

DREAM / WACHSEIN

the clinic and Si! Theatre

The *Dream / Wachsein* performance series grew from an international collaborative research project between the clinic (a performance collective based in Christchurch, whose past work includes *The Forbidden Room*, *Beneath our Feet* and *Wild Night American Dream*) and Si!Theater (based in Leipzig, Germany). The performance model evolved from a meeting-of-minds between its co-directors, Eva-Maria Gauss and Lucette Hindin, at a festival organised by the international women performers group Magdalena, in Denmark 2001.

Before coming to Christchurch, *Dream / Wachsein* had previously enjoyed a season at Interdruck gallery in Leipzig. The organic nature of devised performance art (relying more on physicality and imagery than dialogue), allowed the Christchurch staging to be extended, explored and reinterpreted, even from one performance to another.

Before the starting time of 8pm the audience was let in by a nervous, agitated man (played by Michael Adams) in a brown suit painted white on the front half, who raced around like a confused robotic toy talking to himself and/or the audience. The performers divided the Physics Room into four separate spaces in which the audience found different performances, each linked to the whole, yet standing alone. Each performance area had its individual title but all were united within the overarching theme of time – past, present and future – reflecting on how human beings use, and in turn, are used by time.

In one area a woman (Hindin) sat knitting an endless multicoloured scarf, punctuating her activity with an intermittent, rambling reminiscence broken by wistful silences. Moving on, the audience was met with CircoArts aerialist, Pipi Evans swinging languidly on a trapeze, draping herself in various poses while plaintively reeling in her past, offering a kind of paean to ‘what ifs’ and lost opportunities. Around the corner, in a space probably chosen for its claustrophobic feel, the audience found Gauss pacing the confines of a small, white cube like a laboratory animal, bedevilled by the choices and possibilities of the present. Her fractured monologue reflected the anxiety of the thousand large and small decisions we make everyday. Meanwhile in the confines of the corridor, Anastasia Dailianis, dressed as though for a party in a flamboyant satin dress, repeatedly reached for the handle of a red door then stepped back, vacillating between the excitement and fear of treading into the future.

Sound artist Thomas Phillipotts provided the sonic canvas on which these linked physical narratives were played out. As the performances continued, they built in intensity and complexity until all five strands, including Adams’ free-ranging nervous character, started to weave together in a loose narrative structure, building to a thematic climax. The clinic and Si!Theater certainly achieved their goal of prompting each audience member to consciously examine their own relationship with time.

Andrew M. Bell

