,' but also redefining the 'routes' of the immigrant communities in Taiwan.

**Mika's *haka* in *Mika HAKA*: Performing as the 'Other.'**

Mark Hamilton (University of Canterbury, New Zealand)

In 2000, Māori performer Mika, with his company Torotoro, created a dance show called *Mika HAKA*. The production was developed expressly for presentation at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. As such, it was targeted at the popular market in the UK. Its Māori-Pasifika teenage cast was predominantly male, and its choreography was based on *haka* (Māori intimidatory dance). In anticipation of non-Māori audiences, Mika structured *Mika HAKA* in such a way as to focus attention on the dancers' bodies. This paper considers how *Mika HAKA* constructed sensational images of Māori men by subverting performance conventions pioneered in *kapa haka* ('traditional' Māori group performance). By doing so, the production might be seen to have challenged the definitions of Māori identity that *kapa haka* upholds. In particular, *Mika HAKA* might be seen to have exposed how performances of native identity in New Zealand necessarily negotiate the continuing 'othering' of Māori. This paper considers how *Mika HAKA* explores the valorising and demonising typifications that historian James Belich observes in non-Māori portrayals of Māori men. Furthermore, I propose that the production is a contemporary permutation of the performance of alterity that Christopher Balme identifies as recurrent in the history of Pacific theatre. Finally, I propose that Mika's particular experiences of growing up adopted and gay might be seen to inform his theatrical practice of self-othering.