

Coming to Sleep

A travelogue in science
and performance with
The Playground's
Sleep/Wake

by Sam Trubridge

Photo 1: Dancer and choreographer Maria Dabrowska in an early photographic study for Sleep/Wake. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

"If a man is in deep sleep without dreams he cannot even say 'I am' and he cannot know anything. He in truth falls into nothingness"

- The Chandogya Upanishad

Sleep is the very antithesis of performance. As an absence of responsive action and external awareness it contradicts the paradigms of the theatrical condition. The sleeping body is unaware of the demands that a self-conscious body responds to, and remains sentient only in the sense that its faculties and consciousness are turned completely inward. On the stage however, an enhanced self-consciousness has made it possible for performers to extend the roles and social games that we play in the everyday, to such an extent where they can pretend to be someone that they are not for our entertainment, or perform for the sake of performance itself. Alone on stage the theatre actor replays learnt actions, attitudes, and emotions in an attempt to entertain or communicate profound insights and experiences. By comparison the sleeping body, if placed on stage, would contradict these arrangements: resisting the contract that exists between bodies, wherein one watches and the other responds by performing.

Sleep/Wake is a collaboration between Massey University's Sleep/Wake Research Centre, and The Playground: an experimental company based in New Zealand that specialises in visual forms of dance/theatre performance. The production premiered in January 2008 at The Print Factory in Wellington, as part of the New Zealand Fringe Festival. Following further development over 2008, it had its next season at the Auckland Festival in March 2009. As a continual work in progress, this project explores the unknown territories of sleep on stage, by presenting and exploring sleep science and responding to the poetic, philosophical, and political implications of the field. In this way science becomes amenable to poetic interpretation, and vice versa, whilst making it possible to observe the similarities and shared methodologies that occur in science and the expressive artforms of live performance. Analytical, scientific strategies are employed by both in order to systematise each process, whilst creativity is equally critical so that the researcher can innovate and see beyond the limitations of their individual outlook or experience.

This cross-disciplinary production is centred around a dialogue between the interests of The Playground's director-designer Sam Trubridge with sleep scientist and chronobiologist Professor Philippa Gander. In the introduction to her book *Sleep in the 24-Hour Society* (2003) Gander cites the paradoxical nature of sleep, wherein the semblance of passivity and absence of movement conceals worlds of performance operating within the sleeping body and the dreaming mind. Her publication contains drawings by Nineteenth Century New Zealand artist Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947). These drawings of sleeping bodies share much in common with Trubridge's own drawings and photographs of

tramps sleeping on the streets of Rome in 2005 where, publicly exposed within their private slumbers, they share a disregard for the viewer, for the artist, and for the surrounding architecture; thus mocking any attempt to identify with or define them. It was through such affinities between Gander's research and Trubridge's own interests that a 'script' for the performance began to take form: emerging from scientific observations, data, gathered imagery, drawings, and scenarios developed from discussions and visits to the Sleep/Wake Research Centre laboratory. Later, when a larger team became involved in the process, then performers participated in an overnight workshop at the Research Centre, staying a night in specially built 'isolation units' where stimuli from the exterior world is blocked by thick walls and a regulated air conditioning system. In addition to recording these performers' data through electrodes and cabling, the workshop also involved waking them up at significant moments in their sleep cycles in order to execute memorised dance routines, and answer questions regarding their dreams. This process also provided new dramaturgical 'trajectories' and thematic threads in the performance.



Photo 2: Homeless sleeping above an air conditioning grate in Rome, an early study for *Sleep/Wake*. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

Crucial to the concepts behind *Sleep/Wake* was an interest in the pre-theatrical, pre-performance states of consciousness that we enter into as we fall asleep, and the division between states that is expressed in the show's title. Asleep, the body does not perform. If it does (through

dreaming) then it is a performance entirely for and of itself: an experience turned inward on the senses with little recourse in the physical world. Presented on stage, sleep becomes a place ‘other than’ the theatre, a place beyond the walls of the auditorium, that remains unreachable: mocking the posturing of the stage, its mimicry, and embroidered gestures with an image of complete removal and abstraction from this world. As such this body retains a form of consciousness, whilst transcending the self-conscious need to respond to external scrutiny and model behaviour accordingly. In Wellington’s Print Factory, the audience of *Sleep/Wake* enter the warehouse venue to the side of the set and the seating block that had been constructed in the space. Lights illuminate the timber exterior of a structure made up of three walls, ceiling, and floor that face the seated spectators. Triangles of bracing hold up this simple ‘boxed’ set. The audience’s entrance from outside the set thus presents them first with the backside of this facade, which they then enter to cross the stage to the aisle that takes them to their seats. Sitting down, they are able to see the set from an angle that favours the illusion: with the three walls, ceiling, and floor all flared slightly towards the audience, creating a forced perspective, with a single door in the back wall. There is also a sink, and a bed on stage with a body asleep in it. Wires hang from the ceiling to connect with a skullcap worn by the sleeper. First of all we enter a warehouse theatre, backstage. Now we have entered a bedroom. Like a sleeping body in a place of production, it is a structure at odds with its surroundings: content in the machinations of its own interior workings, illusions, and cogitations.



Photo 3: A point of view of the audience entrance to the *Sleep/Wake* performance, welcomed by the figure of The Orator (James Conway-Law). Photo: Sam Trubridge.

We are familiar with the conventions and ‘frames’ through which we assign sleep to an ‘other’ place, in particular the concentric enclosures of bed, bedroom, and home: specific sites for the transition between states of consciousness, from sleeping to waking and back again. Often this series is further enclosed within

the ‘sleepy’ enclosure of modern suburbia, that product of the growing working class, and battery farm for an industrialised society. However, this formalisation of the sleep/wake divide is not only expressed in the architecture, furniture, and clothing that frames, protects, and separates the state of sleeping from the rest of our lives; it is also understood through the rituals and activities that mark this transition. Thus we prepare ourselves for the journey into sleep with showers, creams, toothbrushes, unguents, gargles, costume changes, prayers, and conjugal rites. Then as we emerge from this state, similar activities will mark our return to the waking, rational world: so we stumble through our morning routines, choosing costumes, arranging hair, boiling kettles, and standing in front of the mirror to prepare our makeup, practise the masks, and rehearse the roles that we shall play in the day to come. It is not by circumstance that our daily morning rituals have so much in common with the preparations a performer may go through before the curtain rises every evening. After all, they are activities and rituals that separate the time to come from the time before, so that when we step out of the door we are well prepared for the roles we have been cast in and can perform with precision all the tasks of the day ahead. However, watching people asleep on the streets, in subway trains, and on busses one can observe that there is none of the apparatus and rituals to separate the sleeping state from the waking. Arms and legs cross thresholds, unconscious of the frameworks that society occupies about them. It is a sleep that disregards etiquette and disciplined performance; traversing architectural frames, and leaving the sleeper completely unaware and rather indiscreetly oblivious to whatever feelings we have for them. This uncontainable sleep persists as a place ‘other’ than the space around it, requiring the waking world to navigate around outstretched fingers or slumbering torsos, rendering the rigid structures of the here and now transparent, irrelevant, or fictitious. As a result of these parameters that are defined and denied by the sleeping body it is possible to see how the waking world of self-conscious rational thought has assigned to the realm of fiction all events and concerns that arise in our night-time imaginings. It is this dichotomy that drives *Sleep/Wake* through the contradictory states of sleeping and waking: the standing and the lying; the passive and the active; performance and non-performance.

Sleep/Wake begins with a body asleep on stage. Alone, it contradicts our efforts to derive meaning from it or to extract a moment of drama, theatre, or even performance from its breathing form. It is. And no more than that. Perhaps it is possible to say that the performance has not begun at all, since there is no performance to speak of yet. Then a figure enters the space delineated by the three walls and ceiling of the set: a man in a shoulderless dress of light mother of pearl coloured

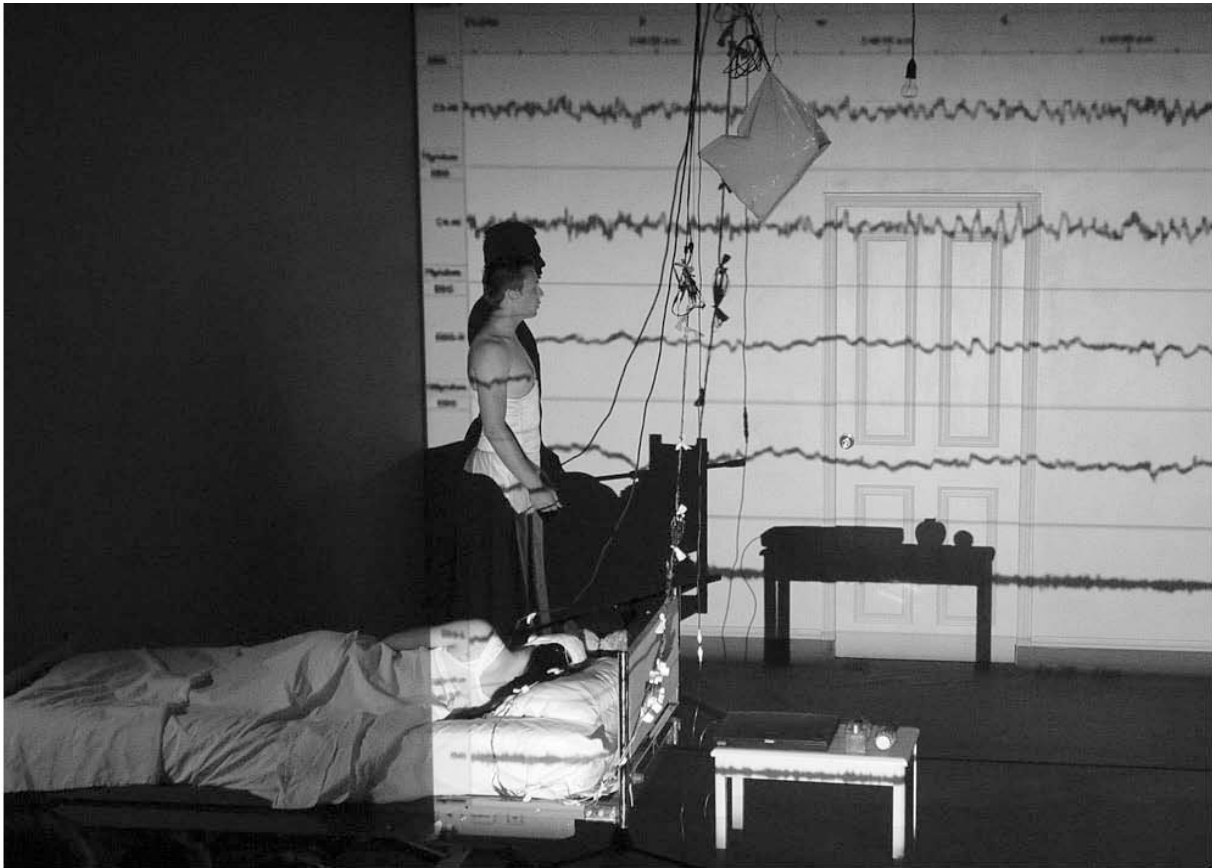


Photo 4: The Orator (James Conway-Law) and The Sleeper (Claire Middleton) with projection of polysomnographic data showing brain activity, eye movement, and the movement of chin muscles. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

material. The upright form stands next to its sleeping counterpart. A projection fades in upon the back wall that displays the signals coming from the cabling attached to The Sleeper's head. This character, 'The Orator', begins explaining the five lines of data that we see: 'polysomnographic' technology that is sleep science's way of making sleep perform. Of these, the top two lines monitor activity in the cerebral cortex; the thinking, decision-making part of the brain. Below that movements in the eye muscles are recorded, whilst the final signal documents activity in the sleeper's chin. As The Orator explains this to the audience, a familiar theatrical operation has begun in the performance. That is, within a conventionally designed drawing room space (with its fourth wall removed) the audience look into an environment that exists parenthetically to the world beyond. Action and concerns are suspended to make room for The Orator's narrative, as he tells of our internal biological mechanisms and their conflict with the demands of an industrialised society: the 24 hour clock, 9-5 work days, and the imperatives to keep producing and performing on the capitalist treadmill. Thus our relationship with The Orator is familiar to audiences of traditional theatre: one where he (the actor) has memorised information that he delivers it to us authoritatively; as if he had just thought of it, and we 'the audience' receive the clear, didactic thread of his discourse.

A significant objective for the production was to do more than just tell the story of sleeping and waking on stage. Within the theatrical medium there is an opportunity to go much further, and allow the audience to experience awakenings of their own within the theatrical experience. Moreso, it is possible through these 'awakenings' to animate 'real' worlds beyond the 'theatrical interlude' that interrupts the continuous drama of our everyday lives. Thus the goal of *Sleep/Wake*; as a live, and 'lived' experience was to explore that transition between states, when, upon crossing the threshold from sleeping to waking we become aware, connected, and responsible beings in a world of connected individuals, connected actions, and connected events. Jacques Lacan writes of this experience in the evolving psychology of the infant, calling this moment of realisation and awakening 'The Mirrorstage'; where the child emerges from a world where it had perceived everything around it as an extension of its own experience and its own organism: a world that is supplicant to its needs and sensations rather than comprised of individual systems. This way of placing the self at the centre comes from a pre-natal state of perception where the experience of being in the womb persists in the infant's psychology. Thus, emerging from this state, the child "is no longer lost within an 'undifferentiated sea of sensations', but perceives itself for the first time as a separate

being - as an 'object in a world of objects'" (Neil Leach, *Camouflage*, p.136) Upon discovering itself in the mirror (or in an equivalent experience) the child also perceives of 'the other' for the first time. In his article 'Of Other Spaces (1967) Heterotopias' Michel Foucault describes this encounter in great detail: "In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself where I am absent". Thus the child becomes aware of and consequently subject to the external gaze of 'the other', and begins to respond to that gaze: modelling its behaviour and manipulating its own image as self-conscious thought begins to produce the survival mechanisms of role playing, mimicry, posturing, and (ultimately) performance. This journey of discovery is not one that we make only once in our lives. Every day that we wake up, we move out of self-centred, self-generated experiences to face the external world again. Within the internal universe of sleeping and dreaming we return to the foetal psychology where there is no 'other'. As in the very beginning, all that we experience in the dream is an extension of our own persona, and all that we see and feel is produced by our own psychological mechanisms: the products of anxieties and fantasies in our reworking of the events of the day before. Thus, as we awaken, we begin to retrace the paths of infancy: continually rediscovering the world, and our place within it.

The Sleeper rises from her slumber and moves to stand in the doorway. As she stands in this threshold between the interior of the set and the external venue, half onstage and half backstage: an unexpected event occurs. The rear wall that frames her collapses, falling forward onto the floor

of the set, sending a gust of wind to through the audience. As this vertical becomes horizontal, there is a collapsing of boundaries provided by the familiar enclosure of the theatre set and the didactic, verbal performance of *The Orator*. In one catastrophic motion, the set transforms from a box to an archway, framing the view of the space beyond. This site that had been excluded from the experience before this moment comes rushing back into the picture, expanding the performance world beyond the theatrical 'cul de sac' of the boxed set to embrace new horizons, and new possibilities within the microcosmic culture of the theatre space. A shift in perception is engineered that may resemble the discoveries of the 'mirrorstage' infant, or the collective realisation that scientists like Gallileo, Darwin, or Einstein provoked in their times. As Foucault says of Gallileo' "[t]he real scandal [...] lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space" (1967). In the *Sleep/Wake* venue a similar reconstitution of space occurs, wherein the audience are forced to discard an outmoded way of perceiving the performance merely as localised action upon the 'playing space' of the stage, and instead must open their senses and their horizons to include the whole environment and its possibilities. It is the experience of one physical state, and one moment, becoming perpendicular to the other: an expansion of the dimensions of the work beyond the boundaries of the proscenium container, the cogitating, cerebral space of the theatre-machine opening, as eyes may open on a waking body.

This phenomena identifies how a rational, architectural, arrangement of space is rendered irrelevant by the witnessing subject and its individual experiences and perception of the event. On stage and in our waking lives, as much as in the

Photo 5: After the wall falls, three bodies in their three beds move through a restless sequence of moments, in pursuit of sleep. Photo: Sam Trubridge.





Photo 6: Underneath the wall Maria Dabrowska (left) lies in the fallen doorway while Elizabeth Barker (right) curls into a tight ball. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

world of dreams, it can be said that the subjective eye of the beholder defies the empirical Cartesian ordering of the three dimensions of length, width, and depth (x/y/z); an arrangement supplemented in more recent years with the concept that time provides a fourth, and equally perpendicular condition to the first three. August Strindberg's preface to *A Dream Play* (1902) attributes similar features to the experience of dreaming where the splitting, convergence, and doubling of characters occurs with one consciousness remaining above them all, that of 'the dreamer': "Time and space do not exist; on an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns: a medley of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities, and improvisations" (Drain, 235). Thus is possible to see in this description that experience is a spatial condition like the three dimensions of length, width, height, and the fourth dimension of time, since it is just as contrary to these states as they are to one other. Hence in performance, in dreaming, or in memory, a simultaneity occurs whereby theatrical landscapes, historical terrains, and dreamscapes overlay and reshape the physical and the previously imagined, to produce a complex architecture of contradictory structures, shifting scale, and concentric environments.

From the collapsing wall, the performance departs from scientific discourse into the territory of ambiguous stage images and phenomena to make use of the dichotomies explored in the first scene. Figures reflect and multiply in the darkness that has been opened up behind the wall, breeding dream doubles, incubi, that emerge from their own beds to manipulate the body of The Sleeper. Alone at the back of the deepened space The Orator stands with his back to us before a large achromatic projection of the sun rising over the curvature of our planet. As the light rises out of the darkness in front of him he reads 'The Litany of Ra' into a microphone: a text that was inscribed in the tombs and on the sarcophagi of Egyptian Pharaohs. This account tells of the sun god Ra, and his journey into the darkness below the horizon. Travelling through the twelve precincts of the underworld, he battles with the spirits of darkness, before finally emerging victorious from the opposite horizon with the coming of dawn. Ra then journeys through the twelve provinces of the day, completing his cyclic

journey to give us the twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night in our twenty-four hour clock. For ancient Egyptians this myth provided an explanation for the movement of planetary bodies, functioning (like many other mythologies and religious texts) in the way that science does today: to explain phenomena such as the rising and setting of the sun, the creation of the world, and the origins of man. Other images replay this story. A body lies in the collapsed doorway as if in a tomb. Then, as the wall begins to lift, the figure resurrects, rises, and walks into the darkness beyond. Meanwhile, underneath the wall a figure is born: first as a curled foetus, then pushing up the wall so that it lifts on an arc through the space. After finally reaching verticality, this wall and body begin to recede from us, falling back, away from the viewer, into the darkness and sleep once more.

Through the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice the performance continues to develop the trope of a journey through the underworld as a place of sleeping and waking, death and rebirth, darkness and light. Standing over *The Sleeper*, The Orator tells the Greek myth of the death of Eurydice on the night of her wedding to Orpheus, and her husband's journey into Hades (the underworld) to recover her. Orpheus convinces the ruler of Hades to return Eurydice to him, and is told that she will follow him on his journey back to the land of the living. However, he must not look back. In the final moments before he emerges from Hades Orpheus begins to lose faith in the deal he has struck, and looking back, loses his wife a second time. It is a story that tells of the loss we feel when we realise that the world of our dreams has not come through into our waking lives. As he speaks, The Orator's delivery moves from 'third person' journalistic narrative to become the protagonist of his storytelling: gradually adding illustrative gesture and mimesis to embellish his narrative with performance. Finally at the sink, he removes the dress that he has worn up to now. Becoming Orpheus, he cradles the dress in his arms, the empty garment becoming a cipher for his lost wife: as the dress that she used to wear, or as a body left empty of life and soul. Worn by him until this point, it speaks of the ghosts that sleep within us: ghosts of people we have lost, that are worn close to the skin and in our hearts. Next, he pulls

the plug from the sink to flood the stage with a mixture of water and a black ink contained in the drains. He sings Monteverdi's *Possente Spirto* into the 's-bend' piping, and into the viscera of the underworld, as the black brackish water begins to lap at the audience's feet

With the actor employing so many layers of self-awareness it becomes possible to liken the body of the audience to the body that sleeps: prone, inactive, passive, and un-self-conscious in the womblike safety of the darkened auditorium, where performance is the domain of the single illuminated figure on stage. Perhaps in the dichotomy of the sleeping body and the standing body, the audience provides a third state, that of the seated body: halfway between standing and sleeping, that is witness to the action without playing a part, present but not active, engaged but not involved, both sleeping and waking. Within sleep science there are phenomena that show further these connections between the sleeping, dreaming body and the body of the theatre (or cinema) audience. This can be observed in how the body 'sets the stage' for dreaming using neurological inhibitors to block stimuli from travelling up and down the brain stem: isolating the head from the rest of the body. In this way actions performed in the dream scape are not

physicalised in the body of the dreamer, and external sensations are blocked out of the dreamscape. This block is accompanied by other phenomena occurring within the brain itself. The emotion centres in the limbic lobe are hyperactivated, as are areas of the cerebral cortex that integrate emotion with perception. Other areas are suppressed: such as the frontal cortex, where memory, logic, critical judgement, and directed thought are located. All this helps the dreamer feel, see, and most of all, believe their internal dreamscape. These various effects on the internal operations of the mind have much in common with the 'effects' that are used in film and theatre to help make the cinematic/theatrical experience more believable and emotionally resonant. Thus sound, lighting, and editing provide an emotional 'scoring' to the scene, whilst our own codes of suspending disbelief allow us to be open to the fictional worlds and events unfolding before us. Further to this the suspension of all physical activity in our bodies renders us as passive and as disassociated in our mental and physical capacities as the 'decapitated corpse' of a dreaming body. This physiological relationship with the 'dream event' described above is resonant with other situations beyond the auditorium of the cinema and the theatre. A similar

Photo 7: The Orator sings Monteverdi's 'Possente Spirto' (*L'Orfeo*, 1607) into the piping of the sink as black water floods the set. Photo: Sam Trubridge.



passivity persists in front of the television, and the computer screen for example; and by virtue of this in the 'global theatre' of modern journalism, politics, and crisis. It is a symptom that pervades our relationship with the media in its many forms, for here our experience is often one of physical inaction, powerlessness, insignificance, disassociation, and distantiation. We consume a kind of sleeping passivity with regards to the images and events that we witness: allowing media events to exist in an 'other' place, or 'dream' world that is beyond the limits of physical experience. Thus like the sleeping bodies of the tramps in Rome, or the pre-natal foetus, our 'passive', reclining, sleeping bodies also deny their surroundings: imagining and dreaming fictional worlds, utopic visions, and sanitised visions of reality.

As the running faucet continues to flood the set we begin to see our contemporary anxieties played out in the rising water. Sleepers awaken and move their bedding to drier regions of the stage. Finding new places of refuge, they pull sleep masks over their eyes and return to their slumber. But the water always finds them; reaching across the floor to waken them from their sleep again. One climbs atop the sink, and with the tap still running she tries to sleep there above the watery mess: the bedwetter. The motif of rising water, the flooded room, and the refugee lifting their possessions above the deluge are images redolent with anxieties of global warming, rising sea levels, and the threat of displacement from home and community. A common reality in countries like Bangladesh, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Nigeria, this tragedy has only become known in the West through recent events like the 2006 flooding of New Orleans, or the 2007 floods in Great Britain and Europe. Like the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in New York or 7/7 in London, it is in such crises that issues of poverty, conflict, and environmental collapse move from media reportage of other places to the urgency of the immediate here and now. Problems that seemed as distant and irrelevant to the physical present as a dream might suddenly assume the weight and significance of a living nightmare. Awakening from its slumber, this First World body is confronted by the cruel reality that inhabitants of third world countries face on a daily basis. In his 2001 essay *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* Slavoj Žižek illuminates our own role in such tragedies: that "the (relative) prosperity and peace of the 'civilised' West was bought by the export of ruthless violence and destruction into the 'barbarian' Outside: the long story from the conquest of America to the slaughter in the Congo" (Hauerwass & Lentricchia, p.134).

In *The Mythic Image* (1974) anthropologist Joseph Campbell describes this moment when the dreamer realises that they are producing the nightmare, where 'he' is: "surprised, even threatened, by his dream, not knowing what it means; yet even while dreaming he is himself



Photo 8 (top): Choreographer / dancer Maria Dabrowska sleeps as water gathers around her. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

Photo 9 (below): Choreographer / dancer Elizabeth Barker descends into the water that floods the stage. Photo: Mary Pack.

inventing it; so that the two aspects of one subject are here playing hide-and-seek: one in creative action, the other in half ignorance" (p.361). In these moments we awaken to the part we have played in the crisis, as much as we respond to the crisis itself, and on stage the figures of the sleepers awaken to the rising water levels and begin to investigate the threat that continues to fill the room. Dancing in this dripping landscape with their sodden bedding, they evoke the figures of the refugee, the drowning swimmer, birds struggling in an oil slick, or the New Orleans citizens who woke one morning to find their houses were full of water. It is a layering of the stage space with 'other' spaces described by Foucault as "bringing onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another" (1967). By revisiting such media images and by 'coming closer' to them through the material language of the stage, the estranged situations that they invoke



Photo 10: Dancer and choreographer Maria Dabrowska's spinning movements throw water across the stage, creating explosive patterns of light on the wall behind. Photo: Marv Pack.

are able to become more tangible for a moment. It is an effect that Hélène Cixous writes of in 'The Place of Crime and the Place of Pardon' (1986-87) where theatre is considered a place that legends look us 'straight in the eye', producing new awakenings in perception, new "mirrorstages", as we begin to recognise 'the other' in the events on stage. So by associating with distant 'othered' spaces, and dream bodies we can recreate our sense of the world; jettisoned from the Lacanian nucleus to become aware that we are one of many, near and far; and from there perform with a sense of responsibility and compassion: "[t]here was the stage, the earth, where the self remains imperceptible, the country of others. There do their words, their silences, their cries, their song, make

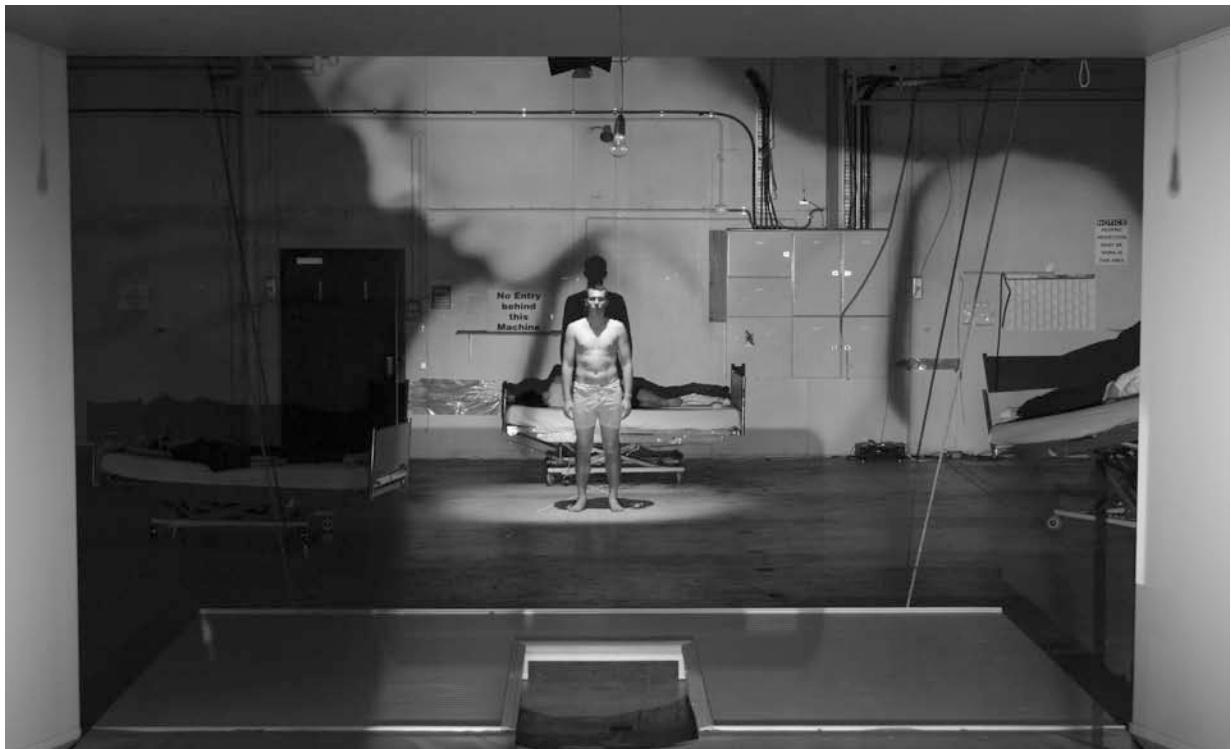
themselves heard, each one according to a particular world and in a particular foreign language" (Cixous, 1986-1987).

As the dancers helicopter their limbs, sprays of water are sent across the space and through the audience, adding tangible proof to the stage image before them. This combination of both the physical experience and its conceptual, poetic references begins to utilise the 'naked theatre language' that Antonin Artaud describes in his 'First Manifesto For A Theatre of Cruelty' (1932). Dissatisfied with the superficial conventions of stage acting he states that: "[t]o view theatre as a second-hand psychological or moral operation and to believe dreams themselves only serve as a substitute, is to restrict both dreams' and [the]

theatres' deep poetic range" (p.92). There is in Artaud's work a desire to break down perception, and open the theatre world from its pre-natal stages of perception to rediscover our connectedness with the world. Continuing to define his 'naked theatre language' he emphasises that it "must allow us to transgress the ordinary limits of art and words, actively, that is to say, magically, to produce a kind of total creation *in real terms*, where man must reassume his position between dreams and events" (p.93). It is halfway between the dream and the event that we encounter the spectacular features of the theatre experience. Light reflected off the surface of the water creates rippling patterns on the walls of the set: the so-called 'gibigiane' of Venetian canals. It is a quixotic, romantic effect; dreamlike in its contrast with the saturated struggling forms of the dancers on stage. Their shadows are cast on the walls as well: the two dimensionality of these dream doubles moving with the patterns of light to make the image unreal, fantastical, and cinematic. Thus a dialogue is created between the dream and the event, where shadow-play invokes the seductive world of the mediated image. The eye is drawn to these phantasms more than the physical bodies that gasp and pant on stage. Then as the lights change these material bodies jump back into focus. As their shadows melt into the walls of the set we become sensitised to their presence once again, and aware of the affect that the illusion has had on our perception of them.

In a closing moment of *Sleep/Wake* a live 'Skype' video link connects with an actress in London. Her sleeping head is projected onto the back wall of the space, dwarfing the lone figure of Orpheus on stage. As he wakes her, a domestic replaying of the Orpheus-Eurydice relationship emerges. We hear Orpheus's doubt transformed into the disbelief that many display upon first using this technology: "I can't believe that you're there". In conversation with the Orpheus / Orator figure, this 'Eurydice' goes about her morning ritual: wandering about her flat, putting the kettle on, brushing her hair, chatting to the camera, exchanging pleasantries, and showing us a view of the sunrise out of her kitchen window. Here the everyday performs its routines for the camera/theatre, conflating the worlds of unconscious, nascent performance in London with the disciplined performance space of Wellington's Print Factory. Then Eurydice begins to tell Orpheus about the dream he had woken her from. In doing so she describes the image that she can see through her own video connection with the performance: the image of him standing alone in a large space, watched by a crowd of people seated in the darkness. Her description begins to identify the individual spectators that occupy the auditorium: the colour of their clothing, and the actions they make in response to being watched, which are visible in the Skype dialogue box at the bottom of the projection. Thus the camera / theatre turns back on itself like a mirror, becoming self aware, and

Photo 11: The Orator / Orpheus (James Conway-Law) calls out to wake performer Ella Robson-Guillfoyle, who performs remotely from her apartment in Hackney, East London. Photo: Sam Trubridge.



reflexive by virtue of a distant independent gaze: a gaze and a domestic environment that alienates the theatrical frame, making it seem absurd; connecting the actor and audience in a moment of shared recognition, investigation, and scrutiny.

With this 'world-shrinking' technology beamed around the planet, paradigms of the near and far, here and there are collapsed. The limited horizon of the performance expands as before: this time to move beyond the walls of the space, beyond Wellington, and beyond New Zealand to embrace the curvature of the earth, and create a connectness between bodies distant and close. This 'desanctification' of space that Foucault attributes to Gallileo's discovery and technologies like the telephone, reiterates a prevalence of the experiencing, perceiving condition that makes flexible the dimensions of time and space. The conflation of two locations into one (an apartment in London and a warehouse in Wellington) speaks of how virtuality has pervaded every enclosure of our lives, as Foucault declared in 1967: "[w]e are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." Furthermore we become confronted with the paradox that virtual conditions impose upon our own materiality, challenging the notion of our own tangibility as: "pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space" (ibid). In becoming the content of Eurydice's dream we are presented with our own ghostliness in the context of her own immediate present. In New Zealand we are 'the underworld'. We are her fiction. At the same time we experience her own ghostly two-dimensionality in our own rectangle of projected light. We realise how we reciprocate the same vision onto 'other' bodies that exist around us, beyond the immediate realm of our senses. It is a conundrum, a reflected objectification, that becomes illuminated by this technology. As the Skype conversation between Eurydice and Orpheus ends, it is our melancholic discovery that we cannot help but distance those bodies which come to us through the scopic, virtual realms of the media image. As she disappears Orpheus refuses to believe Eurydice's dream, shouting that she is not there and histrionically declaiming her presence: the theatre reclaiming 'reality'. So she leaves, leaving both him and us in the eternal twilight of the theatre space. We are left with the paradoxical summation of our experiences of the past hour. Even the quality of grey is uncertain, whether it is twilight, or early dawn. Are these sleepers waking? At the end, have we seen a travelogue of the day's travail? Or have we journeyed through the underworld of their dreams? The phenomena of the stage also asks similar questions. Do we believe only in what we see, only in what is material, physical, and scientific? Or do we trust in the operations of our imagination, and our dreams, trusting as Orpheus should have that Eurydice was there in the darkness behind him, on the screen, on the other side of the world.

As Orpheus walks towards us, the hinged wall rights itself around him. As the doorway moves back to verticality, it resembles an opening in the ground, as if from an infernal underworld. Orpheus emerges from this 'tomb space' back into the familiar environment of the bedroom / bathroom that is slowly reconfiguring itself. As the wall closes with those on either side of it, the architecture becomes complete once again. But everything has changed. The room is flooded with water and strewn with debris: sodden bedding, feathers, and discarded objects. Orpheus's return to the world of the living is a return to a home that is no longer inhabitable: it is a home after the deluge, after the catastrophe. He turns off the tap at the sink, and walks through the rippling light, continuing his journey out of the space. Finally, a projection closes the performance: an ambiguous image of a body, curled into a ball and sinking into the water away from us. As this figure shrinks into the abyss before the camera it nears the horizon point between the floor and the wall of the set, as if to meet its reflection in the water below it. It is a body infinite reduction, but never quite joining with itself, fading until it is no longer visible: disappeared into the distance, swallowed by the depths, or lost in that interval between the mirror and its double. It is the image of a sun setting on the horizon, or perhaps a child being unborn. We can believe that this figure too might rise again, like Ra, so that its foetal form may uncurl, open, and awaken to a new day with new possibilities. It is the same ambivalence that is present in even the darkest stage tragedy, where there is the knowledge that this will end soon. Resurrecting themselves, the actors will rise, and we will applaud them: the credits will roll, the sun will rise again, and each night when we go to sleep we will wake again in a new day. After all the awakenings, the confrontations, and the images on stage perhaps this is the final purpose of the theatrical experience, existing halfway between the dream and the event, theatre resurrects the gaze, challenging us to look again, and recognise our own face in the image of the other. Thus like sleepers we must die so that we may be reborn again.

"If we didn't sleep, there would be no tomorrow. Life would be a single, seamless today. Our every thought and deed would be an outgrowth of all our previous thoughts and deeds. There would be no new beginnings in our lives, for the very concept of a new beginning would be alien to us"

- Menachem M. Schneerson, *The Lubavitcher Rebbe*, (1902-1994).

Photo 12: The show concludes with projection of a figure (world record breaking freediver William Trubridge) sinking into an abyss of water, to disappear from sight. Photo: Sam Trubridge.

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Sam Trubridge directs and designs performance with *The Playground*, and teaches performance design at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand. Before *Sleep/Wake* he directed *The Restaurant of Many Orders*, which premiered at the Lilian Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells, London, with following seasons at Te Whaea National Centre for Dance and Drama, Wellington, New Zealand, Teatro Studio di Scandicci, Florence, Officina Giovani, Prato, and Istituto Giapponese, Roma (all in Italy). This work also featured in the exhibition of New Zealand performance design that was exhibited in the 2007 Auckland Festival, and the 2007 Prague Quadrennial for Scenography and Theatre Architecture.



