

For quite a while now theatre has been trapped between the power of illusion cinema can produce and the freedom of choice and respect to individuality a visit to an exhibition provides. Theatre's powers of producing illusion are miniscule compared to cinemas, and it still addresses its audience as an audience, not as citizens or individuals, but just as components of a bigger unit - the people - unlike the exhibition. So how can Theatre find a way out of this trap? In general terms the answer is one to an old question: what remains specific to this and only this medium. For theatre this question is surprisingly easy to answer: it's situationality or if you don't have a taste for neologisms: it's liveness. Just as surprisingly and to the decline of the whole medium very little theatre directors have actually tried to follow this simple answer and preferred to stay stuck in the trap. The first person who comes to my mind, who tackled this problem *within* the tradition and setting of theatre, is Jan Fabre in his earlier works. Rather than re- playing and representing dramas in real life on stage, Fabre was interested in creating a real drama on stage. I am thinking of the actress being pushed off and climbing back on stage and being pushed off again forever and ever, until the archaichness of this simple exclusion wins over the representation of it. Or the ballet dancers redoing simple exercises non-stop until one can start to see and feel their own resistance to it. In his most recent work entitled *The Application* Juan Dominguez has found an even more elegant way out of theatres trap. Instead of trying to create a real drama on stage, Dominguez exhibits the different dramas, which are anyways already taking place. This becomes exhilarantly clear, when a few minutes into the piece a text is projected, which says: *Doesn't it happen to you that when you see the beginning of a show, you already know if you are going to like it or not?* Yes, *this* is the real drama taking place in theatre, the drama of judgement. I felt caught in the act, and it immediately changed my judgement. Instead of being stuck in theatres trap, Dominguez had set up a trap for me and I bet he got everybody else in the audience. From this decisive moment on Dominguez continues to unveil one drama of the situation after another. There is the drama between the director and his ensemble, which has of course substantially influenced *The Application* as it does with any other piece. The solution Dominguez finds to exhibit this well-known drama is also simply quite funny: The dancers are dancing a quite conventional dance routine whilst Dominguez himself is standing apart (as he always does, after all he is the director) hanging on to his crutches and watching them. After a few minutes a slide appears which dryly states: *look at them! They like this part a lot. Isn't it amazing?* A next slide tries to explain what this choreography initially should have become but finishes laconically with: *but right now it is only a tool to keep the performers mood up.* The next drama Dominguez turns to, it is that of physical attraction or the checking out of the dancers that audiences involve in. As this is a drama which is always going on, Dominguez gives it its place and sufficient time to really do it. Introduced via a nicely stupid trick – the magic glasses which allow to view people naked – we see the scenery happening on stage in its naked version on a screen behind the actors. One might accuse Dominguez of mere deconstruction, but actually he takes these real dramas as points of departure for the creation of scenes, which are often flavoured with Dominguez' particular blend of Spanish humour. Unlike many of his forerunners he is neither interested in explicitly deconstructing the separation between the audience and the stage. For him the fact that both are part of one situation is just a fact and therefore an evident, but - as I am trying to point out - decisive starting point. Consequently there are scenes which take place in the audience or where the audience is addressed, like when in the middle of a scene he turns to the audience and says: *This idea comes from them [the ensemble] it's not mine.* The piece is an incessant flow of such dramas, which follow as loosely connected scenes, framed by Dominguez own drama: his own economy, his application. *The Application* doesn't pretend to have some half cooked ambition, which would produce a neat sentence in an awful press release. It is about life in that it is part of life. No more, no less. Juan Dominguez has to write an application. That's where it starts and he's not going to hide that, that is his life and there is just as much about the current state of things in this simple fact as in most other facts one could think of. This makes *The Application* intellectually much more rewarding and talkative than other works which suffer from the unfortunate disease too often encountered in theatre today: Wanting to involve in another professions craft (say of cultural studies or film) while not even being able to master ones own. Dominguez returns to the basics of his craft. If theatre essentially is drama then Dominguez just seizes it immediately when it shows up, and (un) fortunately that's more often than not.

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