

Basically I don't but actually I do

Jochen Roller and Saar Magal

Presented by Arts House

7.30pm, Wednesday 24 November 2010

7.30pm, Thursday 25 November 2010

7.30pm, Friday 26 November 2010

7.30pm, Saturday 27 November 2010

55 mins

“Basically I don’t. ...but actually I do.

by Urszula Dawkins

Starting with a photo of an SS man shooting a Jewish woman, choreographers and long-time friends Saar Magal and Jochen Roller – an Israeli and a German – chose to confront the unspoken tensions between them, third-generation post-Holocaust. Urszula Dawkins spoke to Saar Magal in Tel Aviv about their collaboration, **Basically I don't but actually I do.** – a work that Magal says is as much a memorial as it is a dance piece.

For Saar Magal, the music of Schubert evokes Germany before Hitler: a decadent society, but at the same time “very ‘cultural’”. At the concentration camps, she says, Nazi officers continued with their elegant lives, their ‘culture’; while bodies burned on the other side of the fences.

The very different music of Magal's and Roller's feet and lungs and bodies “rustles, rattles, pitches and drones” –as one German reviewer put it – in a way that leaves the audience of **Basically I don't but actually I do.** hardly daring to breathe. So why did Magal and Roller choose to spend a Berlin winter poring over endless, terrible images of systematic genocide, in order to create the work?

Jochen Roller and Saar Magal met some 15 years ago when both were studying choreography at London's Laban Centre. “We clicked immediately,” says Magal, “and by the second cigarette break, we realised that we have this really good chemistry together, and then of course we recognised that we have an accent, and then we asked each other, ‘so where are you from?’”. Neither one was happy to hear the reply.

“Jochen was the first German person I ever met, and I was the first Israeli person that he's ever met, and we both have a huge issue since childhood...because on my side all my grandparents were Holocaust survivors and camp survivors from Europe; and for him, his grandfathers, who died in the war – one of them was in the SS and one of them was probably in the SA.”

Roller and Magal became close friends, “but always we checked how close we can be, and how far we can go laughing and making jokes,” says Magal.

“And then one night – because we always wanted to work together, we're both choreographers and performers – we decided to make a piece about that. And then he asked me, so do you really want to talk about it? And I said, well, basically I don't, but actually I do. And that became the name of the piece, and it kind of became the answer for every question that we would ask each other in the process of this piece.”

Neither Magal nor Roller wanted to represent or re-enact the Holocaust – instead they approached the task specifically as a dialogue of the third generation. “I am not a Holocaust survivor, and Jochen is not an SS officer,” she says. But both have experienced “lapses in reality” that “make us go back there in our memory and create associations in the present”.

“If Jochen is coming to Tel Aviv and we're going to the Dead Sea together, and we're putting mud on each other, relaxing in the sun, and then Jochen looks to his left and he sees an old man with a number on his arm – in this moment of relaxation, suddenly this memory of the past is coming. And then he gets the chills in his body and he feels ashamed, he feels this guilt – even though of course he's not guilty of anything right now.”

“And then when I go to Berlin and I'm standing in front of the museum and suddenly this beautiful aryan blonde guy on a bicycle is coming towards me – and I get the chills because suddenly Hitler Jugend [the Hitler Youth Movement] is coming to my head, and I'm a Jew. But then suddenly he smiles at me and then everything is fine, and it's 2010, it's not 1941...”

Magal says that German and Israeli audiences have had very different reactions to the piece: German audiences “felt they had to endure”; whereas Israelis allowed themselves to respond emotionally and personally. She sees these reactions as a kind of reversal: in Israel, the individual stories of survivors have become part of a very public, collective narrative, and Basically... allows a space for personal and private response. In Germany, by contrast, there has been public silence and private deflection of guilt and blame, she says; so the work is an opportunity “for the Germans to feel this belonging, and being part of this story, as public”.

Magal and Roller immersed themselves in the difficult process of confronting archival material and travelling to memorials in both Israel and Germany, in search of a way to combine the public memory with the tensions they carried in their own bodies. The yellow and brown costumes, says Magal, were chosen to represent the Jewish Yellow Star and the brown of the Nazi uniform. The costumes are in two piles, she says, “and we keep exchanging clothes. This is to show, in a way, how exchangeable the roles of victim and perpetrator are, nowadays.”

At the time, the gruelling Berlin winter seemed an appropriate backdrop to the intense and depressing task of developing the work. Friends challenged them, Magal says, asking, ‘Why are you doing this to yourselves?’

“You know, we were afraid that at some point we would almost lose our friendship because of it. But really in the end we felt that it actually made us closer and our friendship stronger. And in a way I think I wasn’t only doing this for myself: I’m doing it also for my people. It’s very big to think like that, but in a way, this piece was more important than just a dance piece, for Jochen as well.”

Magal and Roller were careful in choosing the images that would be the basis for their choreography, not wanting “to make people cry about something or make them feel guilty or go through a catharsis even”.

“It’s really just showing them things and letting them go through their own story – this was really our criteria,” she says. “Everything reminds you of something and creates an association in your head, and it might not necessarily bring up the past; it also can bring up the present.”

Magal hopes Basically I don’t but actually I do. “will take people wherever they want to go, wherever they need to go with this”. The work is unique, she says:

“It creates a different kind of experience for people, because they’re really part of it, physically also. If they’re not, the piece doesn’t exist – not because they’re not looking, but because the piece simply does not exist without them.”

Artistic Credits

Creators/Performers: Jochen Roller, Saar Magal

Lighting Designer: Marek Lamprecht

Soundtrack: Paul Ratzel

Outside Eyes: Elisabeth Nehring, Regev Contes

Production Management: DepArtment / Harriet Lesch, Katharina von Wilcke

Rehearsal Director: Darryll Roller

Biographies

Jochen Roller

Born 1971 in Berlin, Jochen lives and works as choreographer, dancer and performance artist in Berlin. After training in classical ballet, he studied Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen and choreography at the Laban Centre in London. From 1997 he created many dance and performance projects, such as the solo trilogy *perform performing* (2002-2004), the group pieces *Around the World* (2002) and *mindgarden* (2004), the club-series *nouvelles frontières* (2001) and the duets *mnemonic nonstop* (2005) and *Kojote* (2006). He participated at the German Dance Platforms in 2004 (with *perform performing*) and 2006 (with *mnemonic nonstop*) and toured his performances internationally. As a teacher for choreography and performance, he teaches at the University of Hamburg, Lasalle College Singapore, Fine Arts Academy Bern / Switzerland and Dance Academy El Barco in San José / Costa Rica. From 2007-2010 he curated the dance season of Kamnagel Performance Space in Hamburg. He was part of the jury of the German Dance Platform in 2010 in Nürnberg.

His last solo work *JANCLOD!* premiered in May 08 at sophiensaele in Berlin. His performance project *-void-*, collaboration with Florian Feigl, premiered August 2010 in Berlin.

Saar Magal,

Born 1976 in Tel Aviv, Saar studied contemporary dance at Thelma Yalin Arts School and at the Laban Centre in London. From 1996 until 1998 she choreographed several pieces for the Batsheva Dance Ensemble under the direction of Ohad Naharin. Furthermore she created several dance performances, such as *Furniture Showroom* (1996), *Shin* (1997), *Telem* (2000), *Adagietto* (2001), *Roaches* (2006) at Suzanne Dellal Center Tel Aviv and *Showdown* (2008) at Khan Theater Tel Aviv. Together with director Krzysztof Warlikowski she worked at HAU Berlin (2004), Schauspielhaus Hannover (2004), National Opera Warsaw (2005), Opéra Garnier Paris (2006), Bayerische Staatsoper Munich (2007), La Monnaie Brussels (2008) and Opéra Bastille Paris (2008). Her dance film *Cell Fish* premiered in 2005 in Lincoln Center in New York. She gave lessons among others at the American Repertory Theater Institute at Harvard University and the Peridance Scholarship Program in New York. She recently choreographed the play *Unquiet Night*, based on Shlomo Artzi songs and directed by Yael Ronen, at the Cameri Theatre.

Marek Lamprecht,

Born in 1970 in Hamburg, Marek studied German, History and French until 1996. From 1996 – 1998 he worked as an assistant director in different theatres in Hamburg. From 1998-2007 he worked as lighting technician and lighting designer at Kampnagel Hamburg, since 2007 he is the technical director at Kampnagel. He created the lighting design for several theatre directors and choreographers such as Jochen Roller, Samir Akika, Mikael Serre, Michel Schröder, Sandra Strunz, Christiane Pohle and Angela Richter.

Paul Ratzel

Paul is a theatre musician and sound technician based at Kampnagel Hamburg. Among others he composed the music for *Kojote* by Ratzel/Roller and for the dance performance productions *R'Tat/Ort* and *Unica* by Dorothea Ratzel. For *Basically I don't and actually I do.* by Jochen Roller and Saar Magal he composed the music and developed the sound design.

DepArtment is a bureau for cultural management that is regularly engaged in the areas of conception, programming, production dramaturgy, management, project organisation and direction, communication, as well as consulting for festivals, event series, conferences and artistic solo projects. DepArtment manages national and internationally operating dance, theatre, performance, and media artists. The bureau was founded in 1995 at Kampnagel in Hamburg and has been seated in Berlin since 2004 under the direction of Katharina von Wilcke and Harriet Lesch. DepArtment started the collaboration with Jochen Roller in 2004 and since then is responsible for the production and tour management.

www.dep-art-ment.com

Goethe-Institut Australien

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution operational worldwide. We promote the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange. We also foster knowledge about Germany by providing information on its culture, society and politics. In collaboration with a variety of partners, we plan and present events to highlight contemporary discourse and practice. The aim is to focus on the varied and ever-changing perceptions of the world, of cultural roots and developments, to reach out to the public and invite them to participate.

Basically I don't but actually I do. is presented within the BERLIN DAYZ Festival – your German-Australian Arts Festival brought to you by the Goethe-Institut with the support of the German Foreign Office and our wonderful partners and sponsors in Australia, who we would like to express our sincerest thanks to.

Basically I don't but actually I do. is a production by Jochen Roller and DepArtment, in coproduction with Kampnagel Hamburg and Goethe-Institut Tel Aviv. Funded by Behörde für Kultur, Sport und Medien Hamburg and Fonds Darstellende Künste e.V.

About Arts House

Arts House, a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne's centre for contemporary and experimental performance and interactive artforms, providing a nexus for cultural expression and social connection in a city environment. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art. We produce and present art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

521 Queensberry Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
(03) 9322 3720

artshouse@melbourne.vic.gov.au
artshouse.com.au

Bookings:
artshouse.com.au or
(03) 9322 3720

Acknowledgement of Country

Arts House acknowledges the traditional land upon which we are located, of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and pay our respect to Elders both past and present and, through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.