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An audiodescription of Jan Decorte's *Wintervögelchen* with a semiotic analysis of the play, preceded by a discussion of Jan Decorte's theatre work in Flanders looked at from an audiodescriber's point of view.

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Ondergetekende Dubois, Kristien student Master in het Vertalen verklaart dat deze verhandeling volledig oorspronkelijk is en uitsluitend door haarzelf geschreven is. Bij alle informatie en ideeën ontleend aan andere bronnen, heeft ondergetekende expliciet en in detail verwezen naar de vindplaatsen.

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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	A
PREFACE	D
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	E
0. INTRODUCTION	1
1. CHAPTER 1: AUDIODESCRIPTION	3
1.1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.2. DEFINITION	3
1.3. GUIDELINES	5
1.3.1. <i>Guidelines Theatre</i>	5
1.4. INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION	9
1.5. CONCLUSION	10
2. CHAPTER 2: THEATRE SEMIOTICS	11
2.1. INTRODUCTION	11
2.2. THE NATURE OF THEATRE	12
2.2.1. <i>Theatrical communication</i>	12
2.2.2. <i>Theatrical frame and conventions</i>	14
2.2.3. <i>The construction of the dramatic world</i>	15
2.3. TEXT VERSUS STAGING	16
2.3.1. <i>Predetermination</i>	17
2.3.2. <i>Mutual involvement</i>	17
2.3.3. <i>Conclusion</i>	17
2.4. THEATRICAL SIGN	18
2.4.2. <i>Signifier-signified- referent</i>	19
2.4.3. <i>Denotation-connotation</i>	20
2.4.4. <i>Transformability of the sign</i>	20
2.4.5. <i>Foregrounding</i>	20
2.4.6. <i>Typologies of Signs</i>	21
2.4.7. <i>Icon-index dialectic</i>	23
2.4.7.1. <i>Dialectical interchange between icons and indexes</i>	23
2.4.7.2. <i>Narration, index and denotation</i>	23

2.4.7.3.	Theatricality, icon and connotation	24
2.4.7.4.	Icon-index-denotation-connotation	24
2.4.7.5.	Conclusion	25
2.5.	THE THEATRICAL CODE	25
2.5.1.	<i>Message-code</i>	26
2.5.2.	<i>Cybernetic code concept</i>	27
2.5.3.	<i>Structural code concept</i>	27
2.5.4.	<i>Pragmatic code concept</i>	28
2.6.	SEGMENTATION AND SIGN SYSTEM	30
2.7.	CONCLUSION	33
3.	CHAPTER 3: THEATRE IN FLANDERS AND JAN DECORTE	35
3.1.	INTRODUCTION	35
3.2.	THEATRE MOVEMENTS IN FLANDERS	35
3.2.1.	<i>Chamber theatre</i>	35
3.2.2.	<i>Consciousness-raising and political theatre</i>	36
3.2.3.	<i>Postmodern theatre</i>	38
3.3.	JAN DECORTE	41
3.4.	'DECORTIAN' CHARACTERISTICS	44
3.5.	CONCLUSION	46
4.	CHAPTER 4: AD PROJECT WINTERVÖGELCHEN	47
4.1.	INTRODUCTION	47
4.2.	PREPARATION	47
4.2.1.	<i>Organisation of the project</i>	47
4.2.2.	<i>Initiation in the world of the visually impaired</i>	49
4.2.2.1.	Interactive introduction/exhibition	49
4.2.2.2.	Informative documentation	49
4.2.2.3.	Museum tour with AD	49
4.2.2.4.	Theatre play with covered eyes	49
4.2.2.5.	Sartorial training	50
4.2.3.	<i>Introduction in AD and the world of theatre</i>	50
4.2.4.	<i>Exercises</i>	50
4.3.	WINTERVÖGELCHEN	50
4.3.1.	<i>Description</i>	50

4.3.2.	<i>Semiological analysis</i>	51
4.3.2.1.	Introduction	51
4.3.2.2.	Context circles	51
4.3.2.3.	Sign system analysis	54
4.3.2.4.	Conclusion	61
4.3.3.	<i>AD Commentary</i>	61
4.3.3.1.	Introduction	61
4.3.3.2.	Description	63
4.3.4.	<i>Breaking the rules?</i>	69
4.4.	CONCLUSION	70
5.	CONCLUSION	72
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	I
	APPENDIXES	V
	APPENDIX 1: GUIDELINES RNIB	V
	APPENDIX 2: GUIDELINES ABCD	VII
	APPENDIX 3: THE FRENCH AUDIO DESCRIPTION CHARTER	X
	APPENDIX 4: INTRODUCTION AD OF <i>ORAAL</i>	XVII
	APPENDIX 5: DESCRIPTION SCENE 1 AND 2 OF <i>TRAUM</i>	XX
	APPENDIX 6: WINTERVÖGELCHEN	XXII
	<i>Introduction</i>	XXII
	<i>Description</i>	XXV
	Draft version	XXV
	Final version	XXX
	Improvisation list	XXXVIII
	APPENDIX 7: PROGRAMME <i>WINTERVÖGELCHEN</i> KAAITHEATER	XLI
	APPENDIX 8: PROGRAMME <i>WINTERVÖGELCHEN</i> DE SINGEL	XLII

Preface

At the beginning of the academic year, Bart Parmentier of Intro Events contacted my supervisor and teacher of audiovisual translation (AVT) Aline Remael for cooperation in order to organise and create an audio description for the theatre in Flanders. Apart from some experiments by individuals, no official initiatives had yet been taken to provide AD in theatres in Flanders. As I am personally very interested in theatre and in the worlds that are created in theatre, I was intrigued by the idea of making this specific world accessible to people who are otherwise deprived of the visual aspect of it or dependent on short explanations of companions. Moreover, the Master thesis allowed me to go deeper into certain aspects of audio description for theatre. Together with Nina Reviere, a fellow student, I had the chance to take part in this project. In order to help us with the practical preparation, Christine Welche – a professional audio describer in the Brussels' Francophone organisation ABCD – agreed to participate in the project. We decided to perform one 'test' AD as preparation and exercise for the official AD. During the preparation of the test AD, *Wintervögelchen*, it became clear that it was impossible, organisationally, to create two AD's in one academic year. We therefore decided to concentrate on the test AD which has become the subject of this thesis.

When first having seen *Wintervögelchen* in December, Christine Welche was not sure that the play was suitable for AD assuming that it did not have enough events to describe. However, the first impressions of Nina and I were that the difficulty in describing this play was not so much the description of the actions happening on stage, as the unconventional nature of the performance and that, in order to create an AD that would recreate a similar experience for visually impaired people, we had to make clear decisions about certain AD guidelines and apply these decisions consistently throughout the AD. It was at this moment that the idea came to my mind that it could be interesting to go deeper into the specificity of Decorte's theatre and into the way in which this unconventional theatre experience would have consequences for the description and the application of the AD guidelines for theatre.

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0. Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the audio description (AD) of Jan Decorte's theatre performance *Wintervögelchen*. Audio description is the process of translating theatrical images into words in order to make the performance accessible for visually impaired people and in order to try and provide a theatre experience for visually impaired people that is similar to the one of regular spectators. Decorte's performances are of a very unconventional nature with regard to the acting style, the text, the setting and the interaction with the public. The specific atmosphere that was created in this performance lay in the combination of these four theatrical levels. The challenge therefore in making this performance accessible to the visually impaired was to link the visual specificities of the acting style, the setting and the interaction with the public to the specific Decortian idiom employed by the actors which could be heard by the visually impaired people. On top of that came the overall deconstruction of the theatrical illusion in the performance that was pushed into extremes. It was clear that the difficulty in this performance would not so much be the description of the actions and events, but to recreate a similar – unconventional – theatre experience.

Considering the fact that the existing AD guidelines for theatre are often the products of a more conventional and naturalistic theatre tradition, certain guidelines, more specifically those regarding the preservation of the theatrical illusion and the use of objective descriptions, needed to be reconsidered. In order to justify these decisions, a thorough analysis of the source text, in this case the performance, was undertaken. This was done with two objectives in mind: (a) to understand the nature of theatre and the two semiotic systems at work (visual and textual) a semiotic analysis of the play was performed, and (b) to get a good understanding of *Wintervögelchen* and the requirements or its description, it was placed in the larger context of the Flemish theatre history and in Decorte's previous works. The combination of the disciplines of semiotics and the theatrical context, the author thought, would help justify certain (unconventional) decisions that were taken in *Wintervögelchen's* AD. More concretely, my research questions therefore are: (a) what challenges are presented by *Wintervögelchen* for AD, (b) which AD guidelines were broken in the AD of *Wintervögelchen* and why, and (c) how can these been accounted for taking into account the context of the performance (characteristics of the current Flemish theatre and features of Decortian theatre) and theatre semiotics?

The first chapter of this thesis will briefly discuss what exactly AD is, its history in the world and its presence in Flanders. After that, the English and (Belgian) French guidelines for AD in theatre will be discussed. This part is introduced because I want to propose in this

thesis a specific subdivision in the guidelines as a result of the (semiotic) analysis of *Wintervögelchen* and the evolution in the Flemish theatre landscape. The need for a thorough source text analysis in audiovisual translation (of which AD forms a subdivision) with the help of other disciplines is also demonstrated. In this case, the other disciplines are theatre semiotics and theatre history.

In order to understand more about the nature of theatre and to find a way of analyzing a theatrical performance, chapter 2 gives an overview of the theory of theatre semiotics that will be applied to *Wintervögelchen* later on in the thesis.

Chapter 3 discusses briefly the history of Flemish theatre from WWII onwards and gives a detailed overview of Decorte's previous works and typical Decortian characteristics. Together with theatre semiotics, this chapter forms the framework for the analysis of *Wintervögelchen*.

Chapter 4 contains the practical part of this thesis. It includes the preparation of this AD project, a semiotic analysis of the performance, a commentary on the AD in which certain difficulties and choices are explained, and last, it discusses the guidelines that have been broken and proposes a solution for them.

1. Chapter 1: Audiodescription

1.1. Introduction

This chapter will first give a general overview of what AD is, for whom it is created, its history and present status in Flanders. Next, the English and (Belgian) French AD guidelines for theatre will be discussed. These are important because the creation of European or even global guidelines is currently a hot topic in AD research. Moreover, they are discussed because some of these guidelines have been broken in the AD for *Wintervögelchen* and, as a consequence, I will propose a new subdivision or genre in the guidelines.

1.2. Definition

Silverwood defines audio description (AD) as “a commentary on scenery, costume, facial expression, body language and action inserted during the silent intervals of plays, films and television programmes to give information to blind and visually impaired people” (in Hernandez-Bartolomé&Mendiluce-Babrera 2004: 266). Hyks (2005: 6) calls it “a precise and succinct aural translation of the visual aspects of a live or filmed performance, exhibition or sporting event for the benefit of visually impaired people. The description is interwoven into the silent intervals between dialogue, sound effect or commentary”. Audio description describes narratives that combine the complex semiotic sign system of images, sounds and words to tell their story (Remael 2005: 1). Its main task is to translate images into words with a view to ensure two aims: (a) the integration of visually impaired people in society and (b) to bring culture closer to this specific minority group (Hernández-Bartolomé & Mendiluce-Cabrera 2004: 264).

This aim of media accessibility is shared by all the different subdomains of audiovisual translation (AVT) – of which AD is part – like, for instance, subtitling, dubbing or subtitles for the deaf or hard of hearing. Aural, including linguistic, and visual components form the barriers which impede people from having access to its content and from participating fully in social life (Orero 2005: 12). With regard to AD, its users are deprived of visual information to a greater or lesser degree.

However, the audience of AD is very heterogenic: a small part is born blind, another part becomes blind due to an accident or illness and a bigger part involves people who have lost their sight owing to the effects of age (Remael 2007: 34). As most forms of visual disability occur through a progressive degeneration of sight, they are accompanied by a visual memory. Therefore, the individuals in the target group seek different levels of detail and content from descriptions. The heterogeneity of the group has an influence on the description. Some who have been blind from birth may not be interested in, for instance, the concept of colours, beauty and the description of clothing, whereas these concepts are important details for partially sighted viewers with a visual memory (ITC 2000:6). This diversity in the target group also means that it is impossible to create descriptions that meet all the spectators' wishes.

AD in its present form is a rather recent phenomenon. It started in the Arena Stage theatre in Washington DC in 1981, the same year that the Audio Description Service was founded in the USA. This service was created to promote theatre descriptions across the whole of the US. The first performance with AD in Europe was performed in the mid-1980s, in the Robin Hood Theatre at Averham (UK). Today, Europe has more than 40 theatres that offer AD, with the United Kingdom and France as leaders. (ITC 2000: 4)

Research on AD is still sparse and has mainly focussed on film and TV (Braun 2007:1). During the '90s, three main research programmes were carried out: The EU project *Audetel* in the UK, *Audiovision* in France and *Audesc* in Spain (Hernandez-Bartolomé&Mendiluce-Babrera: 267). *Audetel* did research about the technical, artistic and economic sides that were associated with the provision of AD on television in the UK (Braun: 1; Orero 2007: 112). The *Audiovision* project provided both description in television broadcasting and live description in theatres. It changed to ARTE in 1998, when it realised its first AD production in German (ARTE, on line). With *Audesc* in Spain, the Spanish market of AD was extended in 1994 from only a home audience to an AD for commercial representations, live performances and regular television programmes (Hernandez-Bartolomé & Mendiluce-Babrera: 268).

In Belgium, AD began in 1995 when two experiments with AD were carried out on an episode of the TV programme *Langs de kade* (Along the Quay) and on a performance of Shakespeare's *Driekoningsavond* (Twelfth Night) in the then Koninklijke Nederlandse Schouwburg (Royal Dutch Theatre). The next experiment happened in 2006 with the description of an episode of the popular soap opera *F.C. De Kampioenen* which was shown to an audience of 120 blind people in the Amerikaans Theater in Brussels. The viewing was organized by the makers of the soap (Orero 2007: 113-114; Remael 2007: 32). After this, a description and experimental recording was performed on the DVD of the film *Karakter* and now, several new projects are integrated in theses of Master-students audiovisual translation

in the department of Translation and Interpreting of the University College of Antwerp (Remael 2007: 32). Another important development is that in its agreement concerning management of 2007-2011, the Flemish public channel VRT promises to do research and, if possible, to undertake action to make its content accessible to the visually impaired (VRT 2007: 9):

Gedurende de periode van de beheersovereenkomst zal de VRT maximale inspanningen leveren om zijn aanbod voor de slechthorenden en de slechtzienden toegankelijk te maken.

1° Voor slechthorenden zal de VRT zijn ondertitelingaanbod aan televisieprogramma's geleidelijk uitbreiden tot 95% in 2010.

2° Voor de slechtzienden zal de VRT bij hernieuwing van zijn website, de sites maximaal conform het Blindsurfer-label realiseren.

3° Tevens zal de VRT onderzoeken in welke mate hij de televisieprogramma's op een gebruiksvriendelijke wijze toegankelijk kan maken voor de slechtzienden. Indien uit deze onderzoeken blijkt dat zulks financieel, operationeel en technisch haalbaar is, worden de eerste experimenten opgezet bij Ketnet.¹

This year, a report is expected from the VRT about the financial and technical implications of the implementation of AD (De Loor, on line). A positive report will have important consequences for the social integration of this specific group which is now often excluded.

With regard to audio description for theatre in Flanders, there have been fewer initiatives. Geertje Deceuleneer sometimes offers AD in the KVS² in Brussels and Intro Events is the pioneer in rendering events accessible for people who are physically challenged, including visually challenged people. The description of *Wintervögelchen* on 6 February 2009 in the art centre De Singel in Antwerp was accomplished in cooperation with Intro Events. Their most recent initiatives for AD were the live descriptions of football matches (Anderlecht-Germinal Beerschot on 21 March 2009 and all the following home matches of Anderlecht) and there was a successful audiodescription of the schlager festival in Hasselt on 5 April 2009 (Intro Events, on line; Verberck on line)³.

¹ (My translation):

During the period covered by this management agreement, the VRT will do everything possible to make its programmes accessible for the hard of hearing and visually impaired.

1° For the hard of hearing, the VRT will extend gradually the accessibility to its programmes in order to reach 95% in 2010.

2° For the visually impaired, the VRT websites, when being renewed, will be adapted to conform with the Blindsurfer-label.

3° Moreover, the VRT will examine to what extent it can make television programmes accessible for the visually impaired in a user-friendly way. If research indicates that it is financially, operationally and technically achievable, the first experiments will be carried out on Ketnet [the VRT's channel for children]

² Royal Flemish Theatre (my translation).

³ <http://www.kmonet.be/nevero/index.jsp>

The different development of AD in different countries in Europe has resulted in several guidelines, but no standard European or Global guidelines have yet been formulated. The need for these international guidelines will be discussed in the next section.

1.3. Guidelines

The issue of audiodescription has become increasingly popular. Up until now, several countries and organisations have formulated their own guidelines for AD. These guidelines are not always concordant and more research is needed in order to obtain harmonized European standards (Pujol: forthcoming 1-2). Pujol is not the only scholar who proclaims the need of harmonized guidelines, it is a concept that is generally endorsed by scholars as well as by different organizations which provide AD (e.g. Orero 2007: 123; Vercauteren 2007: 139). Today, only Spain and the United Kingdom have official guidelines and other countries, such as Belgium, Germany and France, have guidelines that were formulated by individual professionals (Vercauteren 2007: 139).

Vercauteren (2007: 140) states that international guidelines for AD would only have advantages and this for several reasons: (1) according to Ivarsson “viewers are creatures of habit” and an international guideline “would ensure a consistent viewer experience of high quality, regardless of that viewer’s location”, (2) the different broadcast companies would know what they can expect when buying or lending AD from each other, (3) the organization of courses for AD will need a set of structured and harmonious guidelines, and (4) more and more countries have accessibility laws, international guidelines would prevent different countries from having to reinvent the wheel nationally.

The Spanish guideline distinguishes three categories in audiodescription: (1) recorded audio description for television, video/DVD and cinemas, (2) live audio descriptions for plays, operas and other live events and (3) audio guides for visits to buildings, museums, exhibitions, and natural spaces. Vercauteren (2007: 139-140) writes that it hardly seems feasible to merge these three categories into one single set of guidelines since they are defined by completely different constraints. Since the present paper discusses the AD of a theatre play, the section below will focus on the specific theatre guidelines used in the UK and France.

1.3.1. Guidelines Theatre

Hernandez-Batolomé & Mendiluce-Cabrera (2004: 272) write that the process of AD in theatre differs considerably from AD for films which is due to the different nature of films and plays: (1) plays are live and films are recorded, (2) theatre depends more on speech than on images as opposed to cinema. As a consequence, less information is required and there are also fewer sound gaps, (3) the speech rhythm varies in each performance and as a result, describers often need to improvise when changes occur.

Audio describers normally work in pairs and, if possible, receive help from a visually impaired person who can help decide what needs to be described and what is redundant. Matamala & Orero (2007: 336) insert this also in their MA course for Audiovisual Translation of audio describers and explain why work in groups is preferred to individual work:

- not every person focuses on the same issues
- it helps to decide what is important to describe and to prioritise
- it helps with the research, the choice of writing style, words and syntax

With regard to the preparative work of an audio description for theatre, I refer to chapter 4 which describes the preparation of *Wintervögelchen*.

The theatre guidelines of the UK were drawn up by the RNIB, the Royal National Institute of the Blind, which is a charity offering information, support and advice to people with sight loss⁴. AD in theatre consists of two parts. The first part is the introduction, also called the programme notes, which is given to the audience before the play starts and the second part is the AD of the play itself, narrated during the performance. The visually impaired enter the auditorium ideally 30 minutes before the start of the play to receive the introductory information. This information, as well as the information given during the performance is transmitted through headsets attached to small receivers (Snyder 2005: 16). The description is live because each performance differs in timing and detail. Ideally, the describer is situated in a sound-proof box at the back or side of the stage (RNIB: 1), but if this is logistically impossible, the audio describers can be seated in a room close to the auditorium and be connected with the stage by means of a camera. The guidelines of the RNIB are paraphrased in appendix 1 since they are too long for inclusion here. What follows are observations on these guidelines.

The RNIB guidelines were formulated in 1988 and the last update was done in October 2008. A reading of the guidelines makes apparent that they refer to theatrical conventions like the use of the curtain, the incorporation of intervals, the presence of exits, entrances and doors. In short, they refer to a naturalistic theatre tradition and some of these conventions are outmoded in some contexts. Indeed, in many contemporary plays, the

⁴ <http://www.rnib.org.uk>

setting no longer represents a recognizable place or space nor is it situated in a certain time and place. In such cases, the audio describers need to decide what the function is of the performance space and the setting (if there is any) and what needs to be told to the spectators in order for them to have a good understanding of the set-up for the play.

The RNIB guidelines foresee approximately 10 minutes for the introduction to be provided before the play starts, which (in our experience) will often be too short to provide all the information that needs to be given. Moreover, the introduction is often read twice, once in a long version and once in a short version, in order to give the visually impaired the time and opportunity to absorb the information⁵. It is therefore recommended that they enter approximately 30 minutes before the start of the performance.

Furthermore, the guidelines say that the mood of the scene needs to be described, and yet, the audio describer cannot interpret. These two rules contradict each other, because a mood is necessarily interpretative. However, the issue of interpretation will be considered in greater depth in chapter 4. Linked to this issue is the guideline that says that the audio describer should be “like the faithful lens of a camera” (RNIB: 3). This implies that the describer should give the equivalent in words of what is seen. However, as Remael (2007: 35) states, equivalence is not possible due to the divergence in sensorial and cultural experience between the source and target audience. The audio describers need to ask themselves certain questions: what does the blind spectator need to know in order to follow the story, to understand the characters, what is special about this performance and needs to be described, what is the best way to describe unconventional aspects and how explicit may a description be? Remael (2007: 35) writes that all types of translation have to deal with interpretation, selection and reformulation, but in the case of AD, this is often pushed into extremes. Therefore, it is very important to make an analysis of your source text (in this case the performance) which can help you in making these choices.

The guidelines for the description of French theatre in Belgium come from the manual of the Brussel’s association ABCD (Association Bruxelloise et Brabançonne des Compagnies Dramatiques⁶), which also provides audiodescription for amateur and professional theatre in the French-speaking part of Belgium. These guidelines are quoted in appendix 2. Although they are more detailed with regard to the content, references to the language to be used in the description and the way of describing, they remain very general. For example, with regard to the narrative elements, it states “Describe concisely the elements on stage that are important”, with regard to the content, “Sense the priority of certain descriptions and the hierarchy of elements that need to be described”, “Name objects in a precise and exact way”

⁵ This way of working, of saying the introduction twice, is written in no guideline, but it is often done in the Brussels’ association ABCD.

⁶ Brussel’s and Brabant’s Association of Dramatic Companies: my translation

and with regard to the writing “Find a formulation that evokes the intention of the scene” (My translation from French). But when is a description concise and what is important on stage? Is there a hierarchy of elements that need to be described and how exactly can a describer know what the intention(s) is/are of a scene and how it is best described in an objective manner? This indicates that various issues need to be studied, as Vercauteren (2007: 148) indicates, concerning how and how much should be described and how information can be prioritized.

The problem of the definition of the theatre elements that need description recurs in theatre semiotics where it is stated that everything that is used on scene can be a sign. Up till now, theatre semiotics have not been able to establish theatrical codes due to the polysemic character of theatrical signs and their changeability (see chapter 2). The creation of codes would help AD, because they would state what every sign means and how it can be interpreted. However, this is utopia. There are no rules as to how theatre is created, how it works and what it must look like. Therefore, everything is possible and everything can become an important theatrical sign. This is why, although it is extremely important to have them, guidelines for the theatre will, in my opinion, never become rules. If the performance requires it, guidelines need to be broken in order to give the visually impaired audience an experience that is comparable of that of the regular audience. The description of *Wintervögelchen* is a very good example of this because it needed to break the rule of the preservation of the theatrical illusion, for instance, as the performance itself was all about shattering this illusion.

This problem could be solved by Vercauteren’s proposal (2007: 147) of a subdivision of the guidelines into a section dealing with general characteristics and a section relating to different genres and categories of programmes (in this case, for television). This subdivision has the advantage that it improves clarity because genre-specific problems do not have to be discussed in the general guidelines and the subdivisions according to genre could help with the prioritization of information. In these specific guidelines, exceptions can be made to the rules. The question is then if everything can be related to a genre and its specific rules.

Recently, the French Audio description Charter (2008) was drawn up, especially for film and television, by the CSA, the *Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel*, which is an independent administrative organisation that ensures the liberty of audiovisual communication in France (Morisset & Gonant 2008). This charter can be found in appendix 3. It is divided into 3 parts: it describes the ethical framework of AD, the creative process and the budgeting. The ethical part stresses the need to respect the work that is to be described, and not only the information that the images contain, but also their emotional content and their overall effect. Objectivity is interpreted as not ‘imposing’ the describer’s feelings since the AD needs to provoke the listener’s very own feelings. Moreover, the guidelines also

stress that a good audio description is based on a fine analysis of the image and sound track. The description part briefly lists what needs to be described, when and how, what needs to be avoided and how the recording procedure of the description goes. The budgeting part includes the different steps in the production of an audio description and how much time is approximately required, excluding recording. Most important of all, it stresses the significance of working in group and not in separate entities.

1.4. Interdisciplinarity and Intersemiotic Translation

Diáz Cintas (2004: 4) places AD in the branch of intersemiotic translations, following Jakobson's famous tripartite taxonomy of translation⁷. AD is then, according to Jakobson's definition of intersemiotic translations, "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems", but then the opposite, i.e. the conversion of nonverbal signs, in this case, images, into words.

This intersemiotic approach of AD can be linked with Chaume's (2004: 12-17) argument for a multidisciplinary approach as a methodology for analysing AVT texts. Since these objects, AD included, are hybrid constructions in which several signifying codes operate simultaneously and create meaning as a whole, it is important to understand the relationship between these different codes in order to comprehend the whole 'text' and to make motivated decisions for the description. Besides the text as an object of study, Chaume includes the contextual factors as an important part of this study. This idea is similar to Van den Dries's approach to theatre semiotics in which several contextual layers form the extra-textual framework of a theatre's play interpretation.

The attention that Chaume attributes to the involvement of other disciplines in the analysis of the 'text' as well as its contextual factors, forms the basis for the following chapters in this thesis. As stated above, AD deals with the translation of images into words. The two systems at work are visual and textual. This is typical for the study of semiotics. Therefore, I will first give an introduction to the theory of semiotics which will form the basis of the semiotic analysis of *Wintervögelchen* further on in the study. With regard to the contextual factors, chapter 3 contains a description of Jan Decorte's works and theatrical evolution, which has also had an important impact on the description of *Wintervögelchen*. These two chapters form the extensive analysis of our source text *Wintervögelchen*, which is necessary for the decision-making process of the description.

⁷ Jakobson stated that there are three types of translation: intralingual (or rewording), interlingual (or translation proper) and intersemiotic (or transmutation) (Diáz-Cintas 2004: 4).

1.5. Conclusion

AD for theatre in Flanders is still in its infancy and many aspects still need research. There are a few national guidelines in Europe, but it is important to try and create European guidelines that every country can use. However, these guidelines need to consider the particular theatrical characteristics of every country and therefore it could be very advantageous to create guidelines that are split in two sections: one dealing with the general characteristics of AD and one dealing with the specificity of genres. In this way, genre-specific characteristics can be dealt with separately which creates the possibility to make exceptions to the rules if necessary. This can help to make decisions regarding the AD.

In order to make good decisions, to know what to prioritise and what needs to be described, an analysis of the source text or the performance is indispensable. In order to be able to make this analysis, other disciplines need to be involved in the process because AVT in general is a hybrid construction in which different features cooperate in order to create meaning. AD has two semiotic systems that interact, the visual and the linguistic system (Chaume 2004). Therefore, the next chapter will discuss the theory of theatre semiotics. This theory will be applied to the play *Wintervögelchen* in chapter 4. The other discipline that is involved in the analysis of the source text is the theatre history of Flanders after WWII and an overview of Decorte's previous works. This will be discussed in chapter 3.

2. Chapter 2: Theatre Semiotics

2.1. Introduction

The study of theatre semiotics has always been a complex field of research. Throughout the evolution of semiotics as a scientific discipline, different definitions and approaches have been formulated for semiotic concepts. Nowadays, different basic assumptions exist depending on the school one belongs to and the semiotic tangle becomes more and more intricate: anything that is linked in some way to a sign or a signification can be part of the semiotic research. It is therefore of major importance for researchers wishing to make use of semiotics to clearly identify where they stand in the semiotic tangle.

In this study, a semiotic analysis of Jan Decorte's play *Wintervögelchen* will be attempted in chapter 4. For this reason, what appears to be the most practical and pragmatic approach to semiotics will be used in this paper, which aims to put the theory into practice. I have found this approach in theatre scholar Luk Van den Dries's book: *Omtrent de opvoering: Heiner Müller en drie decennia theater in Vlaanderen*⁸. He acknowledges the lack of consensus in the semiotic field and the need for selection. Van den Dries opts too for the pragmatic approach and focuses on those aspects that he thinks are important for performance analysis: the relation between text and performance, the definition of the theatre sign, the description of the concept *code* and the segmentation of signs.

In doing this, Van den Dries bases his work on previously conducted research by important semioticians like Charles S. Peirce, Patrice Pavis, Umberto Eco, and others incorporating antithetic positions to illustrate the semiotic tangle. In choosing the pragmatic approach he clearly wants to advocate theatre semiotics as a methodological tool for performance analysis.

Another reason why I have chosen to base my theory mainly on Van den Dries is the contemporary nature of his work. It dates from 2001 whereas the other theoretical books on semiotics and the theatre date from the '70s (Patrice Pavis) and '80s (Keir Elam). The branch of theatre semiotics is relatively young (it started with the Prague School structuralism in the '30s), and is still developing and changing very rapidly.

To conclude, this semiotic introduction will also be based on Van den Dries's work because of its pragmatic approach and its applicability to Jan Decorte's performance style.

⁸ *Concerning the performance: Heiner Müller and three decades of theatre in Flanders* (My translation)

However, I will incorporate and elaborate on certain concepts and notions from Elam's and Pavis's works that are not present in Van den Dries's work. First, some basic information about theatrical communication, the concept of the 'frame', conventions and the construction of the dramatic world will be introduced. Second, the relation between text and staging is considered. Third, the theatrical sign is discussed, then the theatrical code and the last element to be examined is the segmentation of the theatre performance and the sign system.

2.2. The Nature of Theatre

2.2.1. Theatrical communication

Semiotics, otherwise known as semiology, is a relative young approach to cultural studies. It is a field of study involving different theoretical opinions and methodological tools. Umberto Eco gives one of the broadest definitions, which states that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign'. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure wrote that semiology was 'a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life' whilst the American philosopher Charles Peirce thought that 'a sign (...) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity' and he declared that 'every thought is a sign' (quoted in Chandler, on line).

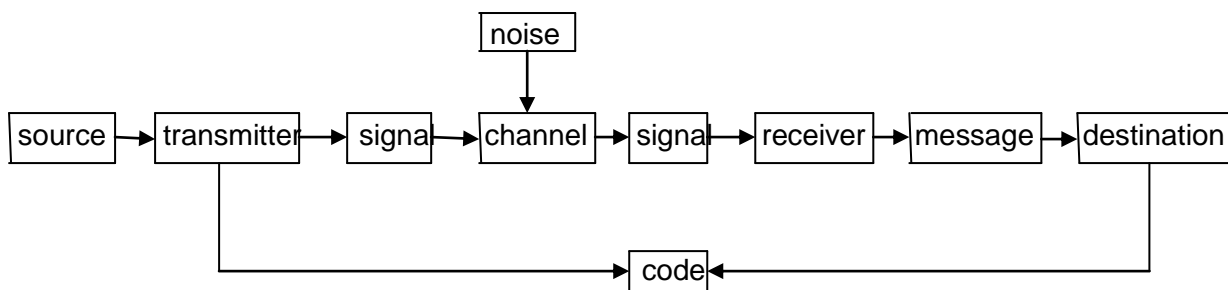
Nowadays, semioticians have shifted from the study of signs in isolation to the study of signs as part of a semiotic sign system: they study how meanings are made. Keir Elam's definition reads (Elam 1980: 3):

Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby [...] It is – ideally, at least – a multidisciplinary science whose precise methodological characteristics will necessarily vary from field to field but which is united by a common global concern, the better understanding of our own meaning-bearing behaviour.

In theatre as well, semioticians are concerned with the modes of *signification* and with *communication* (Elam 1980: 32). Signification cannot be reduced to a one-to-one relationship between individual signifiers and their individual meanings. The production of meaning on stage is too rich and instable and cannot be explained in terms of objects and their representational roles. Moreover, the role of the spectator cannot be underestimated in the creation of meaning. That is why the rules which allow meaning to be communicated and

received in the performer-spectator dialectic have to be examined. Elam proposes a basic communication model that, in his opinion, is not absolute at all (Elam 1980: 32-33).

Theatrical communication can be described in general terms as “the transmission of a signal from a source to a destination.” (Elam 1980: 35). The separate elements in this definition can be found in Eco’s first model of elementary theatrical communication. The *source* of information can be an idea or impulse in the mind of the speaker. The *transmitter* is set into action by the source and can be the speaker’s voice, a computer or anything that can send a signal along a physical channel. During this passage along the channel, *noise* can disturb the signal. The signal is then picked up by a *receiver* and is thereby transformed into a coherent *message*. The formation and understanding (or encoding and decoding) of the message is made possible by the *code*, which can be described as the entirety of rules known to both transmitter and destination, and which assigns a certain content or meaning to a certain signal (Elam 1980: 35). (The notion of *code* will be discussed further on).

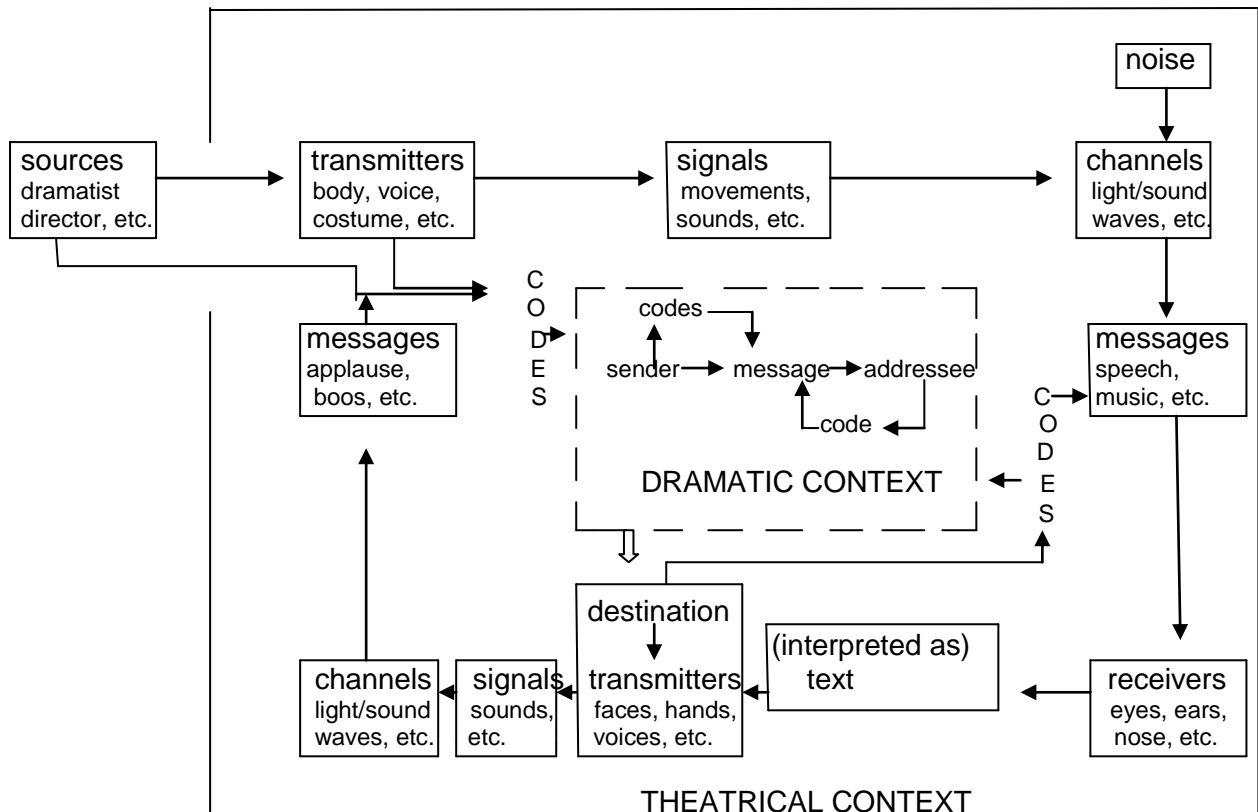


(Elam: 36)

In theatrical communication, the performance results in a multiplication of communicational factors. There is a complex of potential elements at each stage. The sources of theatrical information, for example, are extensive: the dramatist, the director, the actors, set designer, lighting designer, costume designer, etc. The transmitters are first of all the bodies and voices of the actors. Then there are elements on the set like musical instruments or electric lamps. The signals that these ‘bodies’ transmit – movements, sounds – travel through the physical channels available for human communication, from light and sound waves to olfactory and tactile means (Elam 1980: 37). Because of this multiplication of communicational factors, it is impossible to talk of a single theatrical message. The spectator receives a complex of messages coming from speech, gesture, mimics, etc. and will interpret it as “an integrated *text*, according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at his disposal, and will *in turn* assume the role of transmitter of signals to the performers” (Elam 1980: 38). Elam describes this feedback process and the *intercommunication* between

spectators [and producers] as one of the major distinguishing features of live theatre (Elam 1980: 38).

A last factor in theatre that complicates the performer-audience relationship is that the communication does not take (in most cases) a direct form: “the actor-spectator transaction within the *theatrical* context is mediated by a *dramatic* context in which a fictional speaker addresses a fictional listener” (Elam 1980: 38). The next diagram shows a simplified representation of this situation.



(Elam: 39)

Performances can be understood only on the basis of a theatrical competence that is more or less shared by performers and audiences, including familiarity with the codes. But a more fundamental competence is required in order to decode the message and to create meaning: the theatrical frame (Elam 1980: 87).

2.2.2. Theatrical frame and conventions

A theatrical performance has to be placed in a certain frame in order to function as a theatrical performance. It has to be distinguished from reality and in order to do this, one has to be able “to recognize the performance *as such*” (Elam 1980: 87). In the theatrical frame,

the spectator accepts that an alternative and fictional reality is presented by performers and that his own role is that of a “privileged onlooker” (Elam 1980: 88). In this way, the symbolic or representational status of the performance is assumed rather than specified. Sometimes, however, the transactional (performer-spectator) conventions define explicitly what is going on. These conventions are called ‘presentational’ by Elizabeth Burns and are employed through devices like the play-within-the-play, the aside directed to the audience and other modes of direct address. They can be called meta-theatrical and meta-dramatic functions since they draw attention to the theatrical realities in the play, to the fictional status of the characters, etc. In a way, they break the theatrical frame because the actor steps out of his role and acknowledges the presence of the public, but in another way, they confirm the frame by pointing out the pure factitiousness of the representation (Elam 1980: 89-90).

In the creation of meaning, it is important to emphasize that, however familiar the spectator is with the theatrical frames, there is never a perfect overlap between the producers’ codes and the audience’s codes. Every spectator’s interpretation of the text can for this reason be seen as a new construction, (s)he has to make sense of the performance for himself (Elam 1980: 95).

2.2.3. The construction of the dramatic world

The codes and conventions on which the theatrical frame is founded, have the purpose to enable the spectators to ‘read’ the performance as a dramatic representation. On stage, they see a range of dramatic information that refers to a “fictional dramatic world characterized by a set of physical properties, a set of agents and a course of time-bound events” (Elam 1980: 98). This fictional world will be called the dramatic world. It must be noted, though, that nowadays, more and more performances do not want to represent a dramatic world anymore. They want, by contrast, reveal the representational theatrical frame on purpose.

The dramatic representation is based on a principle called ‘world-creating’ or the ‘theory of possible worlds’ (Elam 1980: 100).

Dramatic worlds are hypothetical (‘as if’) constructs, that is, they are recognized by the audience as counterfactual (i.e. non-real) states of affairs but are embodied *as if* in progress in the actual here and now. The spectator will conventionally interpret all stage doings in the light of this general ‘as if’ rule

(Elam 1980: 102)

Any spectator who does not realize the factitious nature of the interpretation will mistake drama for reality. These possible worlds are, of course, conceptual and not physical.

However, even though these dramatic worlds are conceptual, they are actually shown to the spectator since they are seen in progress in the here and now. Elam writes that this conceptual access to possible worlds is transformed into physical access since the counterfactual world is shown rather than described. He concludes that the founding principle of dramatic representation is “the fiction of the *presence* of a world known to be hypothetical” (Elam 1980: 111-113).

2.3. Text Versus Staging⁹

The theatre performance is divided into two basic semiotic systems: the linguistic and the visual, or in other words, the text and the staging. Because of the fact that, in the early developments of semiotic, semiotic models at hand were largely used in linguistics, there was a natural tendency to transpose these models on the dramatic text¹⁰ after which the performance was integrated into the system. This division between text and the actual performance established a dichotomy between on the one hand theatre semioticians who believed that the focus and the starting point of the analysis needed to be the text and on the other hand, theatre semioticians who only wanted to acknowledge the performance as the unique research object of theatre semioticians. Nowadays, however, most semioticians will assert that both the linguistic and the visual system and their interaction have to be examined in semiotic research. Pavis (1978: 11-12) writes that, since most sign categories (which will be discussed under the chapter *Theatrical Sign*) belong to visual systems, theatrical semiotics cannot ignore the visual system and adds that theatre is not a literary text embellished with an illustrative staging. His statement not to oppose text and staging, but to find new categories that belong to both the linguistic and the visual system, is derived from Antonin Artaud’s work:

C’est autour de la *mise en scène*, considérée non comme simple degré de réfraction d’un texte sur la scène, mais comme le point de départ de toute création théâtrale, que se constituera le langage type du théâtre. Et c’est dans l’utilisation et le maniement de ce langage que se fondera la vieille dualité entre l’auteur et le metteur en scène, remplacés par une sorte de créateur unique, à qui incombera la responsabilité double du spectacle et de l’action.

(Antonin Artaud in Pavis 1978: 12)

Just like Artaud, Van den Dries places the theatrical performance at the heart of theatre science. He defines the performance, as “the unique realisation of a theatrical design

⁹ For this chapter I am largely indebted to Van den Dries p19-38

¹⁰ i.e. the *written* text as opposed to the *theatrical* or *performance* text, the first being written *for* the theatre and the second being produced *in* the theatre (Elam: 3)

in an indispensable interaction with a particular audience” (Van den Dries 2001: 23; my translation). In the communicative process, the dramatic text precedes the performance as its pre-text. There are two main approaches towards the text-performance dialectic: predetermination and mutual involvement.

2.3.1. Predetermination

The predetermination approach is the most classical approach (Van den Dries 2001: 40-43). In the most extreme case, the proponents of this approach consider the text as the holder of elements that will determine the stage representation. They assume that certain characteristics of the potential scenic representation are guaranteed in the dramatic text. Less extreme supporters consider the scenic representation as the referent¹¹ of the textual sign. Pavis (1978: 7) proposes an analogous vision in which the referent can be detached from its linguistic form to be concretised in the staging. He distinguishes two referents: the first is the textual referent, i.e. the world described by the text and which can be visualised or not in the staging. The second is the visual referent to which refers the setting, the characters, costumes, etc. The visual referent is suggested by the staging, not represented. It contributes to the creation of the imaginary world (Pavis 1978: 40).

2.3.2. Mutual involvement

The second approach is that of mutual involvement (Van den Dries 2001: 43-45). The basic notion of the transformation process is a semiotic term introduced by Peirce: the interpretant (roughly being the idea that the sign produces (Elam 1980: 25)). The interpretant sign is not predetermined by the literary sign, but it is dependent from the meaning that theatrical producers construe on the basis of their personal reading. This personal reading will create the theatrical sign which is not subject to the text but to historical, societal and subjective contexts. This relation proposes two relatively independent systems – the textual and the scenic – that are related to each other via the theatrical producers. This explains how a text can always give rise to new performances.

2.3.3. Conclusion

To conclude, it seems illogical to rule one aspect (text or staging) out in favour of the other. Both aspects are necessary to create the theatrical experience. Van den Dries chooses the

¹¹ The referent being the reality to which refers the sign (Pavis: 40)

mutual involvement approach. It supports the autonomy of both text and staging and it does not exclude the autonomous judgement of the theatre maker and the spectator. On top of that, it allows the pre-text to function as an open category in which other elements than dramatic texts can be the reason for the theatrical performance: music, poetry, etc. It can even be empty.

2.4. Theatrical Sign

Theatre is a process of signs. How? Theatre can be seen as a cultural phenomenon whereby culture is defined as 'what is created by man'. Erika Fisher-Lichte states that one of the characteristics of human creation is that it has meaning. Meaning is created through signs and therefore, every human action or communication can only take place by means of signs. C.S. Peirce goes further and believes that no one can even think without signs:

If we seek the light of external facts, the only cases of thought which we can find are of thought in signs. Plainly, no other thought can be evidenced by external facts. But we have seen that only by external facts can thought be known at all. The only thought, then, which can possibly be cognized is thought in signs. But thought which cannot be cognized does not exist. All thought, therefore, must necessarily be in signs.

(Van den Dries 2001: 28)

Semiotics assumes that all observation, thinking and acting can only happen by means of sign relations. We perceive reality through signs. This always implies an active role on the part of the perceiver: a sign only becomes a sign when someone interprets it as a sign (Van den Dries 2001: 30).

2.4.1. Multiplicity and non-specificity

The theatrical sign is characterised by its multiplicity and its non-specificity. Whereas the linguistic semiotics have the language sign as specific study object, theatre produces an almost unlimited amount of sign material. There is an enormous diversity in theatrical signs, from aural and visual to verbal signs. Theatre is created with different media and sends its signals via different channels. Consequently, theatre is characterised by a hectic sign traffic which results in a performance that has many semiotic layers which are of a multimedia and polyphone nature (Van den Dries 2001: 53).

This enormous diversity constitutes the richness of theatre and – at the same time – the chaos in theatre semiotics. What can be used as a theatrical sign? Everything. There are

no specific theatrical signs; theatre does not have its own sign system. Therefore, the theatrical sign is non-specific and multiform; almost everything we know from everyday life can be used as a sign in theatre. Moreover, we do not even have to make a distinction between a *natural* sign and a *theatrical* sign since the theatrical frame includes every sign in the semiotic process. In short, not everything on stage is a sign, but everything can become a sign. This decision is up to the spectator. (Van den Dries 2001: 53-54)

The decision entails a transformation of the sign that is influenced by the context of time and space. The meaning spectators will give to a sign depends on the social context that is restricted by time and space and that allows them to “‘bracket off’ what is presented to them from normal praxis” (Elam 1980: 12).

Van den Dries concludes that “a theatre sign is a multimedia communication element which can be used in a multifunctional way and the spectator considers it to be an element of a theatrical frame” (Van den Dries 2001: 57; my translation). This definition of the theatrical sign will be Van den Dries’s key to his application of pragmatic semiotics to the performance analysis. However, I would like to introduce a few other concepts that are linked to the theatrical sign first.

2.4.2. Signifier-signified- referent

Ferdinand de Saussure introduced a definition of the sign as an entity linking a material *vehicle* or *signifier* with a mental *concept* or *signified* (Elam 1980: 6). Pavis distinguishes two kinds of signifiers: the visual (everything that can be seen on the scene) and the textual (most of the time communicated through the aural channel). First, the spectator recognises certain signifiers. Then, the signifiers associate with each other and produce certain signifieds that no longer depend directly from their signifiers. The concept of *referent* refers to an extra-linguistic reality that is actualised in the staging, the ‘representation’ of the referent. (Pavis 1978: 31-32)

The visual signifiers are scattered all over the image: they are spatially organised and cannot be examined one after the other. The linguistic signifiers, on the other hand, are temporally organised. They are linear and can be distinguished one after the other, determined in advance by the structure of the phrase. So the textual signifier is determined by a fixed syntax whereas the visual signifiers are given simultaneously to the audience (Pavis 1978: 38-39).

Pavis (1978: 41) sees the referent as the common domain of the textual and the visual signifiers: the referent of the linguistic system can be realised in the image and therefore, its referent is identical to the visual referent.

2.4.3. Denotation-connotation

In a theatrical representation the signifier stands for a class of objects. Beyond this basic denotation, the theatrical sign acquires secondary meanings for the audience, who relates it to the current social, moral and ideological values. Every theatrical signifier has this denotative and connotative function (Elam 1980: 10).

Every aspect of the performance is governed by the denotation-connotation dialectic: every sign on stage is determined by a constant shifting between primary and secondary meanings: signifiers have an extremely generative capacity partly due to their connotative width. A limited repertory of signifiers can generate a potentially unlimited range of cultural units. This accounts for the polysemic character of the theatrical sign that we have discussed above. How strictly the connotative markers are determined depends on the strength of the semantic conventions. In the Kabuki theatre, the semantic units are so strictly predetermined that the denotation-connotation distinction virtually disappears. In the West, on the other hand, the secondary meanings are much less tightly constrained and will necessarily vary from spectator to spectator and depend on the cultural and social context (Elam 1980: 10-11).

2.4.4. Transformability of the sign

The generative capacity of the theatrical sign is provoked by a quality that has been characterised as the sign's transformability. The signifier is semantically versatile, not only on the connotative level, but also on the denotative one: one stage item can stand for different signifieds depending on the context. For example, the handle of a sword can be converted into a cross. Jindřich Honšl states that any stage item can stand for any signified class of phenomena: the representational relations are completely arbitrary (Elam 1980: 12-16).

2.4.5. Foregrounding

A sign is foregrounded when it attracts attention of the audience to itself. Havranek explains this phenomenon analogously to linguistics:

Linguistic foregrounding in language occurs when an unexpected usage suddenly forces the listener or reader to take note of the utterance itself, rather than continue his automatic concern with its 'content': 'the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention and is perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automatization, as deautomatized [...].

(Havranek in Elam 1980: 17)

In the Western theatrical tradition, the automatized state occurs when the (lead) actor attracts the major part of the spectator's attention; the foregrounding of other elements – when these elements are used in an unexpected way – causes the spectator to be 'deautomatized'. The act of foregrounding strongly resembles the Russian formalist notion of defamiliarisation, ostracising, which is also called *ostranie* by Shklovsky. The foregrounding is twofold: it grants an unusual prominence or autonomy to certain features of the performance, and above that, it distances those features from their codified functions, i.e. they are not used in the way the audience expects them to be used. At this point, the spectator is encouraged to take note of the semiotic means of the signifier that is made 'strange' rather than automatic. (Elam 1980: 17-18)

This concept of alienation was one of the aims of Brechtian epic theatre. His definition of the effect as a "way of drawing one's own or someone else's attention to a thing" which "consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected". (Elam 1980: 18)

2.4.6. Typologies of Signs

Both Elam and Pavis use Peirce's tripartite typology of signs to designate the relationship between signifier and signified: icon, index and symbol.

Icon

The main principle in iconic signs is similitude: the icon represents its object mainly by similarity between the signifier and its signified. Because of the generality of this definition, almost any form of similitude between sign and object suffices to establish an iconic relationship:

An icon is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses.

(Peirce in Elam 1980: 21)

Pavis (1978: 13) considers the icon – or better, the iconic function since the pure state of icon, index or symbol does not exist – as the fundamental theatrical sign: on stage, the actor's body and voice are as real as in everyday life. The sign is thus a literal one, because it refers to itself. The difference between the signifier "actor" and the signified "character" barely exist. Brecht's method consisted in dissociating the signifier from the signified to crush the iconic credibility of the character.

The notion of iconism is useful, provided that the next remark is kept in mind. The principle of similitude is very flexible and founded on convention. Similarity can be asserted rather than be apparent, for example when an empty stage becomes a prison cell. The convention allows the spectator to make the necessary analogy between the signifier and the signified (Elam 1980: 25).

Index

For Pavis, the index is not about the content of a sign (like the icon) but about its use by the actor and the spectator. Indexes can be linguistic as well as visual. Deixis are an example of linguistic indexes. The look of an actor towards an object, the gestures or music that indicates a theme are examples of scenic indexes. Together with the icon, the index is the second fundamental theatrical sign (Pavis 1978: 16).

Elam defines indexes as signs that “are causally connected with their objects, often physically or through contiguity” (Elam 1980: 12). The signifier and signified are bound in a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, smoke indicates a fire, a knock on the door indicates the presence of someone outside (Elam 1980: 20-22). Indexes are more functions than distinct objects. A costume, for example, denotes iconically the mode of the dress but stands indexically for the social position or profession (Elam 1980: 25).

Symbol

The symbolic meaning of a sign is established through an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. No similitude or physical connection exists between the two (Pavis 1978: 17; Elam 1980: 23). The whole theatrical performance is symbolic, “since it is only through convention that the spectator takes stage events as standing for something other than themselves (Elam 1980: 27).

On stage, the iconic, indexical and symbolic functions are co-present and signs are never pure icons or indexes or symbols (Elam 1980: 22). Theatre is not about putting reality on stage, but about putting it in signs. The resemblance with reality is thus not the only criteria for a representation. The performance is based on the opposition icon-index. It is the dichotomy between the imitating (icon) and the denotation (index) that will mark the performance (Pavis 1978: 137).

2.4.7. Icon-index dialectic¹²

Pavis (1978: 56) opposes icon and index as two signs with different notions and functions. It is necessary to understand both notions well enough to understand their importance for the sign's connotation and denotation. The icon is polysemic because it can have different significations and consequently, it is unstable. The index tries to be unambiguous. It is characterized by linearity: it ensures the connection between the different elements on scene and between icons. In contrast to icons – signs with a rich content – indexes are empty signs. They form a frame instead of content.

2.4.7.1. *Dialectical interchange between icons and indexes*

Many theatrical signs are both icon and index. Sometimes the icon becomes an index when a new informative element becomes part of the physical or intellectual setting of the performance. Conversely, the index can become an icon. Pavis gives the example of someone who has a knife; the fact of having a knife shows an intention, thus it is an index. Then, that person kills someone with the knife; the object becomes an icon that means death.

2.4.7.2. *Narration, index and denotation*

Signs are related with other signs in the performance. The narration is a succession of signs that relate to each other till the end of the 'story'. This succession is often logical and causal or consists of a succession of juxtaposed elements. The narrative progression is ensured by indexes: they are responsible for the dynamics of the story. Let us reconsider Pavis's example of the person with the knife. If that person buys a knife and with the same knife he kills someone further on in the story, these acts function as indexes. The buying of a knife indicates a project which is executed further on in the story. The index is part of the performance's dynamics; it refers to an episode further on. Every sign that prepares another sign can function as an index.

In other words, the index refers to the message and not to the code, it does not create new significations and connotations. The index refers to other elements of the message that can be objectively perceived. Narration is therefore a denotative system that describes situations and is ensured by the indexes, signs that connect different episodes to each other. It precedes all connotations.

¹² For this part, I am indebted to Pavis 1978: 55-96

2.4.7.3. *Theatricality, icon and connotation*

Subdivision 2.4.7.1 discussed the theatrical sign in relation to semantics, 2.4.7.2 in relation to syntax and this part discusses the theatrical sign in relation to pragmatism, i.e. the codes that allow the deciphering of the message.

What is generally perceived as the theatrical part of the performance – being “the theatre minus the text” (Pavis 1978: 82; my translation) – is based on icons, stage images that can imitate or evoke reality. The visual icons are polysemic because they can have several functions in the performance. The icon can be transformed into a number of equivalent metaphors which allow the icon to have several connotations. The spectator will link the icon to an ultimate connotation, depending on more than one context: the narration, social, ideological, cultural contexts, etc.

2.4.7.4. *Icon-index-denotation-connotation*

In a theatre performance, icons and indexes coexist, but there is always one that prevails. If the signs are mainly iconic, the audience will have no problems identifying with the play because the signifiers ‘imitate’ reality. If the signs are mainly indexical, the audience does not identify with the performance, but is conscious of its demonstrative nature. The performance will be characterized by an estrangement because the signs focus more on the signifying part than on the signified reality (Pavis 1978: 141).

Both icons and indexes can be denotative or connotative, but the effect they have on the play differs. When the icon denotes, it imitates reality. When it connotes, it opens up to all sorts of interpretational possibilities. When the index is denotative, it refers to another sign in the narrative. When it connotes it refers to itself, insisting on its own materiality and complexity. Thus the icon-index dialectic can have four possible consequences for the interpretation of the theatrical signs, as is shown in the following diagram (Pavis 1978: 142):

	L' <i>icône</i> est à la fois	L' <i>index</i> est à la fois
La <i>dénotation</i> se définit comme	« effet de réel » (similitude)	épisode narratif renvoyant au suivant
La <i>connotation</i> se définit comme	sens ambigu (dissimilitude)	signe auto-réflexif et ambigu

2.4.7.5. Conclusion

Because these concepts cannot always be applied in an unambiguous way and because there are no examples REGARDING what a connotative index exactly is, I have decided to give my own definition to these four concepts. I do this because I want to be able to apply the concepts to the signs in *Wintervögelchen* and not to have to adapt these signs to the theoretic concepts. I will therefore illustrate the meaning of these concepts to a practical example, a paper crown. The denotative iconic function of this sign is *crown*. The denotative indexical function is *king* which refers to a character in the story. It is a first level of interpretation. The connotative iconic function is (for example – this depends on the context of the play) *power abuse*. This function implies a second level of interpretation that goes further than the first one. The connotative indexical function exists when the crown is not really a crown, but the factitiousness (its paper form for example) is accentuated. It is therefore not as such an imitation of reality. The process of symbolization allows passing from icons, imitating reality, to symbols which represent reality by means of a code. The dramatic world is not copied from reality, but represents it in an arbitrary way, according to conventions established during the performance (Pavis 1978: 109-111; 137).

2.5. The Theatrical Code

The theatrical code is a basic concept in semiotics. It is the key to interpret signs. However, as Elam writes, in theatre semiotics no one knows what the code is:

If our knowledge of theatrical systems is rudimentary, then our current understanding of contributory codes must be said to be barely nascent, especially since the very concept of the code remains problematic and ambiguous in most of its applications.

(Elam 1980: 52)

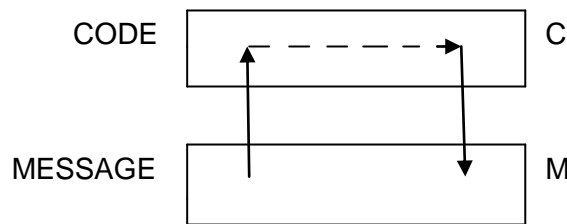
I have used the concept 'code' in previous paragraphs, but its definition and functioning remain problematic until today. The ambiguity of the concept 'code' is the result of the mixing of different related concepts (depending on the contexts in which they are used) and of the absence of a specific code categorisation that tells us how to 'read' a performance. This lack results in a fading of the codifying function in theatrical semiotics. Semiotics is a theory that attempts to explain signification by means of certain rules, but theatre does not have a grammatical structure that can explain all performances. It is impossible to gather all theatrical signs and codes to interpret these signs. Van den Dries therefore puts the question whether the term 'code' can still be used. (Van den Dries 2001: 59). The complexity of the

signs supposes an infinite rule complex, all the more because different spectators or creators will employ different codes (Van den Dries 2001: 59).

Pavis describes the abstract working of message and code, as formulated by Jakobson. On an abstract level, the concept does not pose any problem. It is only when attempting to put this theory into practice that no satisfying answer can be produced.

2.5.1. Message-code ¹³

Jakobson has examined the possible relations between the code (C) and the message (M) and he has demonstrated how the discourse always shifts between code and message.



(Pavis 1978: 20)

- From message to code:

This is the first phase of the deciphering of the signification. The message refers to the code when we explain words and phrases with other words. We look for a metaphor for the sign with which we are confronted. All these signs are icons, reflections of a reality to which we cannot give a meaning yet. In this phase, the metaphors are not yet definitively fixed.

- From code to code:

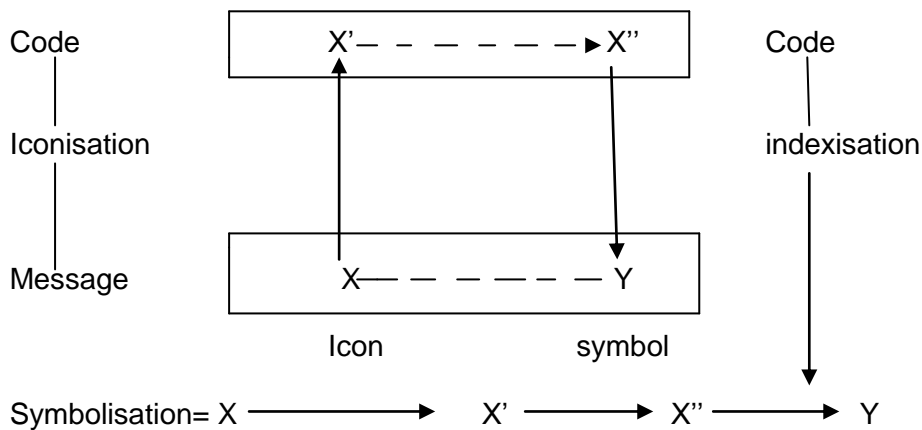
Here, the code is divided into subcodes: cultural, ideological, aesthetic, etc. after which the decodation is effectuated.

- From code to message:

The metaphors need to be reintegrated in the message. It is the inverse process of the first phase and ensured by the indexes. We check the meaning we have created with the indexes in the performance in order to know whether it is correct or not.

¹³ For this part, I am indebted to Pavis 1978: 19-23

- Return to the message: the signification:



(Pavis 1978: 22)

The last phase is the symbolizing phase in which the sign completes its transformation into signification. In the iconic phase, the signifier was not yet linked to a signified. In the symbolizing phase, the signified exist independently from its signifier.

As mentioned before, the practical or applicable side of the code is more problematic. Van den Dries glances through three code theories and examines them in relation to his pragmasemiotic strategy.

2.5.2. Cybernetic code concept

The cybernetic communication model discusses sign processes as a form of communication between an encoder (the sender), a decoder (the receiver) via a channel ideally free of interference by means of a common code repertoire. The encoded and decoded messages need to correspond more or less to consider the information transfer as successful. The problem with this concept is that theatrical communication does not have fixed codes that both encoder and decoder can use (Van den Dries 2001: 59-61).

At this point, Van den Dries (2001: 62) concludes that one cannot speak of codes in theatre. The search for code definitions can only lead to unstable hypotheses that have to be reconsidered every other moment. The code can therefore not function as a stable criterion for sign interpretations. This conclusion can lead to two different strategies: the structural and the pragmatic strategy.

2.5.3. Structural code concept

To describe a dynamic code process without impeding its transformability the codifying rules need to have a dynamic potential themselves. Eco introduced the distinction between codes

and subcodes. They are linked to each other via under- or overcoding processes. Elam adopts the code-subcode dialectic, defining the first as “the cultural and systemic norms of society at large” and the second as “sets of secondary regulative rules, peculiar to drama and theatre” (Elam 1980: 53).

Subcodes are generally produced by the process of overcoding which means that “on the basis of one (constitutive) rule or sets of rules, a secondary rule or set of rules arises in order to regulate a particular application of the base rules” (Elam 1980: 53). Some examples of overcoding are the informative monologue, the rise and falling of a curtain, the use of exaggerated movement, etc. Subcodes produced by overcoding are strictly related to ‘fashion’ and therefore unstable. They can either influence the existing codes or subcodes very little, or establish new codes (Elam 1980: 53-54).

New codes can also occur through undercoding. This is the “process whereby barely recognized new rules emerge” (Elam 1980: 55). This occurs when signs are used in an unconventional way which needs to be understood before being accepted. Elam asserts that every interesting performance will involve code-observing, code-making and code-breaking. On top of that, he introduces a third subcoding regulation that he calls ‘idiolectal’ factors: “any dramatist, director, actor or designer of note will impose, over and above the constitutive and regulative rules, his own subcode or idiolect, the ensemble of personal, psychological, ideological and stylistic traits which makes a written text recognizably ‘Strindbergian’ [...] or ‘Brechtian’ ” (Elam 1980: 55).

In Elam’s code definition, overcoding, undercoding and idiolectal factors form the three processes that ensure the coding dynamism and renewal in the theatrical sign process. However this coding subdivision remains too unstable for Van den Dries. He wants to give a prominent place to the general cultural knowledge and to the spectator, who has a personal norm system; hence also Fisher-Lichte’s conclusion that every attribution of meaning is individual and personal (Van den Dries 2001: 70). The pragmatic code understanding will therefore describe the code concept from the point of view of the audience.

2.5.4. Pragmatic code concept

Whereas the first theatre semioticians were especially focused on the general-abstract analysis of the theatrical phenomenon, the contemporary semioticians are much more interested in the specific theatrical communication. Special attention is attributed to the users of theatrical communication. This shift in focus has had important consequences for the code processes: one does not try anymore to define and theorize the code as a fixed or dynamic repertoire. It is too volatile to make a set of rules. (Van den Dries 2001: 71)

The danger of not having autonomous rules for the code is that spectators can invent their own codes. Van den Dries states that the audience cannot form the basis of the interpretation of the codes. The interpretation needs to be completed with other characteristics from inside and outside the theatrical text. He adopts the term *context* in which expectations, traditions, etc. can guide the communication (Van den Dries 2001: 72-83).

The performance is considered as a sign process that is embedded in a large number of different contexts that help decide the interpretation possibilities of the message. These contexts can determine, influence and adjust the performance before, during and after the sign process. Hence the change of the term *code* into the concept of *context*. (Van den Dries 2001: 83)

In order to put the theory into practice, the concept of context needs to be systematized in different contextual layers. Van den Dries proposes five subdivisions that will determine the semiotic process in theatre communication: climate, landscape, typus, corpus and text (Van den Dries 2001: 83-92).

Climate

This is the socio-cultural context. It determines the general cultural, political and ideological definition of the signs. This relation – between art and society – is sometimes very difficult to show, but it is important since art does not exist in isolation. It is the most diverse and broad category because it is impossible to give a complete description of the social political, economic, cultural and artistic climate and how it determines the use of theatre signs. It therefore needs to be restricted, temporally and geographically, and the performance is the central point.

Landscape

It refers to the whole of theatrical forms that exist in a certain space and time. They form the limits of what is familiar and known. The landscape is restricted in the same geographical and temporal way as the climate. The relations between the performances are characterized by two poles: the centre and the periphery. The centre is the 'protector' of the canon, the periphery introduces new ideas.

Typus

Theatre has different genres and styles. The typus is the whole array of conventions that are typical for a certain style period. Examples are Brechtian theatre or the Stanislavsky tradition.

Corpus

The corpus is constituted of the past history of the company and theatre makers that are involved in the production. The reduction of interpretation possibilities is accomplished partly through the recollection of previous productions in the form of the spectator's own experience, reviews, things read or heard about the company or theatre makers, etc.

Text

- pre-text: material that precedes the performance and on which the performance is explicitly based.
- inter-text: the 'texts' used by the sign users as a reference for the performance (intertextuality)
- performance text: the performance.

The performance is the centre of the whole context concept. The author's intentions will form the basis of the production. These intentions can be demonstrated explicitly in the dramatic text by including other texts that can be announced in brochures, interviews, reviews, etc. They allow the spectator to link the dramatic text with the other referred texts. The same accounts for visual and textual references in the setting (Van den Dries 2001: 92-93). These five levels form the basis of Van den Dries's pragmasemiotic model.

2.6. Segmentation and Sign System

Segmentation is linked to the search for discrete theatrical sign units. These units – analogous to for instance morphemes or phonemes in different branches of linguistics – can be considered to be the base material of the theatrical language that, when put in relation to other units, constitutes a semantic and/or syntactic coherent structure (cfr. supra). However, semioticians agree that the atomization of sign units is a useless enterprise and cannot lead to a semantic and/or syntactic structure. The five context layers of Van den Dries form the basis of the contextual segmenting process. Further segmentations on the material level have been developed to find smaller sign systems in the theatrical performance that constitute meaning.

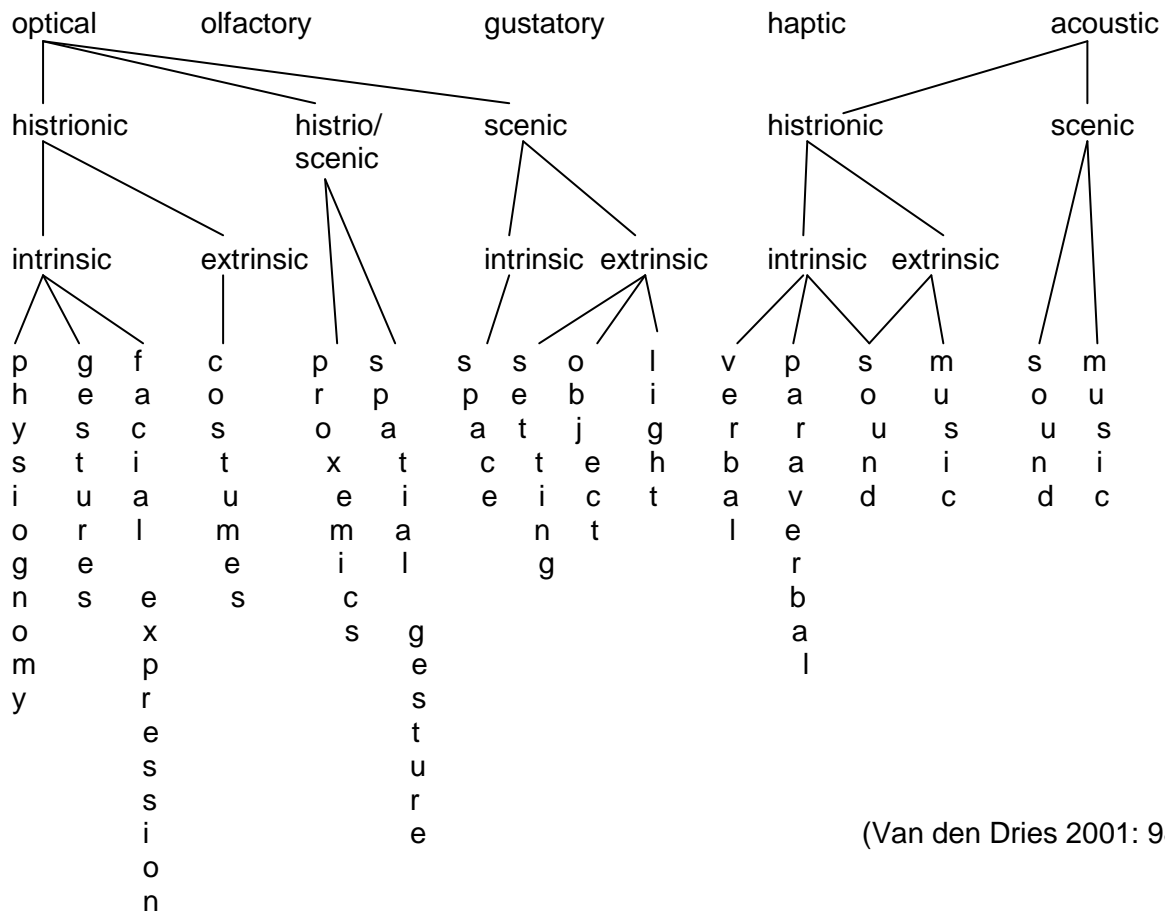
First of all, what is a system? In Elam's communication model (Elam 1980: 37) the performance text depends on a number of systems and on a set of codes that need to be more or less the same for the performers and the audience, for its encoding and decoding of the message. A system is then understood as "a repertory of signs or signals and the internal

syntactic rules governing their selection and combination” (Elam 1980: 49). A code is “what allows a unit from the semantic system [a signified] to be attached to a unit from the syntactic system [a signifier]. That is to say, it is an ensemble of *correlational* rules governing the formation of sign-relationships” (Elam 1980: 50).

Tadeusz Kowzan was the first semioticians to propose a systemic classification of the sign material in 1968. Kowzan distinguishes thirteen sign systems. This segmenting aims at the identification of different sign units that function in the theatre and it is based on the segmentation of material classes to which the sign belongs. One has to bear in mind that overlaps between these sign segments are possible (Van den Dries 2001: 95-97).

1 parole	texte	acteur	signes auditifs	temps	signes auditifs (acteur)
2 ton	prononcé		signes visuels	espace et temps	signes visuels (acteur)
3 mimique 4 geste 5 mouvement	expression corporelle			espace	
6 maquillage 7 coiffure 8 costume	apparences extérieures de l'acteur	hors de l'acteur	signes visuels	espace et temps	signes visuels (hors de l'acteur)
9 accessoire 10 décor 11 éclairage	aspect du lieu scénique			temps	
12 musique 13 bruitage	effets sonores non articulés		signes auditifs	temps	signes auditifs (hors de l'acteur)

Van den Dries adopts Kowzan's categorization but inserts 3 other classes Van den Dries 2001: 97-98): *sensus*; *histrionic* and *scenic*; *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. The last class deals with characteristics intrinsic to the actor or extrinsic to him.



What follows is a global description of the classes (Van den Dries 2001: 98-99):

- physiognomy: the general appearance of the actor, physique and age
- mimics: facial expression (general and/or specific)
- gestures: the gestures of the body (general and/or specific)
- costumes: the actor's clothes, the grime, the use of masks and/or wigs
- proxemics: analyses the distance between the actors, their positions in relation to each other (frontal, lateral, eye contact) and their positions with reference to spatial objects
- spatial gestures: discusses the entrance and exit and the movements (horizontal, vertical) in the theatre space
- space: the spatial position, the interaction between 'audience's space' and the 'actor's space': proportion, dynamics, design, etc.
- setting: 2-dimensional parts (walls, floor, etc.) and 3-dimensional parts (stairs, objects, etc.)
- object: all the stage-property
- light/projections: the light sources, the projections and film fragments
- verbal means: the verbal manifestations of the actors

- paraverbal means: the way in which the text is spoken by the actors (intonation, rhythm, accent, etc).
- music (histrionic): the musical fragments produced by the actors
- sound (histrionic): the sounds produced by the actors
- music (scenic): the music that is not produced by actors
- sound (scenic): the sound that is not produced by actors

These elements can be examined separately and in relation to the performance. It needs to be stressed that the global meaning of the performance is not the sum of the submeanings. The notion of hierarchy is prominent in this discussion: what form of expression is most foregrounded and which one is not? It is also possible that the relation between sign systems is not hierarchic, but that several expression levels are equally important for the generation of meaning (Van den Dries 2001: 100-101).

2.7. Conclusion

The semiotic enterprise for theatre is a complex undertaking in which theories, concepts and definitions are regularly modified. That is why one needs to choose and select visions according to the aim of one's study. I have chosen to follow mainly Van den Dries's pragmasemiotic model because it allows semiotic theory to be put into practice and it takes into account more than just the theatre performance itself. The whole historic, social, ideological, political, and cultural contexts are involved since theatre does not exist in a vacuum and these contexts contribute to its meaning. Another prominent place is attributed to the theatre maker and the spectator for the creation of meaning.

The meaning of a theatre performance is not intrinsic to the performance. It is dynamic and multi-interpretable. Therefore, the concept of 'code' – still used, especially in the abstract theory about the construction of meaning – has had to make way for the five context levels introduced by Van den Dries: climate, landscape, typus, corpus and text, as there is no such thing as a code that holds the key to the signification of a performance.

These five context levels are the first semiotic segmentation that Van den Dries proposes. But in order to study the performance more thoroughly, a further segmentation on the material level is introduced, based on Kowzan's thirteen sign systems. Van den Dries's sixteen different expression systems form altogether the *theatrical expression* (in contrast to the five levels that segment the *contexts*). The theatrical expression and the context are connected to each other by the spectator. His or her point of view (and interpretation) is

guided by focalisation. The hybrid sign production in a theatre performance will entail a constant choice activity of the spectators. They will select and reject signs and, in this way, create their own image of the performance. The theatre makers will focus as well on certain aspects. Consequently, two foci coincide the focal direction of the theatre makers and the focus of the spectators (Van den Dries 2001: 108-110).

I have also introduced two concepts that Van den Dries does not mention, but I believe they are important for the analysis of the performance: the icon-index dialectic. The theatrical signs (and thus the performance) can – being disconnected from the contexts by which it is surrounded – be interpreted in four ways: iconical-denotative, iconical-connotative, indexical-denotative and indexical-connotative. These relationships can in their turn determine the contexts of landscape, typus, corpus and text: is there a theatre tradition of recognition or of alienation?

In order to find out if Flanders has created a specific theatre tradition and what Decorte's place is in this, the next chapter will give a general overview of the different style periods Flemish theatre has been through since WWII and discuss in more detail Decorte's previous work and typical Decortian characteristics.

3. Chapter 3: Theatre in Flanders and Jan Decorte

3.1. Introduction

The second step in the analysis of the source text is the discussion of Flemish theatre and of Decorte's previous work. In the history of Flemish theatre, theatre scholars attribute an important role to Jan Decorte in the creation of a new theatre language and form. From the '50s onward, theatre in Flanders has tried to find its own voice and authenticity, while being influenced by international dramaturgical movements. This chapter will briefly discuss the three main movements that have succeeded each other after WWII: chamber theatre, consciousness-raising or political theatre and postmodern theatre. Next, Jan Decorte's work and its specific characteristics will be discussed. These characteristics are important for the legitimization of choices we have made in the audiodescription of *Wintervögelchen*.

3.2. Theatre movements in Flanders¹⁴

In theatre, one can always distinguish a centre and a margin. The centre consists of theatre companies which play the established repertoire. In the margin there are the companies which are not satisfied with the way the centre tends to perpetuate former theatrical traditions and want to introduce new elements, be it on the level of repertoire, form or other. Since Decorte's theatre was created in the margin of the Flemish theatre in the beginning of the '80s, this paper will only consider the evolution of this margin, which, of course, set itself off from the theatre practice of the centre.

3.2.1. Chamber theatre

From the '50s onward, a new movement, called the chamber theatre, came into being. It was based on mainly two impulses: to introduce new repertoire and to provide villages and small towns with their own theatre. I will discuss successively the repertoire, the use of space and the acting style in the chamber theatre.

¹⁴ For this chapter, I am indebted to Van den Dries 2001: 163-342 and Hellemans, Geerts & van Kerkhoven 1990

The theatre makers of the chamber theatre wanted to introduce texts in which the “experiments and the newest universal movements” would occupy a central place because they thought that the existing theatre houses neglected the new dramatic and philosophical tendencies that were flourishing abroad (d’Haese in Van den Dries 2001: 179; my translation). These tendencies were mainly existentialism and absurdism. Chamber theatre placed the absurdity of the human fate in the spotlight and the inevitable alienation of the individual within the society. It was the first step towards a socially committed theatre. At the time, the plays of Beckett, Ionesco, Sartre and Genet became part of the chamber theatre repertoire. They express the worries, uncertainties and questions of the post-war generation. However, these philosophical and literary progressive values did not pay off. Many troupes had to dissolve after a few years, theatres had to close their doors or they were obliged to find a middle path between experimental drama work and a more accessible repertoire of classical, more realistic or even commercial plays.

The opening of small theatres in the regions outside the cities entailed a different use of space. The reduction in size (of both the stage and the audience seating) brought along a different relationship between actors and spectators: more intimacy and involvement from both sides. The audience was also more inclined to identify with the characters and the actors tended to display a greater psychological realism in their acting.

Van den Dries writes that contrary to what this may seem to imply, the chamber theatre did not introduce a new revolutionary way of acting. There was no real difference between the acting techniques of the centre and those of the margin. The notable differences were the more realistic acting, a greater psychological credibility and the increased interaction between actors and audience. However, this evolution is mainly due to the reduction of the spatial proportions than to a conscious will to change the acting style.

If, at the beginning of its appearance, the chamber theatre had its own task in the theatre in the area of repertoire renewal, it lost this singularity in the beginning of the ‘60s. By then the theatre houses of the centre had adopted the absurd and existentialist repertoire and as the repertoire was the only real innovating part of this movement, the chamber theatre very quickly lost its avant-garde status. Towards the end of the ‘60s the Flemish fringe theatre went through a crisis. A new avant-garde was needed.

3.2.2. Consciousness-raising and political theatre

At the origin of the consciousness-raising and political theatre lies the fundamental artistic discontent that was created by the ‘failure’ of the chamber theatre to be innovating. Carlos Tindemans’s (1969) essay from this period, *Onbehagen met (Nederlands) theatre*, reflects

this feeling. It mainly discusses the lack of good theatre and the resulting lack of an audience.

The term *consciousness-raising theatre* was first introduced in the Netherlands in 1969-1970. The May '68 turmoil and the whole social and political climate of the period created new ideas about what the practice of consciousness-raising entailed, and the concept of 'consciousness' was introduced in almost all branches of the cultural sector, theatre included. This movement strongly focused on young people and had a strong didactic slant. It was introduced in Flanders but applied in a less restrictive way than in the Netherlands, writes Hellemans. Generally speaking *consciousness-raising theatre* included in Flanders all performances that criticized contemporary society. Theatre became a consciously employed means in the struggle against individual and social oppression, it formulated opinions about the prevailing ideologies and proposed other types of community beside the traditional family. This desire to change society was the driving power behind political theatre and rooted in Marxist ideology.

Van den Dries states that on the level of acting, the actor got a bigger responsibility in the creative process; instead of being merely the performer, he became co-creator of the performance. Hellemans en Van Kerkhoven detect two important guiding principles on the acting level: the epic characteristic of the characters and alienation. The epic qualities – introduced by Brecht - are reflected in the way characters were placed in a historical and societal context; they represented certain social relations and social functions and not so much psychological human beings. To create a feeling of alienation, the actors used techniques that discouraged identification with a person's individual fate like exaggeration and caricaturization, the use of a narrator, unusual costumes and the direct addressing of the audience.

On the level of scenography, political theatre needed to be accessible to everyone, especially to those who had never set foot in a theatre before. The political troupes, therefore, often played in places that were not equipped for the theatre but that were familiar to this specific audience. This change in space entailed a relation between actors and audience that was based on a high level of directness, which was strengthened by the fact that, very often, the strict separation between the stage and the audience space was broken.

On the textual level, according to Van den Dries, theatre companies looked for their own repertoire. Most texts were created in the troupe itself and based on a theme, improvisation, image, or other sources. Sometimes an existing text provided the base material, but it was usually rewritten and adapted to the troupe's aim. In a later phase, the performances were based more and more on existing plays. The dramaturgical form of the performances also changed during this political period. Whereas the spectator was used to being confronted with a theatrical form that was relatively coherent and interpretable, the

performances now evolved towards a more fragmented composition. Different social phenomenons would be compiled to create one performance and the spectators had create coherence themselves.

For Van Kerkhoven, the main problem of this theatre was its lack of a typical political dramaturgy: the conflict between on the one hand innovation with respect to a social content and on the other hand insufficient renewal of a dramatic form. This inability to depict the social problems that were their main concern in a dramatic way led to a return to a more traditional narrative structure and a more naturalistic creation of characters. This then caused an internal contradiction: traditional realism leads to the individualization of setting and characters and will therefore focus on a personal and individual problem instead of on social processes. This return to a more traditional realism in form is thus in direct contradiction with the content of the plays. The inability to resolve the form-content problem would contribute to the decline of the consciousness-raising theatre.

In the beginning of the '80s theatre in Flanders became highly critical in the centre as well. The centre had, again, absorbed the margin. This would eventually lead to the creation of another movement that started in the '80s, also known as *De Vlaamse Golf* (The Flemish Wave).

3.2.3. Postmodern theatre

The period of postmodern theatre is the most difficult one to describe because it is so close to our own time. Van den Dries mentions this obstacle. He writes "Zoals voor de geschiedschrijver geldt, dat de eigen tijdrekening nog te vol is van feiten die een relevante keuze bemoeilijken, vormt ook voor de opvoeringsanalyst de actualiteit een moeilijk overzienbaar terrein"¹⁵ (Van den Dries 2001: 273). Moreover, the predecessors of this avant-garde are still very active at this moment: Jan Fabre, Jan Decorte, Ivo Van Hove, Anne-Theresa De Keersmaker, Sam Bogaerts, etc. All of these theatre/performance makers continue to create important works today. I will try to give a general overview of this revolutionary avant-garde that started in the '80s.

The chamber theatre and the political theatre were created mostly out of local needs and social circumstances. This new movement, on the other hand, grew mainly out of the confrontation between an international import of avant-garde theatre and the Flemish desire for innovation. It was characterized by the multiplicity of ways of expression and the performances integrated dance, multimedia material, performance and plastic art. General

¹⁵ In the same way that a historian has to confront the difficulty that the era in which he/she lives is still too full with facts that complicate a relevant choice, a performance analyst confronts the fact that the current events form a terrain which is difficult to overview. (My translation)

tendencies in acting, scenographic representation and repertoire can be detected, but they are worked out in different ways according to the philosophy of the theatre maker.

According to Van den Dries, the revolutionary change in this form of theatre was particularly present on the level of acting. The acting needed to be redefined, theatre makers were looking for a new way that did not have its roots anymore in conventional realism. During the 20th century, different acting philosophies were proposed by Stanislavski, Brecht, Meyerhold, Grotowski, etc. It had become an important domain of research and it showed the need for a new attitude towards acting skills. In the Flemish margin, a few general tendencies can be discerned: the breaking of the acting conventions and the technical refining and the refusal of the psychological realism.

Ivo Van Hove showed the tension between a detached and an exuberant perception. He employed every corporal means in his performances like dancing, jumping, singing, yelling, whispering, crawling, hanging, etc. The actor still depicted a character that had a psychological basis, but at the same time he showed his obsessions, frustrations and repressed impulses by means of magnified signs and symbols. Sam Bogaerts inserted two elements: the situations in the play were recognizable but at the same time, he showed the factitiousness of theatre. This resulted in a tension between on the one hand the character and his role-playing and on the other hand, the character and the acting situation.

Jan Fabre intentionally did not work with professional actors because they were too artificial for him. He wanted to show the body in all its aggressiveness and its sensuality. For him, acting needed to be non-acting: the performers needed to be themselves, they could not play a role. Fabre abandoned the concept of character and moved towards performance. The play with which Jan Decorte made a name for himself (*Maria Magdalena* in '81) showed an acting style that was extremely awkward and alienating: an unusual diction, abstract, non-representational costumes and gestures, mimics and proxemics that shunned all realistic imitation.

A last characteristic that occurred in this period on the level of acting was the dissolution of the subject: one role was played by several actors, several roles were played by one actor or the different reality levels (conscience, subconscious, past, present,...) were rendered through different media. In general, the new crop of theatre makers abandoned the belief that a character and its identity was created through 'wholeness' and psychological realism, a belief typical of the centre.

With regard to the theatre space, the theatre companies did not want to play in the big theatre houses either and they looked for new spaces with a specific atmosphere. When they did play in theatres, the represented space was rarely imitated. A few, often negligible, signs sufficed to denote the space of action or to localize the action in time. Sometimes, the represented space was shown in a alienating and confusing perspective (e.g.: the *Maria*

Magdalena setting of Decorte) or it was neutral. The theatre space was an empty place filled with actors, objects and light. It did not refer to a specific place or time. It could also be purely aesthetic. Very often, especially in new theatres, the reality of the theatre space was shown: the machinery and the bare walls were shown, they were not covered anymore with curtains and side wings.

The repertoire underwent a serious change. There was no specific repertoire anymore, everything was possible. The dramatic author was not placed in the centre of the performance anymore; he has made way for a co-authorship between the author, the director, actor, scenographer, the dramaturge, etc. The status of the text was affected because it did not necessarily form the basis anymore for a performance. The text was subjected to a close-reading: the theatre makers looked for a contemporary and personal vision, texts gained a different meaning, characters were redefined as are the interactions between them. Due to change in meaning – as a consequence of a different era, moral, social context, etc. – texts were rewritten, adapted, reduced, assembled, ... They were taken away from their author and became the property of someone else.

To conclude, postmodern theatre is characterized by the decentralizing character of this new movement. Whereas *modern* art wants to deliver a work that is characterized by 'unity', the *postmodern* art work does not feel the need for this 'wholeness'. Contrary to the political theatre, the performance is not created anymore for the purpose of the transmission of a concept or an aim, it is created for itself. The theatre becomes aware of its own theatricality. The theatrical frame is questioned in an auto-reflexive movement. There is a rise in meta-theatricality, the play-within-a-play device, and the fictitious character of theatre is continually brought under attention in the style of playing, the interaction with the public, the use of scenic objects, etc. This new generation of theatre makers wants to break through the theatrical illusion. Today, we still live in this postmodern movement. Therefore the characteristics described above, still count for theatre today. Moreover, some of the theatre makers who lay the basis for this movement, are now artistic directors of established theatre houses (e.g.: Ivo Van Hove in Toneelgroep Amsterdam) or are internationally renowned (e.g.: Jan Fabre). Consequently, the theatre they create can be seen as part of the current centre, although the more traditional theatre still exists.

3.3. Jan Decorte

Many scholars see Jan Decorte as one of the theatre makers who were at the basis of this revolutionary innovation of the Flemish theatre in the beginning of the '80s. A few quotes will confirm this:

Jan Decorte est l'un de ceux qui ont le plus contribué au renouveau du théâtre flamand.

(Fonds flamand des lettres : 1)

Vroeger, eerste helft van de jaren tachtig zeg maar, gold hij als de man die het Vlaamse teater bijna in zijn eentje uit de diepe slaap haalde waar het eigenlijk al sinds de jaren vijftig in was gesukkeld.

(Pieters 1995)

L'auteur, acteur et metteur en scène Jan Decorte a joué et joue un rôle déterminant dans le théâtre flamand de ces trente dernières années.

(Van Kerkhoven 2005: 49)

In het begin van de jaren tachtig was hij een van de markantste regisseurs in Vlaanderen. Zijn eigenzinnige aanpak van klassieke teksten was de aanzet tot een golf nieuw Vlaams theater.

(Six 1995: 606)

Erg jubelend over de menselijke mogelijkheden waren de "Vlamingen" al evenmin. Op de bodem van hun werk trof je cynisme aan. [...] Dat was al zo bij de roepende-in-de-woestijn en voorloper-wegbereider van de "Vlaamse golf": Jan Decorte.

(Blokdijs 1989: 10)

However, Decorte's professional path has not been one without controversies and radical changes. What follows is an overview of the different periods, works and performances of this theatre maker. Jan Decorte was born on 9 May 1950. In 1969 his first play, *Kosmika*, was staged in Ghent. In 1980, he taught at the Brussels' conservatory and created Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* with the students, which resulted in an invitation for the Holland Festival in '81 and a commission from the Brussels' theatre house *Kaaitheater* where he would create Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*. This performance would go down in history as a landmark in Flemish theatre: "Met deze negentiende-eeuwse draak als vehikel voltrekt Decorte zijn theaterrevolutie."¹⁶ (Wambacq 2000: 35). Later that year, in cooperation with *Het Trojaanse Paard*, he created the double performance *Mauser/de Hamletmachine* from Müller. Jan Decorte became artistic leader from *Het Trojaanse Paard* and put Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* on stage in 1982. Next came Shakespeare's *King Lear* in 1983. All these

¹⁶ "With this 19th century monstrosity as vehicle, Decorte completes his theatre revolution" (My translation)

performances fitted in the *Maria-Magdalena*-concept: a close-reading of the classical repertoire, an anti-theatrical setting and a portrayal of mankind characterized by despair and repugnance. The actors were distant, spoke in a monotonous way and behaved in a deviant way. Decorte mixed seriousness, irony, kitsch, weariness and disgust and was very demanding for his actors. This beginning of Decorte's career is often called his classical period (Wambacq 2000: 35-36; 43).

The next period, Decorte calls it his "poetic-actional phase", started with the play *Scènes/Sprookjes (scenes/fairy tales)*, which was a collage of images, music and text fragments (Wambacq 2000: 39). He distanced himself from the existing repertoire and looked for new, and especially his own, material. Instead of creating 'artistically justified theatre', he made a U-turn and produced a performance in which three fairy tales were stripped of concreteness and anecdotic representation. In 1984 there was *Mythologies*, in which texts fragments from Goethe, Hölderlin and Decorte were used, and *Anatomie (Anatomy)*, based on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*: a text rife with cruelty is combined with a childlike staging. In this period, the critical reception of Decorte's plays was usually bad. His first classical works were appreciated, but the critics did not follow his switch to this new naive theatre. Besides, Decorte turned out to be a self-willed and difficult artist to work with. He distanced himself more and more from the theatre world and its critics. (Wambacq 2000: 39)

In 1985, Decorte gave a lecture in the Brussels' *Beursschouwburg* about the reasons why theatres did not attract new and young audiences, even though communication was the primary function of theatre, and had nothing to say anymore (Decorte 1991: 7-8). Wambacq saw in this statement a dramaturgical commentary on his (then) latest performance *Kleur is alles (everything's in the colour)*. Decorte had announced it would be the first step towards a change in the functioning of his theatre company (*Het Trojaanse Paard – HTP*).

Kleur is alles introduced Decorte's third period: it was a straightforward comedy and fitted in his new concept of short and quick performances of max. 75min. He wrote that comedy forced us to confront our era, that it was a means to make us laugh with the hopeless future without drowning us in fear (Six 1995: 609). With this play, Decorte seemed to turn his back to theatre, as if he doubted the meaning of it (Blokdijs 1989: 12). *Kleur is alles* was no more than a satirical sketch about the artists' and intellectuals' milieu, interspersed with nonsensical jokes and characters (De Boeck 1997: 222). He produced three similar productions: *In het kasteel (In the castle)*, *Op een avond in (one evening in)* and *Macbeth Party*. All these performances had a number of characteristics in common, i.e. their childlike staging and language, slapstick humour and caricatural acting. Decorte criticized the illusion of theatre, wanted to show the facticity of theatre and continued along the path of its deconstruction. He also adopted a new working method: from then on, he wrote his own

texts. He started writing them 3 weeks in advance and there was no rehearsal. Decorte only gave a few indications and the premiere was the first time that the actors played together. In this way, he wanted to create a theatre that was fresh, funny and agreeable to play and to watch. In 1986-1988, Decorte created his AIDS-trilogy – under the name now of Jan Decorte+Cie – *Het Stuk-Stuk (The piece-piece or the broken play)*, *In Ondertussendoor (In between the meantime)* and *Naar Vulvania (To Vulvania)*. These three performances could be seen as the pinnacle of Decorte's grotesque parody on theatre as a medium (Wambecq 2000: 39-43; De Boeck 1997: 221). By this time, however, many critics had given up on him and even refused to go and watch his new work.

In 1988, Jan Decorte lost his state subsidies and although Decorte had lost all credit with the critics, many people did not like this official move which showed up the clear disapproval of the established theatre administration (Van Kerkhoven 1988: 7). In 1989, Decorte participated in the television show *Sterrenwacht* and became a 'Famous Fleming'. He started creating new performances which he now calls 'little classics'. They were, just like the comedies, quick and funny, but not created for a big audience: in 1990, *In het moeras* (after *Woyzeck*), in 1991 *Meneer, de zot en tkint* (after *King Lear*) and in 1993 *Titus Andronikustmijnklote* (after *Titus Andronicus*). He created, what he calls, abstractions of these plays. He wanted to show their essence and pushed the use of a childlike language a bit further. The language used in the plays was very Flemish, sometimes archaic and was written phonetically without punctuation. In his next creations, *Bloetwollefduivel* (1994) and *Bêt Noire*, he radicalized his language. These 'little classics', however, were no succession of gags and jokes and therefore unlike his comedies, instead, they were dark, serious and cynical plays. After this production in 1994, Decorte changed the name of his company into Bloet+Cie, retired from public life and went through a severe depression. (Wambecq 2000: 44)

In 1998, he resurfaced and participated in Fabre's new production *The fin comes a little earlier this siècle (BUT BUSINESS AS USUAL)*. Decorte's *Bêt Noir* (1999) was what Wambecq calls a "Decortian adaptation of *Oidipus*, reduced to its very essence" (Wambecq: 45, my translation). The next performances were all created in this typical *Decortian* way: *Marieslijk* (2000), *Sasja danse* (2000), *Amlett* (2001), "*betonliebe+Fleischkrieg*" *Medeia* (2001), *Cirque Danton* 2002), *Cannibali!* (2003) and *O Death* (2004), (Fonds flamand des Lettres : 1). After *O'Death*, Decorte went through a crisis that he himself called "his crazy period". In this period, he created few works: *Zeldzame Werken*, *Burgaudine* and *dieu & les esprits vivants* (2005). In 2006 he returned to the public with *Dido en Aeneus*, and in 2008 with *Wintervögelchen*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* (Hillaert).

3.4. 'Decortian' characteristics

What exactly is the essence of a *Decortian* performance? The previous part has briefly discussed the theatre maker's four periods. They all have their own specificities or focus, but certain characteristics remain the same, only varying in the degree of intensity and extremism.

Erwin Jans (1999: 5) provides a good description of Decorte's evolution when it comes to choosing texts:

The traditional dramatic text cannot provide answers anymore. Plot, dramatic conflict, recognizable characters, psychological developments, causality. Fragmentation, language consciousness, the blending of different registers and genres, fractured plot lines, construed series of images, leaps in time and space – all are the expression of a complex, unsystematic experiencing of reality. Theatre makers are searching for 'new, at least other' relationships between words and things, between fiction and reality, actor and character, text and performance.

Decorte's first three stagings were symptomatic of a new approach to classical repertoire at the beginning of the '80s, when his often hypercorrect translations were already revealing his sensitivity to the materiality and plasticity of language. The plays he wrote in the latter half of the '80s are full of far-from-innocent language games, balancing between absurd comedy, harrowing fairytale and comic strip. In his adaptations of *little classics*, merely the tragic core is retained, extreme cruelty collides with poetry in an exalted lyrical expression that has its roots an image-drenched, sonorous Flemish idiom.

Nowadays, Decorte writes his own texts, inspired on classic plays. His approach is drastic: he reduces, prunes and rearranges the story radically till he is only left with the essence. Sentences are very short, the dialogues quick. (Fonds flamand des Lettres: 1; Six 1995: 608; Six 2001: 294). In Decorte's choice of texts, the oppositions character-actor, lie-truth and power-impotence are always present (Decreus 1996: 824).

Acting-wise and contrary to his meticulous staging in the beginning of his career, Decorte nowadays favours a spontaneous and simple way of acting (Fonds flamand des Lettres: 1). He wants to depsychologize his characters: the actors consciously create a distance between the character and his/her emotional content. There is no question of a creation according to the traditional codes and conventions that entails identification, emotions or empathy. The characters are preferably replaced by the actors themselves. They act in an aberrant way and speak with a secure, cool and consciously chosen diction (Decreus 1996: 820; 823; Van den Dries 2001: 290).

Decorte's language is simple, also called infantile, influenced by Flemish dialects. He uses child-like rhymes, word plays, diminutives, sound games, a phonetic orthography without punctuation and tomfoolery dialogues. He calls this simplification the poetic essence of a play (Fonds-flamand des Lettres: 1; Six 1995: 607; Rummens 2001: 244). Decorte

emasculates the heroism of the original text by stripping the text of its literary discourse. His language creates an atmosphere that comes close to that of a puppet show. His tactic to place the characters in front of the public and to confront them with the spectators is also reminiscent of this puppet show effect. This feeling is strengthened by the flat characters – no psychological depth nor implicit or explicit motivations for their actions – who look like they have stepped out of a comic book (Six 2001: 294; De Boeck 1997: 225).

His very idiosyncratic language also allows Decorte to create a tension between the dark theme of the original play that he is adapting and his own ironic and playful tone. He creates confusion between the serious and the comical aspects of his source texts (Six 1995: 607; De Boeck 1997: 225). According to De Boeck (1997: 234), this confusion is fundamental in Decorte's work. However, it creates a perverse effect because the dark themes and characters are not part of the conventional child world to which his language refers (Six 1995: 607; De Boeck 1997: 225). Hence the references to his work as "perverse fairy tales" (de Boeck 1997: 225) and "Decorte's horror puppet show for adults" (Six 1995: 607).

The settings barely have any referential power: the space in which the actors move does not refer to a reality we know, nor does the lighting. The costumes do not place the action in either a historical or recent period of time (Van den Dries 2001: 291).

A last Decortian characteristic is the insertion of meta-theatre elements in his plays. De Boeck considers Decorte's AIDS-trilogy – *Het Stuk-stuk*, *In Ondertussendoor* and *Naar Vulvania* – as a grotesque parody on theatre as a medium. Decorte plays with the theatrical codes, conventions and stereotypes to criticize in a hyperbolic way the factitious nature of theatre and its hypocritical use of illusion (De Boeck 1997: 221, 228). In this trilogy, Decorte may have pushed the critique to its extreme, but this theatrical meta-level recurs in many plays. He brings the normal mechanisms of the classical play to the surface, he expresses them in words (De Boeck 1997: 229). Rummens places Decorte in the post-dramatic era. According to him, the use of meta-theatre in performances is a typical mechanism for this era.

Post-dramatic theatre is often a show of self-betrayal. It is a form of illusion that negates itself constantly. The convention is showed as a convention and in this way it is put into question. The drama is deconstructed as a fictional genre.

(Rummens 2001: 241)

3.5. Conclusion

Flanders has created a specific theatre movement which started in the '80s and continues today. It can be called postmodernist or post dramatic theatre that is specifically characterised by the desire to break the theatrical illusion through the setting, the acting style, the interaction with the public and the choice of repertoire. Moreover, this movement has shifted through time towards the centre; certain precursors of this 'Flemish Wave' are now artistic directors of renowned theatre houses. Jan Decorte fits perfectly in this postmodern theatre. He is even seen as one of the main precursors of this movement. Although his theatrical career has known several stages, each characterised by other qualities, the characteristic of meta-theatre and the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion have always been present. It was very important to keep this in mind during the creation of the AD of *Wintervögelchen*, since this play fitted perfectly in what is called Decortian theatre.

4. Chapter 4: AD Project *Wintervögelchen*

4.1. Introduction

Whereas the previous three chapters discussed the theoretical frame of the project (AD guidelines, theatre semiotics and theatre history of Jan Decorte), this chapter considers the practical part. First, the preparation of the project will be described, containing the organisation of the project, the initiation in the world of visually impaired people, AD and theatre, and the exercises that served as preparation for the AD of *Wintervögelchen*. Next follows the project *Wintervögelchen*, containing the description, a semiotic analysis of the play and a commentary of the AD. Finally, the rules of the theatre guidelines (discussed in chapter 1) that have been broken in this AD will be discussed.

4.2. Preparation

Nina Reviere and I did not have yet any experience with audio description at the time and as there were no specific trainings on audio description that we could follow, Aline Remael and Christine Welche have guided and helped us through the preparation of our first AD project. The preparation can be divided into four parts: (1) the organisation of the project, (2) the initiation in the world of visually impaired, (3) the introduction to AD and the world of theatre and (4) the exercises to prepare the test AD.

4.2.1. Organisation of the project

First of all, we needed to find a theatre house in Antwerp that wanted to participate in the project and a performance that was suitable for AD. An important condition was that the theatre house was in conformity with the regulations for accessibility for disabled persons. The international art centre De Singel was therefore at the top of the list and its artistic coordinator Myriam De Clopper turned out to be highly interested in participating in the project.

The choice of play was mainly restricted by timing and by language. De Singel invites national as well as international theatre companies and it was important to have a

Dutch performance. If we combined these two restrictions, Jan Decorte's play *Wintervögelchen* came out as the best option.

After this decision, a meeting was organised with all the participants to discuss the project: Myriam De Clopper of de Singel, Bart Parmentier of Intro Events, Aline Remael, Christine Welche, Nina Reviere and myself. Most important was the organisation and the technical aspect of the project. Regarding the organisation, we decided to perform the AD on 6 February 2009 and places were reserved for 15 persons of whom approximately 10 visually impaired. They would also get a group discount. Bart Parmentier would take care of a test audience of visually impaired people and inform them about the project. Nina Reviere and I would perform a practice version to test the AD on 4 February 2009 which would allow us to make adaptations to the script if necessary for the AD on 6 February. With regard to the technical aspect of the project, Christine Welche agreed to lend the headsets and transmitters of ABCD. These headsets are highly practical because they allow the spectator to use only one earphone to listen to the description so that the text of the play can still be heard through the other ear. A second issue was whether or not Nina and I could sit in the auditorium to follow the play live while describing the play. In order to do that, we needed an insulated room – like an interpreting booth – so that the regular audience would not be disturbed by our description. However, De Singel did not have these booths and the price for renting them was expensive. We therefore chose the second option, i.e. the connection of the stage to an adjacent room through a camera. This way, Nina and I would be able to follow the performance from a screen. De Singel was able to provide all the material which was necessary to establish this link. A second meeting was organised on the day of the try-out in order to check the technical side of the AD: microphones, the connection between the auditorium and the room from which Nina and I were going to describe.

For the evaluation of the AD after the play, Myriam De Klopper reserved a room in De Singel. Then, the question remained whether or not the visually impaired people could enter the auditorium 30min. in advance to listen to the introduction. For this we had to contact the theatre company, vzw Bloet, which agreed.

Before preparing the audio description, Nina and I decided to see the play twice and to record it on video if possible. Luckily, the premiere of *Wintervögelchen* was in Brussels in the Kaaistudio's¹⁷ on 17 December 2008, which gave us enough time to prepare the audio description in Antwerp in February. The first time we went to see the play at the opening night, we met Jan Decorte who agreed to participate in the project and allowed us to film the play. The second time (18 December 2008) we filmed the play and we based our description on this version.

¹⁷ O.L.V. van Vaakstraat 81, 1000 Brussel

4.2.2. Initiation in the world of the visually impaired

Every training programme for audio describers attributes attention to the understanding of the world of the visually impaired. It is important to know who your audience is and to make decisions regarding what needs description. We studied the world of the visually impaired in five ways:

4.2.2.1. *Interactive introduction/exhibition*

This exhibition was organised by the *Blindenzorg Licht en Liefde* in Hasselt and was focused on introducing people who can see into the world of visually impaired. The exhibition comprised a dark room in which the visitors had to make their way through several obstacles that visually impaired encounter daily, without seeing anything. In addition to this, more info was given regarding the different sorts of blindness, guide dogs and technological tools that allow visually impaired to read, surf on the internet, etc.

4.2.2.2. *Informative documentation*

A very extensive information pack is provided by *Blindenzorg Licht en Liefde*¹⁸, which contains also several useful addresses of organisations for visually impaired in Flanders.

4.2.2.3. *Museum tour with AD*

The KMSKA¹⁹ in Antwerp organizes tours for the visually impaired. We participated in a tour focusing on the description of abstract paintings. A guide described the paintings with the help of duplicates in relief. She described amongst others the height, the width and the composition. She also gave details about the painter and placed the paintings in context. The visually impaired were also asked about their feelings regarding the paintings. Nina and I both tried to 'understand' a painting with covered eyes.

4.2.2.4. *Theatre play with covered eyes*

To watch a performance (with and without AD) with covered eyes is a very useful exercise because you feel where description is needed and what is clear just from hearing the actors. We assisted at a French play by the playwright de Musset in the Collège Saint-Michel in Brussels, audio described by Christine Welche and Marie-Claire Daloze of ABCD. For the

¹⁸ zoc@blindenzorglichtenliefde.be

¹⁹ Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen (Royal Museum for Fine Arts Antwerp: my translation)

discussion of what is often missed in plays when they are not audio described and for the advantages of the provision of AD, I refer to Looten (2008: 10).

4.2.2.5. *Sartorial training*

ABCD organized a training day for the description of costumes from the 16th to the 19th century. The specific terms and vocabulary were provided as well as the specific sartorial characteristics of these different centuries. The training was given by Anne-Marie Hobin.

4.2.3. Introduction to AD and the world of theatre

The introduction to AD was done through literature concerning AD reflected in the bibliography and certain exercises described above. For theatre, this was done through literature concerning theatre semiotics.

4.2.4. Exercises

Two exercises were completed before starting to write *Wintervögelchen's* AD: a description of two scenes of *Traum* from a recording, which is a creation of theatre company Wolff, and an introduction for *Oraal*, that was seen in theatre house De Monty in Antwerp on 19 December 2008, which is a creation of tg Cactusbloem. *Oraal* can be found in appendix 4 and *Traum* in appendix 5.

4.3. Wintervögelchen

4.3.1. Description

The introduction to and description of *Wintervögelchen* can be found in appendix 6. They are also recorded on the DVD included in the thesis. The appendix also contains the draft version. This version was adapted after the practice version on 4 February 2009, mainly because the visual humour was lost due to an AD which was too objective. This will be further explained in the AD commentary that follows the semiotic analysis of *Wintervögelchen*.

4.3.2. Semiological analysis

4.3.2.1. Introduction

The semiotic analysis of *Wintervögelchen* will be based on the theory outlined in chapter 2. There are two main fields of analysis, namely context circles and sign systems. Of the context circles, only the corpus and the text will be discussed. The *typus*, being the whole array of conventions that are typical for a certain style period (in this case: Decortian theatre), is described in chapter 3 but the description of the climate and landscape would bring us too far from the subject. I therefore refer to Van den Dries (2001: 129-157) for a discussion of these two contextual circles. The sign systems will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. The DVD with a recording of *Wintervögelchen* and its AD attached to this thesis can be used to follow the analysis.

4.3.2.2. Context circles

corpus

The corpus in semiotics discusses the past history of the companies that cooperate in the theatre production. In this case, these are Jan Decorte/Bloet vzw, Comp. Marius and Kaaitheater Brussels.

Jan Decorte's work has been discussed in chapter 3, here we will only discuss his specific contribution to *Wintervögelchen*. In the announcements of the play, Jan Decorte's theatrical style is specifically emphasized by the media. The production is repeatedly represented as 'the new Jan Decorte' (Bellon: 10). He has written the text, directed the play, he participates in the acting, the setting, the costumes and the lights. He and Sigrid Vinks operate under the name Bloet vzw, the company responsible for the production.

Comp. Marius are Waas Gramser and Kris Van Trier. Both actors have been working together since 1991. In 1999 they adopted the name Comp. Marius after an important turn in their artistic career. For the first time, they had left the theatre auditorium and played outside in daylight. Since that moment Comp. Marius has specialized in playing in the open air and on location²⁰. They are co-producers of *Wintervögelchen* together with Kaaitheater in Brussels.

²⁰ programme *Wintervögelchen* of De Singel art centre in Antwerp (see appendix 8)

The art centre Kaaithheater was founded in 1977. Originally an international festival, it developed into a centre with a permanent theatre season in 1987. It stages theatre, dance and concerts and is particularly interested in innovating work. It creates its own productions and participates in many co-productions with artists and companies from Belgium and abroad²¹.

Text

The pre-text is the texts or texts on which the performance is explicitly based. In the case of *Wintervögelchen*, Decorte has rewritten Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*²². Shakespeare is the author that Decorte has used the most as a basis for his own plays. In this case, it is a rather awkward choice because, generally, *A Winter's Tale* is not considered to be one of Shakespeare's best plays: it is unfinished and a mix between a psychological drama and a happy comedy. Courteaux²³ describes it as a play with sudden style ruptures and in which every act there is a change of characters. In short, it is full of mistakes with regard to the conventions of a classical play, even a Shakespeare classic (Hillaert: 52; Hermans²⁴). But this is exactly what appeals to Decorte. He likes the rough and unfinished character of the play because he feels most comfortable when the wholeness of the text is broken into fragments²⁵. Another writer that is mentioned in the press file is Friedrich Hölderlin, a German poet from the 18th-19th century²⁶. His influence is recognizable in the many references to the German language in the play.

The performance text is the actual text written by Decorte. He describes it as a "a playful performance about power, jealousy, despair, love and a little bird". In these themes, we recognize the usual Decortian tension between comedy, lightness, tragedy and dark themes²⁷. In this work he proceeded as follows: he read Shakespeare's version once in English and in four hundred minutes he wrote his own version, based on what he remembered from the original one. After that, he did not change the text anymore. This is also how it was staged and played, typing errors included (Hillaert: 52). The text is not segmented into scenes or acts, it is a continuous text without stage directions. Only the characters are indicated to show who is saying what. This text bears the same characteristics as those discussed in chapter 3. It is written phonetically, without any punctuation or capitals, the sentences are broken off at strange moments and there are no

²¹ <http://www.kaaithheater.be/page.jsp?id=253&menu=3&submenu=3>

²² programme *Wintervögelchen* of de Singel and Kaaithheater.

²³ In the programme of *Wintervögelchen* of Kaaithheater (see appendix 7)

²⁴ <http://www.goddeau.com/content/view/5444>

²⁵ programme *Wintervögelchen* of Kaaithheater, an excerpt from an interview with S. de Jonge in *Humo*, 16/12/2008 and Hillaert

²⁶ <http://vooruit.be/nl/page/1140>

²⁷ http://www.desingel.be/ProductionDetailView.orb?pr_id=8400 (consulted 08/04/2009)

page indications. An example (from the beginning of the play) reads as follows, the translation gives an impression of what it could look like in English:

de zinger.	the singer.
es gab einmal ein vögelchen twidelidu twidelidei	es gab einmal ein vögelchen twidelidu twidelidei
nen edele.	a nobel.
et ware broers zegkik de koninge ze ware so dich talsdage kunt zijn addet ni misgestaan voor manne zadde mekaar gekust ennal da verstaat ge	it were brothers I sey the king sthey were so closas possiblyou canbe ifnot bee ing wrong for men they had kisst eechother anall that you understand
nog nen edele.	enother nobel.
et ware gee broers den ene was de konink van sicilië en den andere van boheme wetge wa datta licht boheme over de zee zover zebbe da bere en ander beeste die wier ni ebbe of toch	eet were no brothers the wan was the king of sicily end the other of Bohemia youknow whear it lies Bohemia over the sea sofar theyhav bares end other beests that we dont hef hir or do wi

misschienst in de berrege	perhapst inthe mountens
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In the text, two parts can be distinguished: on the one hand the singer who summarizes the plot, comments and links the ‘scenes’ to each other and on the other hand the characters who ‘play’ the story. An example:

antigonus.	antigonus.
(...)	(...)
hellup	hellp
ik wor	I am
opgegete	bein eeten
door nen	bya
beer	bear
(...)	(...)
hellup	hellp
kwor	I am
opgegete	bein eeten
antigonus	exit
af	antigonus
tis te	‘tis too
belachelijk	ridiculous
de zinger den tijt.	the singer the time.
tis te	‘tis too
belachelijk	ridiculous
zeiëm	he said
en ij ee	and e is
gelyck	rite

4.3.2.3. *Sign system analysis*

Space/setting

The performance we have audio described played in the red hall in de Singel in Antwerp. Normally, this auditorium can welcome up to 800 spectators²⁸, but since Decorte always plays for a limited audience (up to 200 spectators), the play was performed on the stage itself that was demarcated with black curtains²⁹. In this way, the big scene served both as stage and stand for the audience and the size of the auditorium was considerably reduced. It

²⁸ <http://www.desingel.be/building-redhall.orb>

²⁹ The DVD is recorded in the Kaaistudio’s in Brussels. Therefore, this description differs slightly from what is seen on the DVD.

created a more intimate atmosphere. Since the stand was installed on the stage, the public looked down on the scene.

In the middle of the scene there was a light-wooden construction consisting out of a floor of 5mx5m with three walls of 2m high, on the left, behind and on the right. In the walls on the left and on the right was an opening of 1m large through which the actors entered and left through a small step. The floor of this construction slanted down to the front which created a depth perspective. Left and right of the wooden space, we saw the actors' attributes on the ground and five chairs facing each other: three on the left of the stage and two on the right. There was a glass of water next to each chair. In front of the public, nine antlers were lying on the ground. Left, at the front of the stage, about three meters from and in front of the wooden construction, was a lectern. Left and right of the wooden space were several light bulbs which ran all the way to the back of the stage. The actors sat on the chairs from the moment the public came in and were thus part of the setting.

The setting was rather symmetrically constructed with a few elements that break through this symmetry: at first sight, the wooden construction looked 'normal', but the optical perception was not created in an accurate and perfect way. It was unbalanced and not mathematically correct. This created the main asymmetry in the setting. The place of the wooden construction was central and therefore focalizing. It attracted the spectator's eye and would thus be central in the performance. This setting did not indicate any period or time. The chairs were 'unreal', i.e. they were not typical chairs that one finds in a home. They were made out of the same wood as that of the central space and were especially created for this play. The lectern was very plain and sober as well. The wood was darker than the chairs', but no special meaning could be deduced from this.

With regards to the icon-index and denotative-connotative dialectic – see chapter 2 for the theory – the setting is mainly indexical denotative: it refers to the fairy-tale or imaginative world in which the story takes place, the lecturer refers to the story-teller.

Objects

The objects next to the wooden construction were the only objects used in this performance. Left was a golden paper crown, a long grey beard, two wooden nameplates with an iron string and a doll. On the right was another golden paper crown, two brown beards that are shorter than the grey one, two wooden nameplates with an iron string, a wooden step and a red cloth. The objects on the left belonged to the actors on the left and vice versa. All these objects announced disguise and masquerade.

The iconic character of the objects is denotative: they refer to a beard, a crown etc. which we know from real life. The indexical character is denotative: the crown indicates a

king or a queen (status), the name boards indicate the characters, the beard indicates the sexual identity or the age (long grey beard in contrast with short brown beards). There is also an indexical connotative character to the objects: the objects were made out of cardboard in a child-like way, very basic and stereotyping. This indicated the unrealistic meaning of the objects. Here, a tension occurs between the iconic and the indexical function: the iconic one is denotative and created a 'real effect', but the indexical one indicates that the objects are not those we know from 'real life'. There is an incongruity between the signifier and the signified.

Lighting

There were two kinds of lighting that followed the structure of the play. The play alternated between Jan Decorte as a narrator and the other actors who played the story in the wooden construction. These scene changes were indicated by changes in lighting. When Decorte spoke from behind the lectern, a spot illuminated the front of the stage and the light bulbs right and left from the wooden space burned. In this way, the scene was lit up with a cold and clear light and the wooden construction was put in the shade (e.g.: scene 1). When the actors played the story, these lights went out and a softer, more yellow spot lit the wooden construction (e.g.: scene 2). This spot changed throughout the performance and that was when the story took place in Bohemia instead of in Sicily (scenes 16, 18, 19, 20, 21). Then, the lighting was stained and created the atmosphere of a wood. When the action took place in Sicily again, the stains disappeared.

The function of the light is mainly indexical denotative: it refers to the narrative structure of the play. First there is the distinction in light for the narrator and for the wooden box, the second distinction is the one between Sicily and Bohemia.

Sounds

Most histrionic sounds were the result of scene changes, actors that moved places, the light changes, etc. However, an important difference was heard between the actors moving on the main scene or those moving in the wooden construction. To enter this construction, they had to go up a small step (e.g.: scene 14, time code 34:26). It showed their entering into another, fictional world: the dramatic world discussed in chapter 2. This dramatic world is made explicit in the setting and it could be heard in the histrionic sounds. Also the sounds of the actors who put on the objects discussed above, announced this change into a different world. Out of the wooden box, they were actors, inside it, they were characters.

Another histrionic sound is Decorte who read from a script on the lectern. He put his glasses on and off before and after the reading and the spectators heard the sound of the pages turning. In this way, the spectators were reminded very explicitly of the narrative, “this-is-not-reality”-character of the performance. As it was stated in chapter 3, the introduction of a narrator was used in the postmodern theatre to discourage identification with characters. A last sound was the one coming from the costumes (which will be discussed later on). They were made of a cloth that made noise from the moment that the actors moved. It strengthened the mechanical aspect of the acting (which will be discussed later on) because of the constant background noise.

The histrionic sounds are indexical denotative: they indicate the change from the real world into the dramatic world. For example, when the actors put name boards around their necks, this indicated the change from actor into character.

physiognomy

The most striking characteristic on the physiognomic level was that Sigrid Vinks, Waas Gramser and Kris van Trier played female as well as male roles. These sex changes were indicated with the help of the wooden name-boards they put on (on which their names are written: *konink S, Hermione, Perdita; Camillo, Paulina* and *konink B, Hermione*) and certain objects (a false beard, a paper crown). Here, theatrical role and the sexual identity of the actor were disconnected from each other. Consequently, the theatrical character of the acting was foregrounded.

Iconically, the actors do not have a denotative function as they change sexual identity. Indexically, they are denotative, because, for instance, a woman with a beard means a man (*konink S*). However, this trick is also indexical connotative, because a woman with a false beard remains a woman with a false beard. It has an alienating effect.

Costumes

All the actors wore the same costumes: blue trousers and a blue straight jacket with a collar and a series of buttons in the front. They were made from a stiff shining cloth that rustled when the actors moved. No one wore shoes. From scene 18 until 22, all the actors, except for Jan Decorte, took off their jacket. The men were stripped to the waist and the women wore a simple black bra. Their costumes never referred to any period, they were abstract and lifted the story out of anecdotal representation. No additional make-up or hairstyles were used. The costumes determined neither a character nor a period or a sex distinction. They were uniform and indexical connotative as they did not refer to anything.

Gestures

When the actors sat on their chair, the gestures were reduced to a minimum. They moved their feet, gave each other a look, drank from their glass of water, put their hands under their legs, etc. These gestures were performed as them being actors, not characters. When they moved within this scenic part – the area outside the wooden box – the actors were part of the audience's world. They were Waas Gramser, Herwig Ilegems, Kris Van Trier, Sigrid Vinks and Jan Decorte. Only Decorte never left this area of the scene. He sat on the chair, or he stood behind the lectern reading from the script. He never stopped being Jan Decorte.

The other actors, on the contrary, became a character from the moment they entered the wooden box. Then, their gestures changed: they became woodenly, deviant, they moved as if they were puppets and someone pulled the strings. They faced the public most of the time and, together with their playing in the wooden box, this strengthened the audience's feeling of watching a puppet show. Jan Decorte narrated the story and the actors brought the story alive in a show-box.

There was only one moment when everyone – Decorte included – performed at the same time in the same space. This was during the dance in scene 18 when everyone grabbed one or two pairs of antlers and danced in a mechanical, caricatural and exaggerated way in front of the wooden box. Their gestures enforced the alienation effect that was already present with the costumes and the change of sexual identity.

The gestures can be indexical denotative, for example in scene 2 where konink S angrily entered with clenched fists. The gesture referred to his mood and to certain events that would follow. They can also be iconic connotative, in that they reminded of a puppet theatre.

Facial expressions

Just like the gestures, the facial expressions were caricaturizing and exaggerated. For example, in scene 5, Konink S entered the wooden box in an angry mood. This is shown in two ways: he said explicitly *grom grom grom* (“*growl growl growl*”) with clenched fists and on top of that, he frowned. The caricatural image of how one behaves when being angry is shown twice: in words and in the facial expressions.

Just like the gestures, the facial expressions are indexical denotative because they referred to events in the story, they are iconic denotative in the way that the mimics reminded of the exaggerated mimics sometimes used in comics.

Proxemics

The actors never had physical contact with each other. They were very static: most of the time they played in the middle of the wooden box, face to the public or to each other. There were a few exceptions. For example, in scene 16 (time code: 40:25), Antigonus was attacked by a bear and he rolled out of the wooden box on to the scene in front of the audience. There he got up and commented on his own situation before leaving the stage via the wooden box: *antigonus af 't is te belachelijk* ("Exit antigonus it's too ridiculous"). Wauter Hillaert wrote in the newspaper *De Morgen*³⁰ that the actors did not so much play dialogues as they played a series of monologues. Although they replied to one another, the answers were often quite long and they did not talk directly to each other since they faced the public most of the time. This lack of interaction between characters and the constant acknowledging of the public broke the conventional communication pattern.

Another means used to involve the public were the actors' meaningful looks. Both during the monologues and the dialogues, they talked to the audience. Consequently, their reactions to what was said and to what they said themselves were directed to the audience. In this way, a direct communication between actor and the spectators was established. The audience was no 'privileged secret onlooker' anymore like in conventional plays, there was no fourth wall behind which the audience is safe. The proxemics are therefore mainly indexical connotative.

Verbal means

The verbal means used in this performance will not be discussed in greater detail because this is the part that is accessible to the AD audience.

Paraverbal means

The text was written in a phonetic orthography with a Flemish slant and this was audible in the pronunciation of the actors. Their diction was affected, they spoke more slowly than in a normal conversation and they put different intonations in their voices, but with the same caricatural and naïve touch that the characters and the language have. This, however, could be heard by the AD audience. What is more difficult in this performance is that Sigrid Vinks, who plays the king of Sicily, his wife Hermione and their daughter Perdita, changed her voice according to the character she represents. The question is therefore to what extent this was confusing for the audience. The AD of *Wintervögelchen* mentioned the name of the character in order that the audience knew who was speaking. This was particularly important, we

³⁰ 08/01/2009

thought, at the end of the play when all the actors were together on stage and played different characters. However, during the discussion with the visually impaired persons after the performance, most of them said they could recognize by then the voices and consequently the characters.

The paraverbal means are indexical denotative and indexical connotative since it is Decorte's own idiom that is used.

Music

There were two moments during the performance when music was played: at the opening of the play and in the middle, during the spring festival (scene 18). The music at the beginning was a German song from the group Gustav³¹. The song is about someone who wanted to change so many things. To be able to do that, he/she conformed with the image that people have of demonstrators; signing petitions, discussing, rebelling in silence, etc. However, after a few years, nothing had changed. So he/she decides to do things his/her way and to leave the path of conformity and to choose the path of the outcast.

If we look at Decorte's career, this song could be interpreted as symbolizing his own choices. He has always been the exception, even up to the level of being rejected by the critics and the audience. But he has continued to make his own theatre.

The second song in *Wintervögelchen* was a techno song to which all the actors danced, stripped to the waist, with a pair of antlers. Their dance was wild and mechanical at the same time. The movements matched the music, somehow atypical for a spring festival, which was what the actors were supposedly acting out. The music rendered the whole atmosphere of the scene more abstract.

Whereas the first song may be a metaphor for the whole of Decorte's philosophy around theatre, the second song is indexical denotative because the music connects with the party.

³¹ "Ich bekenne mich schuldig, die Welt tut mir weh/Drum zieh ich die Schlüsse wenn ich Schlüssel seh/Wenn Innen wie Aussen so blind sind wie wir/Dann hilft nur das Warten, das Trinken von Bier/Ja auch ich unterschreibe nun die Petition/Ich bin für mehr Logik, für mehr Konzentration/Rebelliere im Stillen, diskutiere banal/Wenn man vieles verliert, ist dir vieles egal/Ich habe beschlossen, ich gehe konform/Ich stelle mich richtig, und entspreche der Norm/Ich wollte viel ändern, und die Jahre sie vergeh'n/Und ich hab nichts bewirkt, und es blieb alles steh'n/Drum zieh ich die Schlüsse, wenn ich Schlüssel seh/Ich wähl den Weg des Geringsten, denn der andre tut so weh/So weh so weh/Drum singet ihr Vögel (Tschiep Tschiep Tschiarip)/Drum singet ihr Vögel, denn ich sing jetzt mit (Tschiep Tschiep Tschiarip)" Source: <http://www.lyricsmania.com/>

4.3.2.4. Conclusion

All the characteristics of Decorte's theatre discussed in chapter 3 can be found in this performance. The use of meta-theatre is expressly present in the setting. The wooden box in the middle of the scene materially represents the dramatic world. The actors only become a character from the moment they enter that box. This is noticeable by the change in their speech, movements, gestures and interaction. When they are outside the box, they remain themselves, the actors. The public also witnesses the change from actor to character, when they put on the name board, beard or crown that indicates their character. Only Decorte's role is dubious: he never enters the wooden box although he participates in the story as a narrator and commentator. In this way, the illusion of theatre is completely torn down. Most theatrical devices are shown openly to the audience. However, this performance is not an innocent comedy whose only aim is to entertain. The puppet show that Decorte stages is in direct tension with certain themes, characters and events in the play.

With regard to the icon-index typology, we see that the signs are mainly indexical denotative and connotative. As a consequence, the performance indicates its demonstrative nature and the audience is not encouraged to identify with the reality shown since it does not represent a recognizable reality. The denotative nature mostly refers to the change from the real world into the dramatic and theatrical world. The connotative nature of the signs stress their own materiality and factitiousness.

4.3.3. AD Commentary³²

4.3.3.1. Introduction

The introduction of *Wintervögelchen* was read twice because it contained a lot of information and was therefore quite long. The first version contained (a) a welcome paragraph and information about the audio describers, (b) a description of the auditorium, (c) information about Jan Decorte and characteristics of his plays, (d) information about the play *Wintervögelchen*, (e) a description of the setting and lighting, (f) an introduction of the actors, costumes and changes in characters, (g) a listing of the characters and their objects, (h) specific characteristics of this performance, (i) a casting and credits, (j) a description of the first scene of the performance, and (k) a closing paragraph. The second time the introduction was read, the information about *Wintervögelchen* and the actors was left out. Certain parts of the introduction will be discussed in more detail because they are of importance for this performance.

³² All the texts to which this section refers can be found in appendix 5.

The information about Decorte and the characteristics of his plays was inserted because it was important to acquaint the audience with Decorte's style – since it is an unconventional one – and since we did not know what the theatre experience of the AD audience was. As the Decortian characteristics of his plays were present in *Wintervögelchen*, this information was important in order to establish the atmosphere in which the performance would take place.

The description of the setting was done in a less common way. Normally, first the general frame and then the details are described. Here, we had two different places which represented two different realities in the play and it seemed that using the box in the centre as a reference point would be the best option to describe the rest of the scene. There was also the relationship between Decorte who functioned as the story teller – but who did not participate directly in the story – and the other actors who played the story that had to be explained. This relationship and the meaning of the box were made explicit in the introduction which also described the change in lighting that indicated the switch between Decorte and the other actors in the wooden box: “ In this way, a sort of “show-box” was created, with Jan Decorte as the story teller and the other actors bringing to life the story in their wooden show-box”.

When the actors were introduced, the costumes were described as well because everyone wore the same clothes. The fact that actors played different roles, that women played men and vice versa was also mentioned. It was important for the visually impaired to know this in advance, otherwise it could be confusing during the play. The description of the characters was done in relation to the objects that they use. This paragraph informed the audience that the creation of characters was not done in a conventional way, but that they could be recognized by a name board, a fake crown and/or beard. The factitious character of the crown and beard was mentioned because it was part of the creation of the meta-theatrical character of the performance. The regular spectator was confronted with these child-like objects every time they are used. Therefore, this characteristic was made explicit in the introduction.

For the same reason, we introduced a paragraph on the specific visual characteristics of this performance: the addressing of the audience, the special gestures and the exaggerated and grotesque facial expressions of the actors. The image that was used was the one of the actors looking like puppets on strings. During the play, these characteristics were repeated to remind the audience of them. For example:

Final version of AD:

AD title 46: “Ze herhalen steeds dezelfde mechanische bewegingen”³³

AD title 67: “Ze dansen als marionetten met overdreven gebaren (gelach): ze huppelen van het ene op het andere been, en zwaaien wild met de armen in de lucht, (opengesperde ogen, mechanische glimlach)”³⁴

AD title 87: “Ze dansen met houderige, groteske bewegingen (gelach), ze zwaaien met de armen en springen van het ene been op het andere. Slaan op hun hoofd, wiebelen met hun poep, zwiepen met hun baard, zwaaien met hun handjes, billengeklets..... (schoppen met hun benen,...)”³⁵

4.3.3.2. *Description*

With regard to the description, there were four main issues that came up during the preparation and they will be discussed here in more detail: repetitive actions, visual humour, the issue of meta-theatre (theatre-within-theatre) or the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion and the issue of interpretation.

Repetitive actions

Due to the structure of the performance which alternated between Jan Decorte as a story teller and the other actors who brought the story alive in the wooden box, several actions were repeated in the course of the performance. For example: light changes, the transformation of actors into characters with the help of the name boards and other objects, Jan Decorte who puts on his glasses, turns around a page, reads aloud and puts off his glasses again. These actions needed to be described to the audience. However, it was impossible and unnecessary to sustain it during the whole performance: it absorbed too much time that could be used for other, more meaningful, descriptions and it was uninteresting after a while. Therefore, we described in detail these actions at the beginning a few times, but after a while, we only mentioned, for instance “Jan Decorte”. By then, the audience could identify the sounds of the page that turns, the glasses case that clicked, etc. The image was established.

³³ My translation: They constantly repeat the same mechanic movements

³⁴ My translation: They dance like marionettes with exaggerated movements (laughter): they hop from one leg on the other and wave their arms wildly in the air, (their eyes wide open, mechanic smile)

³⁵ My translation: They dance with stiff, grotesque movements (laughter), they wave with their arms and jump from one leg to the other, hit their head with their hand, wobble their bum, sling their beard, wave with their hands, thigh smacking.... (leg kicking,...)

With regard to the actions that showed the change from actor to character, they were also described in detail at the beginning and left out afterwards. However, when there was enough time, we repeated these actions in some places during the performance because they are an important part of the deconstruction of theatrical illusion, which will be discussed later on. The sides from where the actors entered and left the box were mentioned in the beginning as well, but since they always entered and left from the same side as the one where they were sitting on the stage, we left them out after a while, assuming that the audience would hear from which side people would enter the box.

During the try-out, we noticed that the actors had changed certain parts, gestures, facial expressions and that they did not do the same movements every night. We therefore have drawn up an improvisation list (appendix 6) in which we had formulated descriptions for each scene that could occur. In this way, we could react on the spot and “improvise” when necessary.

Visual humour

Decorte described his performance as "een vrolijke voorstelling over macht, jaloezie, wanhoop, liefde en een vogeltje"³⁶(website de Singel). The cheerfulness is conveyed on the level of text (with Decorte's idiom), the paralinguistic level (the specific pronunciation and intonation) and on the visual level. We will specifically concentrate on this last level since this is of importance for the AD.

The visual humour lies in the gestures and in the facial expressions of the actors. Their characteristics have been discussed in the previous chapters. Here, the changes made in the draft version will serve as examples to illustrate how we have tried to render the humour in the AD. The draft version was performed during the practice version. During the practice version, we noticed that the theatre experience created by the AD was more sterile and less ‘juicy’ than the one that regular spectators received. Hence the necessity to insert more vivid descriptions. We also noticed that the performance had changed compared to the first two presentations (on which the video we used for our AD was based). So adjustments needed to be made.

A first adjustment was the introduction of more descriptions regarding facial expressions, gestures and moods. Because of their exaggerated and caricatural nature, we needed to describe them more expressively. In order to create the time in the AD to do that,

³⁶ My translation: “A cheerful performance about power, jealousy, despair, love and a little bird”
http://www.desingel.be/reactions.orb?PR_ID=8400&mode=all

we removed other descriptions. So we took out more objective descriptions, especially with regard to proxemics, that did not add extra value to the AD. Some examples:

Draft version ³⁷	Final version
AD 7: Konink B. gaat links af. Camillo blijft.	AD 8: Konink S gaat kordaat af. Camillo kijkt verontwaardigd naar het publiek
AD 9: Hermione drukt zich tegen de achterwand, en zwaait traag met haar armen. Jan Decorte	AD 11: Jan Decorte loopt naar de lessenaar. Hermione neemt een elegante pose aan, als een balletdanseres, en luistert naar wat hij zegt.
AD 12: Hermione komt los van de muur.	AD 13: Hermione kijkt bedrukt.
AD 14: Hermione af links.	AD 15: Hermione gaat ontredderd af (links).
AD 15: Hermione links op, Paulina rechts op.	AD 16: Paulina rechts op, Hermione komt al lopend/in paniek op.
AD 18: Konink B komt van links op en kijkt naar het publiek.	AD 20: Konink S komt stampvoetend binnen en kijkt nors (naar het publiek).
AD 19: Konink B zet een stap naar achter.	AD 21: Hij fronst (zijn wenkbrauwen)
AD 23: Spots houten ruimte: twee edelen.	AD 26: Spots houten ruimte: twee edelen. Ze trekken bezorgde grimassen en kijken naar Sigrid met grote ogen (op het podium).
/	AD 27: met grote ogen naar het publiek AD 28: Zijn ogen worden groter / bedenkt plotseling iets (tot het publiek) AD 29: Nadrukkelijk en met een uitgestreken gezicht
AD 24: Edelen af	AD 30: De edelen knikken met hun hoofd, aarzelen even en gaan dan af
AD 25: Konink B komt op. Hij haalt zijn schouders op en laat zijn armen hangen.	AD 31: Konink S komt op en kijkt beteuterd (naar het publiek)
AD 27: Konink B gaat links af.	AD 33: Konink S gaat verslagen af.
AD 28: Kris staat recht en neemt een baby-pop mee. Hij komt op als Antigonus. Hij houdt de baby vast aan haar linkerarmpje.	AD 34: Kris staat recht en pakt een baby-pop met een kaartje aan haar enkel. Hij komt op als Antigonus, met voorzichtige stappen. Hij houdt de baby hulpeloos vast aan haar linkerarmpje.
AD 29: Antigonus kijkt rond.	AD 36: Antigonus speurt de omgeving af. Rechts, links, afwachtend, opgetrokken wenkbrauwen, bijna wanhopig
AD 36: Iedereen neemt een gewei vooraan op het podium. Ze dansen ermee als wilden op muziek. Iedereen, (behalve Jan Decorte) is in bloot bovenlijf en de vrouwen in zwarte beha. Ze herhalen steeds dezelfde mechanische bewegingen.	AD 46: Iedereen neemt een gewei vooraan op het podium. Ze dansen ermee als wilden op muziek. Iedereen, (behalve Jan Decorte) is in bloot bovenlijf en de vrouwen in zwarte beha. Ze herhalen steeds dezelfde mechanische bewegingen.
AD 37: Een man komt op langs rechts, in bloot bovenlijf.	AD 46: Autolycus komt enthousiast op in bloot bovenlijf.
AD 41: Perdita en Florizel komen al dansend op. Ze draaien een tijdje in het rond en houden elkaars hand vast. Perdita wiegt met haar heupen en Florizel danst wat onhandig.	AD 49: Perdita en Florizel komen op en dansen verleidelijk: schalkse blikken, heupwiegen, rond elkaar draaien, kronkelen van plezier. Florizel danst op kromme benen en kijkt scheel. Ze kijken ondeugend. Hun

³⁷ In the draft version, Konink S and Koning B were confused. The final version is the correct one.

	ogen fonkelen (van plezier/verliefdheid)
/	AD 50: Florizel is het noorden kwijt.
AD 42: Ze laten elkaar los.	AD 51: Florizel loenst.
AD 45: Perdita danst weer.	AD 56: Florizel heeft weke benen.
/	AD 57: Billengeklets.
AD 47: Perdita en Florizel af links.	AD 60: Perdita en Florizel huppelen af.
AD 48: Camillo laat zijn armen hangen.	AD 64: Camillo haalt gelaten zijn schouders op.
AD 51: Konink B en Florizel komen op langs links, Konink S. langs rechts. Ze dansen als poppen met overdreven gebaren (gelach): ze huppelen van het ene op het andere been, met de armen in de lucht.	AD 67: Ze komen op. Ze dansen als marionetten met overdreven gebaren (gelach): ze huppelen van het ene op het andere been, en zwaaien wild met de armen in de lucht, (opengesperde ogen, mechanische glimlach)
AD 71: Ze dansen met houderige, overdreven bewegingen (gelach), ze zwaaien met de armen en springen van het ene been op het andere.	AD 87: Ze dansen met houderige, groteske bewegingen (gelach), ze zwaaien met de armen en springen van het ene been op het andere. Slaan op hun hoofd, wiebelen met hun poep, zwiepen met hun baard, zwaaien met hun handjes, billengeklets..... (schoppen met hun benen,...)

Meta-theatre

Many of Decorte's performances are characterized by the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion (see chapter 3) and *Wintervögelchen* follows this tradition. The mechanics of theatre was apparent especially on the level of setting and on the level of characters. The setting was established in such a way that it showed the world of the actors and the world of the characters at the same time whereas in more traditional theatre, the world of the actors is hidden in the side wings or just not shown. When the audience then see the actors, they actually see the character and forget about the real person behind it. In *Wintervögelchen*, this device is made even more explicit by the open change of the actor in the character. The audience assisted every time at the transformation when they saw the actors putting on their name boards and other objects. The audience saw a play within a play, a setting within a setting. Moreover, when the audience saw the characters in the box, it was always reminded of the fact that they were no real characters. The name boards were necessary to know which character was playing, the fake beards fell off, characters changed sex and character and their voice changed according to this transformation. The role of Decorte was ambiguous as well: his character in the story was the story-teller – another device used to stress the fictitious story-side of the performance – but at the same time, the people in the audience knew and saw him as Jan Decorte. He did not become a character, he stayed himself, the actor.

This deconstruction of the theatrical illusion had important consequences for the AD. If the regular spectator is confronted to such a large extent with the use of meta-theatre, how

will this be made clear in the AD? It is important to try and recreate a similar theatre experience for visually impaired people as the one of regular spectators. But at the same time, almost all the AD guidelines stress that the theatrical illusion cannot be broken. We see, then, that these two rules are at odds with each other. In *Wintervögelchen*, the theatrical illusion could not be maintained because it was in the first place never established. We therefore took the decision to designate the actors with their real name when they were not playing. From the moment they entered the box, they were indicated with their character's name. In this way, we have tried to convey the existence of the two different worlds apparent on the stage. Some examples:

Final version	
AD 7	Beide mannen gaan af en gaan terug op hun stoel zitten. Links: Sigrid staat recht en verkleedt zich als Konink S met de baard, de kroon en het naamplaatje. Rechts: Waas doet de baard en het naamplaatje van Camillo aan. Camillo komt in de deuropening staan. De konink komt op en staat vastberaden voor het publiek.
AD 16	Camillo af rechts. Dezelfde acteur verkleedt zich als Paulina. Paulina rechts op, Hermione komt al lopend/in paniek op.
AD 20	Jan Decorte gaat weer zitten. Sigrid verkleedt zich in Konink S en Waas in Paulina. Houten ruimte. Paulina komt op. Konink S komt stampvoetend binnen en kijkt nors (naar het publiek).
AD 25	Paulina af, het hoofd gebogen. Konink S draait zich om en stapt kordaat af. Beide acteurs leggen hun attributen weer op de grond en gaan zitten. Licht op het podium. Jan Decorte.
AD 26	Jan Decorte gaat zitten. Kris en Herwig staan op. Spots houten ruimte: twee edelen. Ze trekken bezorgde grimassen en kijken naar Sigrid met grote ogen (op het podium).
AD 31	Sigrid verkleedt zich als Konink S. Konink S komt op en kijkt beteuterd (naar het publiek)
AD 34	Houten ruimte: vlekkelig licht, als in een bos. Kris staat recht en pakt een baby-pop met een kaartje aan haar enkel. Hij komt op als Antigonus, met voorzichtige stappen. Hij houdt de baby hulpeloos vast aan haar linkerarmpje. De baby bungelt boven de grond.
AD 49	De acteurs verkleeden zich als: Perdita, Florizel, Konink B en Camillo. Konink B en Camillo zijn verkleed als vrouwen en verstoppen zich in een hoek om het koppel te bespieden.
AD 64+65	Camillo haalt gelaten zijn schouders op. Camillo af. Konink B volgt. Waas en Herwig leggen hun attributen neer en gaan zitten. Licht podium. Jan Decorte

AD 66	De acteurs staan op en trekken hun jasjes weer aan die op de stoelen hangen. Ze verkleden zich als Konink S, Perdita, Florizel en Konink B. Spots op de houten ruimte
AD 73	Waas verkleedt zich in Paulina en Kris in Hermione. Spots op de houten ruimte. Hermione komt op met een kroontje in haar hand. Paulina komt op van rechts met een rood doek en een driehoekig houten blok. Ze zet het blok rechtsachter in de hoek. Hermione staat voor het blok en houdt de deuropeningen in de gaten. (Ze kijkt uit naar de rest). Paulina verstoppt Hermione onder het rode doek en helpt haar op het houten blok. Konink B en Konink S op. Kijken met open mond naar het publiek. Konink S.

Interpretation

The last issue to be discussed is the issue of interpretation. When we consider the examples that illustrate the way we have tried to insert visual humour in the AD, it is clear that many objective descriptions have made way for less objective or even subjective descriptions. Every guideline discussed stresses the need for objective audio descriptions using objective language. However, as Pujol (forthcoming: 5) stresses, interpretation is the essential basis of audio description and cannot be avoided. From the moment the audio describer has to decide what is necessary to describe and what can be described within the time constraints, he/she is interpreting. This is also an important reason why an audio description is always made in a group (consisting of at least two describers). This should allow the description to be as objective as possible. Remael (2007: 36) goes into more detail and questions the need – and possibility – for total objectivity. When, for instance, the mood of a character is very important for the story and clear from the context, is it then not important to describe this? It is information that people can see, so does the visually impaired person have to be deprived of it? Is the attempt to reproduce the regular spectator's experience not more important than just the objective description of what is seen? Does one describe what one sees or does one describe what one needs to be 'seen' in order to understand the production?

The question is then how much one can interpret and whether there are 'levels' of interpretation. In my opinion, theatre semiotics could help in this issue. When one considers the typologies of signs, i.e. icon, index and symbols, discussed in chapter 2, these represent four levels of interpretation. The first and the most pronounced one is the symbol, the second is the connotative icon, the third is the denotative index and the fourth is the connotative index. The level of the symbol can immediately be eliminated from AD because it implies a personal interpretation of the play as a whole. To show the difference between connotative icon, a denotative index and a connotative index, we can look at the following example: a man on stage wears a crown. This crown indicates a crown on a denotative iconic level. On a

denotative indexical level, it indicates a king and on a connotative iconic level, it could indicate (according to the context) abuse of power. The connotative indexical level would stress the object of a crown, for example the factitious nature of it if it does not imitate reality (e.g.: *Wintervögelchen*).

It is clear that in linking a crown to power abuse on the connotative iconic level, the interpretation goes much further than the interpretation one makes when linking a crown to the status of a king (indexical denotative). With regard to the connotative indexical level, in the description of *Wintervögelchen*, the paper crown's factitiousness is mentioned in the introduction, but not in the description itself. A possible hypothesis regarding interpretation is that the connotative iconic and connotative indexical levels of a sign should not be mentioned in an AD because they are too interpretative. The connotative indexical level though should be mentioned in the introduction if it is part of a deconstructive vision of theatre. The denotative iconic and indexical levels can be described as such.

4.3.4. Breaking the rules?

When the different guidelines (see chapter 1) are considered, one could say that the description of *Wintervögelchen* has not respected two important rules: the rule of maintaining the theatrical illusion and the rule of objective descriptions. However, the semiotic analysis of the play and the contextualization of it in Decorte's previous work can justify the decisions that were taken in the AD under discussion. With regard to interpretation, there is need for more research in order to know what is exactly meant by 'objective'. I have put forward a hypothesis on the basis of the semiotic concepts of icon, index, connotations and denotations that could help to make certain decisions. Next to it, maybe AD should not only describe what can be seen, but also, and more important, what needs to be seen in order to understand the performance. The question, then, is how you know what needs to be seen. An analysis of the source text, like in this thesis, can help to answer this question to a certain extent or at least help to justify decisions, even if they go into the guidelines.

The theatrical illusion could, in my opinion, not been maintained in the AD since it did not exist in the performance in the first place. The use of meta-theatre in Flanders is, as indicated in chapter 3, relatively widespread. This is because some precursors of the "Flemish Wave" that took place in the '80s and '90s, and who used techniques such as meta-theatre to discourage the audience to identify with the characters, are now part of the Flemish (and Dutch) theatre centre or internationally renowned. As a consequence, the techniques they originally used in the margin of the theatre have now shifted towards the centre. This does not mean that all performances bear the characteristics that can be seen

as typical for postmodern theatre, but it means that they are not necessarily the exception either. It is used in *Wintervögelchen* into an extreme level, but there are other plays and movies that apply certain characteristics of meta-theatre (or meta-film)³⁸. Therefore, I believe it is important that the guidelines take into account the use of meta-theatre and thus the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion.

Vercauteren (2007) proposes a subdivision of the guidelines into a section dealing with general characteristics and a section dealing with different genres and categories of programmes. Meta-theatre could be included as a genre. It should not be in the general guidelines because Flanders may be used to the use of meta-theatre, this is not the case in all European countries. Most performances still require the theatrical illusion in order to enjoy it. Therefore the general guidelines can state that the theatrical illusion cannot be broken, but exceptions for meta-theatre can be formulated in the specific genre-section.

4.4. Conclusion

Wintervögelchen is a typical Decortian performance. It contains almost all the characteristics like the Decortian idiom (child-like language), the puppet-like movements of the actors and the meta-theatrical elements. The semiotic analysis of the play has shown that most sign systems were denotative or connotative indexical. This implies that the visual aspects of the performance either refer to actions in the play or to what is said, or stresses its own materiality and is auto-reflexive. Because most signs are not chiefly iconic, there is no recognition because they do not imitate reality. The semiotic analysis indicates the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion in *Wintervögelchen*. If this result is linked with Decorte's previous works, we see that it is of major importance that the visually impaired people will be conscious of this characteristic. The AD has therefore broken the rule of maintaining the theatrical illusion.

Another rule that has partly been broken is the use of objective descriptions. Much of the performance's humour was visual. In order to try and give the visually impaired a similar theatre experience than the one regular spectators have, more objective descriptions (mostly with regard to proxemics) have made way for more meaningful and 'juicy' descriptions that, in our eyes, rendered the specific humour of the play in a better way. The question here is: how far can one go in interpreting for AD? I have tried to answer that question with the use of the icon-index and denotation-connotation dialectic. As well the denotative icons as indexes can be stated in the AD, but the connotative icons and indexes are too much a personal interpretation. However, if the play is mainly indexically connotative (like in this case), the

³⁸ With regard to meta-film, the example of *Kiss kiss, bang bang* (directed by Shane Black) can be quoted.

factitiousness of the objects can or even needs to be mentioned in the introduction. The symbolic meaning of the play is also too interpretative to mention in the AD.

With regard to the guidelines, the history of Flemish theatre after WWII shows that meta-theatre and the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion occurs quite regularly in the theatres next to more conventional plays. Van den Dries calls it part of postmodern theatre, which could imply that more and more countries will use this theatrical device in their search for new ways of theatre. It is therefore highly important that the guidelines foresee a place for meta-theatre, because it has consequences for the AD. Now, the guidelines are mainly based on a more conventional and naturalistic approach of theatre and Flanders is not the only country where this is changing. The issue of meta-theatre could therefore been further developed in the guidelines as a genre with genre-specific characteristics that influences AD.

5. Conclusion

Jan Decorte's theatre performances are unconventional in many ways and in order to make this performance accessible to visually impaired people, in order to provide a theatre experience that is similar to the one of a regular spectator, two important guidelines were broken: the preservation of the theatrical illusion and the avoidance of interpretation.

The theatrical illusion was not maintained because Decorte did not respect it in his performance in the first place. Meta-theatre is a characteristic also typical of his previous performances. Moreover, it is a characteristic that is present in Flemish theatre in general. In the last three decades, Flanders has known a revolutionary theatre movement that pushed itself away from the conventional, more naturalistic theatre forms and experimented with new acting styles, settings and repertoire. This postmodern theatre likes to fragment, to question itself and to show its own theatricality. The 'play-within-a-play' device and the deconstruction of the theatrical illusion is therefore not unknown in the Flemish theatre landscape. Besides, some theatre makers that were at the start of this movement are now renowned or internationally known artists, and as a consequence, the idea of meta-theatre has been introduced to the centre.

This phenomenon is of importance to the AD guidelines for theatre. If one strives for the creation of a European guideline, specific theatre characteristics of each country need to be considered in this specific guideline. Given the fact that Flanders produces theatre where the theatrical illusion is partly or completely pulled down, which has consequences for the AD of it, meta-theatricality needs to be given a place in the guidelines. This could happen by dividing the guidelines into two sections: one for general guidelines (in which the theatrical illusion is maintained) and one which distinguishes different genres. This solution allows to describe in a more specific way what, how and how much can be described and, if necessary, to make exceptions to the rules (as in the case of meta-theatre). However, to know what specific characteristics can be formulated in the subsection of meta-theatre, more research needs to be carried out.

The second guideline that was broken was the one that states that no description in the AD can be interpretative. However, this very concept of objectivity is problematic, since audio describers interpret from the moment they choose what needs description. In *Wintervögelchen*, after having performed the practice version, it was clear that, in order to recreate a similar theatre experience, more objective descriptions, like the description of proxemics, needed to make way for more colourful, and necessarily more interpretative,

descriptions. This was necessary to convey the humour that was to a large extent visual due to the expressive, caricaturizing and puppet-like acting style.

The question, of course, remains how far one can go in his/her interpretation? on the basis of *Wintervögelchen*, I have proposed a possible solution in which gradations of interpretation are shown. This hypothesis is based on the theatre semiotical concepts of symbols, icons and indexes and the concepts of connotation and denotation. The first and most interpretative level is the symbolic one which should be avoided in AD. The second level is the iconic connotation which is equally too interpretative to use in the AD. The indexical denotative and the iconic denotative level can be used in the AD. The indexical connotative level is the level which indicates meta-theatricality. When this typology characterises most of the theatrical signs, specific decisions, as in the case of *Wintervögelchen*, need to be considered.

A last reflection is that an analysis of the source text is indispensable in order to make a fitting AD for the performance. The analysis allows the audio describer to put the performance in context, to understand better certain mechanics at work in the performance and to link the different semiotic systems at work to each other. It helps to make decisions about what, how and how much needs to be described in order to make the performance accessible for visually impaired people. AD is not just a description of what is seen, the whole work needs to be taken in consideration and therefore the description also needs to describe what needs to be seen in order to understand the performance. Therefore, analyzing the source text can only improve the quality of the AD.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: guidelines RNIB

a. Programme notes

- The notes are timed to last no more than ten minutes.
- What needs to be mentioned:
 - Title
 - Author
 - The cast
 - Outline of the play: details of the play are compiled from the theatre's handbill. Avoid opinions of critics.
 - Setting: details of the place, period and time span.
 - Description of the set: set the atmosphere, describe the architecture geographically but simply. Don't use stage language. The position of doors and where they lead to is particularly important.
 - Lighting: Describe the lighting effects. Changes in lighting effects should be mentioned during the action of the play.
 - Characters and costumes: describe only those appearing in the first act (the description of those appearing in the second or third acts will be described during the interval). Describe age, appearance and mannerisms, style and colour of costume. The amount of detail necessary varies in importance according to the production; Give simple, clear description. Do not be precise about every detail.
 - Acts and intervals: give the number of acts and the number and length of intervals.
 - Opening scene: finally describe the scene at the beginning of the play, which characters are on stage and what is happening.
 - The describer should remind the audience of the length of the interval at the end of the first act and say when the commentary will resume. Subsequent scenes in the first act are read during the few moments the curtain is lowered between scenes.

b. Description of the play

- Give a quick indication of who is speaking, except where the voices are easy to recognise.
- Mention exits and entrances that are not obvious, or any other significant details.

- Comic “sight-gags” can be explained a little in advance so that the laughter can be joined when it comes.
- The mood of the moment or sense of tension need to be explained during the silences.
- Time restriction: the commentator will not be able to describe everything, he/she thus must decide which points can be left out and which must be included because of their significance later in the plot or because of what they reveal about a character or a name: the clothes, their positions and movements, eye contact between two people, colours and facial expressions.

c. *General remarks*

- The qualities of the describer:
 - imagination and judgement
 - good sense of timing
 - ability to express oneself fluently and concisely
 - no personal reactions
 - ability to enter into its emotional atmosphere
 - no evaluation or interpretation of the play
 - be faithful like the lens of a camera
 - to have a good knowledge of the play. Therefore, the describer must have seen the performance at least twice before describing.

Appendix 2: guidelines ABCD

(My translation)

a. Introduction

- Start on time so that you do not have to rattle off the introduction
- Word of welcome, AD presentation and the organizing group
- If necessary: a short presentation of the auditorium
- Theme of the play
- Description of the stage, the costumes, lighting
- The cast
- Leading figures
- Warnings or factual announcements (e.g.: explosions, loud music, interval, duration of the performance, long silences in the AD)
- final word: short reminder of the cast (audio describers included) and a closing sentence

b. Narration elements: describe concisely the elements on stage that are important

- The entrances, exits, important movements
- Characters in action (if possible and necessary, the characters' emotions and facial expressions)
- Objects
- Relations
- Changes in setting or lighting
- Sounds that cannot be identified
- Visual clues that give indirect information that is important for the story

c. Content's quality

- Take into account the intelligence and imagination of the visually impaired
- Sense the priority of certain descriptions and the hierarchy of elements that need to be described
- Interventions
 - do not fill in all the pauses with descriptions.

- respect the play's logic. Be aware of what is reality and what is illusion for the spectator
- do not give more information to the visually impaired than that the seeing spectator receives
- do not interpret events
- Reflect the atmosphere
- Find a balance between too much and too little information
- Make decisions regarding anticipating or postponing certain information: most visually impaired people still have a residual vision, so to describe something that they cannot see or to omit something that they can see can entail confusion with the visually impaired.
- Name objects in a precise and exact way
- Be aware of ambivalent signs
- Colours can be significant and need to be described

d. Writing

- Do not break the theatrical illusion
 - describe all the aspects of the performance as if they were real
 - do not use certain expressions that break the illusion (e.g. he leaves the stage)
 - avoid expressions like "we see"
 - avoid technical terminology
- Use a vocabulary which is precise, rich, comprehensible, adapted to the situation
- Use different registers and connotation
- Write in a simple, clear and succinct way
 - use full phrases
 - use phrases that are grammatically simple: the description needs to be understandable from the first time of listening
 - write in the present tense
 - avoid the passive voice
 - use precise adjectives and adverbs that do not reflect a personal interpretation
 - use an active verb instead of a verb with an adverb if possible
 - avoid pronouns (he, she, they) because this can be confusing

- use a definite article if something was mentioned before, otherwise use a indefinite article
- If necessary, refer to other senses
- Find a formulation that evokes the intention of the scene, but without excessive distress: people who can see can turn away their sight when the image is too brute but visually impaired cannot do this from the audiodescription.
- “Disappear”. A good description makes the performance richer and cannot be felt.

e. Voice quality

- Calm, clear and pleasant voice
- Good articulation and diction
- Control with regards to the microphone (“pops”, mouth noise and volume)
- Control the respiration
- Natural voice
- Tone quality
- balance between a neuter and a expressive voice (keep a lively voice)
- Adapt the voice to the rhythm and the mood of the scene.

f. Perfection

- Insight in the scenic development
- Respect the intrinsic rhythm of the performance
- Describe in both a scientific and poetic way
- Evoke the imagination in a succinct way
- Communicate empathy with the auditor
- Do not let your personal opinion of the play interfere with your description

Making culture accessible to everyone prevents exclusion.

Audio description is a description technique intended for people who have difficulty seeing. And since catering for difference often opens up new horizons, it may attract a wider audience.

Brief reminder of the audio description procedure:

Audio description consists in describing the visual elements of a cinematographic work for blind and partially sighted people, to provide them with the essential components required to understand the work (décor, characters, movements, body language). The recorded text is inserted between the dialogue and sound effects and mixed with the original sound track.

Public and programmes concerned:

In France, there are 77,000 blind people and 1.2 million partially sighted (with visual acuity below 3/10 after correction).

Other people concerned by audio description include:

- elderly people whose cognitive capacities are diminishing
- sick people who are sometimes bothered by the rapidity of the moving image
- foreigners who are learning the language
- and for anyone who can see but who wants to listen to a film without looking at it (while driving, for example).

Some people will depend heavily on audio description to understand the film while others will use it as a simple back-up.

Audio description can be used for any type of film, television series or documentary, as the tastes and preferences of the visually impaired are as varied as those of a sighted audience.

The Audio Description Charter

An ethical framework, basic principles:

Audio describers are creative writers in every sense of the term.

They must produce an original text based on a visual medium.

Describing a work means understanding, analysing and deciphering it in order to convey its message and trigger emotion through verbalisation.

The following principles must be followed:

➤ Respect of the work

The work, style of the author and pace of the film must be respected.

The describer not only conveys the information contained in the images, but also their emotional content, their overall effect and their poetry

➤ Objectivity

The description must be given objectively in order not to impose the describer's own feelings but rather to provoke the listener's. The description must be precise and contain four main types of information: the people, the places, the time and the action.

The describer must not interpret the images but describe them. The describer must not distort the information nor interfere with the way the story is told.

Audio description is demanding. It requires precise writing, based on a very fine analysis of the image and sound track.

➤ Respect of the listener

The describer must adapt the description so that it is neither distracting nor tiring for the listener. The visually impaired do not need to know the story line because they can hear the dialogue.

The description must blend in with the film, remain out of the limelight and be the little voice whispering in the listener's ear. The description must turn it into a moment of pleasure!

The Audio Description Charter

Operating method: Description (1/2)

*A description
is the imprint of an era
or a culture.*

*Translating images with words is
not as easy as it sounds.*

The description must contain the four main types of information: the people, the places, the time and the action.

Who

The characters
Their clothing and style
Their body language
Their physical features
Their age
Their expression

Where

Places, scenery, atmosphere, interior decoration, etc., and, more particularly, changes of places.

When

Time frame: past, present, future
The season and time of the day

What

The action taking place, displacements, and any visible but soundless reactions which are often the most important descriptions

Also to be included:

Noise that cannot be identified immediately
Sub-titles, signs, written messages and significant symbols
The front and/or end credits

To be avoided:

Sound effects that can be immediately understood
Audible emotions
Technical cinematographic terms. However the message the director wants to convey must be described
Anticipation of characters' names or features

The Audio Description Charter

Operating method: Description (2/2)

Let the work breathe and act on its own

*The visually impaired live in a world of sighted
people*

When:

- during silences, between dialogues
- exceptional overlapping a dialogue only to provide essential information

Never encroach upon:

- dialogue
- sound effects, when they complete the film or description
- the music when it is significant

It is essential to:

- describe in the present tense
- describe in the third person
- avoid "we can see"
- describe objectively
- use complete sentences as far as possible
- adapt vocabulary to the type of film and respect the language register
- use rich, precise vocabulary, explaining any technical terms used
- only use subjective adjectives when describing an obvious characteristic
- mention colours that can be completed with an adjective
- complete any description once it has begun
- avoid describing an image if it can be understood, particularly if it is not essential to understanding of the film

Working in pairs helps to respect these principles.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Audio Description Charter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">conclusion</p>	<p>For consistent high quality audio description, the following is recommended:</p> <p>Asking the director to proofread the description</p> <p>Incorporating the audio description from the beginning of the post-production phase</p> <p>Regularly organising working groups with visual impairments or, if possible, producing the description in collaboration with a visually impaired person trained in audio description.</p> <p>Audio description involves analysis, research and creative writing which require appropriate professional training if the principles set out in this charter are to be correctly applied.</p>
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Appendix 4: Introduction AD of *Oraal*

This appendix contains the first version of the introduction and the final version, which is written in bold. In this way, the two versions can be compared.

Intro *Oraal*

(De blinden zijn samen met hun begeleiders via de achtergang, de controlekamer en het podium de zaal binnengekomen. Ze hebben al informatie gekregen over de controlekamer en weten dat de rest van het publiek straks op dezelfde wijze de zaal zal binnenkomen. Ze weten dat de acteur aanwezig is terwijl ze over de scène lopen en dat het halfduister is.)

Goeieavond en welkom in de Monty. Zodadelijk zal u de voorstelling bijwonen van het stuk **Oraal**, gebracht door het gezelschap tg Cactusbloem. De audiobeschrijving wordt vanavond verzorgd door Nina Reviers en Kristien Dubois (*te preciseren wie wanneer spreekt*). De voorstelling duurt ongeveer 75 min. Er is geen pauze. (*De rest van het publiek zal straks via het podium de zaal binnenkomen.*)

Goeieavond en welkom in de Monty. Zodadelijk begint de voorstelling van het stuk Oraal, gebracht door het gezelschap tg Cactusbloem. De audiobeschrijving wordt vanavond verzorgd door twee Masterstudenten vertalen aan de Artesis Hogeschool in Antwerpen. Aan de microfoon Nina Reviers en later op de avond Kristien Dubois. Wij zitten achteraan de zaal/in een aparte ruimte en zijn verbonden met de zaal via een camera.

U bevindt zich in een hele grote ruimte: het podium is ongeveer 8m diep en 10m breed en staat 1m hoger dan de zaal. Het plafond is ongeveer 10m hoog en er is plaats voor 150 toeschouwers. De voorstelling duurt 75 minuten en er is geen pauze. Na de voorstelling zal u de zaal verlaten via de deuren achter u.

Tg cactusbloem is ontstaan tijdens de eerste maanden van de bezetting van Irak door de Amerikaanse en Britse troepen. Naar aanleiding van deze situatie rijpte de idee bij theatermaker Hazim Kameledin en andere betrokkenen om met dit materiaal nieuwe ideeën aan te brengen in het hedendaagse Vlaamse culturele landschap, om vooral een artistiek statement te brengen betreffende de oorlog tegen Irak. Sinds enkele jaren focust tg Cactusbloem zich op de inburgering en integratie van nieuwkomers-kunstenaars en artiesten van diverse afkomst die al langer in Vlaanderen verblijven. Zo wil Tg cactusbloem het publiek laten kennismaken met artistieke vormen die buiten het gangbare circuit vallen.

De Irakese theatermaker Hazim Kameledin, en oprichter van tg Cactusbloem, behaalt in 1978 de licentie kunst aan de Academie voor Schone Kunsten in Bagdad. Hij moet Irak verlaten omdat zijn theaterstukken hem in moeilijkheden brengt met het regime van Saddam Hoessein. Hij verblijft in verschillende Europese landen en belandt in België 20 jaar geleden. Hij studeert Nederlands en theaterwetenschappen aan de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven en volgt een opleiding aan de Antwerpse Mime Studio. In 2003 richt hij het collectief tg Cactusbloem op naar aanleiding van de bezetting van Irak door de Amerikaanse en Britse troepen. Hij wilt actualiteitsgebonden theater maken en andere culturen introduceren in het Vlaamse theaterlandschap. Sinds enkele jaren focust tg Cactusbloem zich op de inburgering en integratie van kunstenaars en artiesten van diverse afkomst.

Oraal is gebaseerd op de gelijknamige roman van Hazim Kamaledin en is bewerkt door Hazim Kamaledin, Tony De Maeyer en Marijke de Roeck in een monoloog die wordt gespeeld door Tony De Maeyer.

Oraal is gebaseerd op de gelijknamige roman van Hazim Kamaledin. Het boek is bewerkt tot een monoloog door Hazim Kamaledin, Tony De Maeyer en Marijke de Roeck. De monoloog wordt gespeeld door Tony De Maeyer en Hazim Kamaledin regisseert. Het geluid wordt verzorgd door Diederik van Remoortere en Tom Tiest. Wouter Dupon, Fabien DeLathauwer, Hoessein Kamel en Kobe Wens zijn verantwoordelijk voor de techniek en video.

Het verhaal van **Oraal** gaat over Maytham Al-Boedhabah, een cineast in Bagdad. Hij wordt getroffen door een bomaanslag met honderden anonieme anderen, midden op een marktplein. Langzaamaan ontvouwt er zich een vertelling over een cineast, over een familiegeschiedenis, over een orale cultuur en hoe die cultuur weegt op het dagelijkse leven van de Irakezen nu in 2008.

Oraal gaat over Maytham Al-Boedhabah, een cineast in Bagdad. Hij is het slachtoffer van een bomaanslag op een marktplein, samen met honderden anonieme anderen. Langzaamaan ontvouwt er zich een vertelling over een cineast, zijn familiegeschiedenis, Irak en zijn orale cultuur; over verhalen die van generatie op generatie mondeling worden overgedragen. Al deze verschillende verhalen vertellen één groot verhaal en tonen de invloed van de Iraakse cultuur op het dagelijkse leven van de Irakezen in 2008.

Oraal springt van de hak op de tak. In Maythams verhaal wordt het heden met het verleden vermengd, het gewone met het ongewone. Het is een verhaal dat de verwarring toont van een volk dat aan zijn lot is overgelaten.

Het fragmentarische karakter van het verhaal wordt gereflecteerd in het decor. Midden op de scène hangt er een groot plastic doek (5mx3m) waarop gedurende heel de voorstelling verschillende soorten beelden worden geprojecteerd: mensen die door elkaar wandelen, YouTube filmpjes, een raketlancering, een dansfeest met een grote trom, halfnaakte mensen, oorlogsbeelden, etc. (*Tijdens de voorstelling wordt er drie maal lucht in de plastic geblazen om hem zachtjes op te blazen.*) Links voor het plastic doek hangt er een plasma-televisiescherm waarop er constant een serie van beelden te zien zijn, andere dan die op het plastic doek. Daarnaast worden er links op de muur ook beelden geprojecteerd, vaak close-ups van de acteur. (*Hier ben ik niet meer 100% zeker en ik kan het niet verifiëren op de video*). Op deze manier wordt er een multimediaal landschap gevormd in verschillende lagen, die soms zichtbaar naast elkaar staan en soms elkaar overlappen.

Oraal springt van de hak op de tak. Het verhaal wordt verteld in beeld, woord en geluid. Dit fragmentarische karakter wordt gereflecteerd in het decor. Rechts van de scène, op ongeveer 5m diepte, hangt er op 1m van de grond een groot plastic doek (5m breed x 3m hoog). Hierop wordt gedurende heel de voorstelling beeld- en geluidmontage geprojecteerd: mensen die door elkaar wandelen, YouTube filmpjes, een raketlancering, een dansfeest met een grote trom, halfnaakte mensen, oorlogsbeelden, etc. Links voor het plastic doek hangt er een plasma-televisiescherm (1m x 50cm) waarop ook constant beelden te zien zijn. Tenslotte worden er links op de zijmuur ook beelden geprojecteerd, vaak close-ups van de acteur. Zo wordt er een multimediaal landschap gevormd waarin beeld en geluid met elkaar verbonden zijn.

Te midden van dit decor staat de verteller. Hij draagt hedendaagse kleren, een bruine broek en een grijs T-shirt met lange mouwen. Hij heeft een lampje vastgebonden op zijn hoofd zodat het publiek steeds zijn gezicht kan zien.

Te midden van dit decor staat de verteller. Hij draagt een bruine broek en een grijs T-shirt met lange mouwen. Hij heeft een lampje vastgebonden op zijn hoofd zodat het publiek steeds zijn gezicht kan zien. Bij het binnenkomen van het publiek staat de verteller achter het grote plastic doek. Tijdens het stuk staat hij steeds voor het doek. De scène wordt verlicht door de projecties, het lampje op het hoofd van de verteller en twee spots die van de zijkanten van het podium komen zodat er een streep licht wordt gecreëerd voor het plastic doek. Deze spots veranderen regelmatig van kleur: blauw, rood, oranje, wit en geel

De rest van het publiek zal net als u via de coulissen het halfduistere podium opkomen en zo de zaal bereiken. Het beeld van het publiek dat over de scène loopt vermengt zich met beelden van wandelende mensen die geprojecteerd worden op het doek. Zo wordt het publiek deel van het marktplein in het verhaal waar Maytham Al-Boedhaba het leven laat.

Deze inleiding zal worden herhaald binnen ... min.

Wij wensen u een aangename voorstelling en zien u graag terug na de voorstelling voor uw opmerkingen.

(Bronnen:

<http://www.cactusbloem.be/>

programmaboekje Monty

<http://www.aidanederland.nl/agenda/theater/Hazim%20Kamaledin.html>

Appendix 5: description scene 1 and 2 of *Traum*

(wat wordt vermeld in de inleiding):

Een rechthoekige lege witte ruimte, ongeveer 10m breed en 6m diep. De zijwanden en de achterwand zijn bedekt met witte plasticfolie. Er zijn drie openingen in de wanden: achteraan de linkerwand, in het midden van de achterwand en achteraan de rechterwand. De betekenis van de ruimte is afhankelijk van de scène die erin gespeeld wordt. Verschillende malen in het stuk worden er woorden geprojecteerd op de linkerkant van de achterwand die enkele seconden blijven staan en dan weer verdwijnen. De witte kamer wordt DE RUIMTE genoemd.

(beschrijving)

Scene 1: Introduction		
Time code	Speed	Description
00:00:00 00:01:15		De vloer is bedekt met zwarte, gele en rode slingers in crêpepapier en een discobol met spiegelglas hangt rechts aan het plafond en weerspiegelt het licht in vlekjes op de muren. Rode, gele en donkerblauwe discolichten flitsen afwisselend door de ruimte.
00:01:15 00:01:25		(klokgeluid)
00:01:25 00:01:35	+	Vijf figuren, vier mannen en een vrouw, betreden in het halfduister de ruimte door de middelste opening en vormen een rij vlak voor het publiek. Ze dragen, donkere overalls met twee verticale witte strepen en een gasmasker.
00:01:35 00:01:47	+	Het licht schijnt feller en feller. De man in het midden heeft een bladblazer vast, de vrouw uiterst links een vuilniszak, en de anderen een bezem. Ze strekken hun armen uit en tillen de voorwerpen in de lucht.
00:01:47		Projectie in het blauw: 'TRAUM' De man start de bladblazer
00:01:54		Iedereen ruimt de slingers op.
00:03:07		Alle slingers en de schoenen die eronder lagen zijn opgekuist. De ruimte blijft leeg achter.
Scene 2: the prologue		
00:03:10	++	Een vrouw komt binnen. Ze draagt een camera-statief met camera op haar rechterschouder. Ze heeft gekleurd blond haar, draagt een gouden spannende glittertrui die haar linkerschouder en een deel van haar rug bloot laat, een aansluitende zwarte broek en hoge hakken. Een kleine handtas hangt schuin over haar borst. Ze stopt, knipt met de vingers en projectie
00:03:31	++	HIER. NU. BEDRIJF 1. HET TONEEL SPEELT DE PROLOOG

00:03:35		Gedurende enkele minuten loopt de vrouw heupwiegend en verleidelijk in de ruimte en kijkt het publiek steeds aan.
00:04:35		De vrouw heeft het statief met camera links geplaatst en met een kabel aangesloten. Ze haalt iets uit haar tasje. Het licht gaat uit en achterop de muur wordt haar linkeroog in het groot geprojecteerd. De vrouw brengt mascara aan op haar wimpers, eerst bovenaan, dan onderaan.
00:04:58		(tekst)
00:05:13		De vrouw wisselt van oog.
00:05:16		(tekst)
00:06:23 00:06:27	+	Met een wimperkammetje maakt de vrouw wimpers los die aan elkaar plakken.
00:06:35 00:06:37	+	De vrouw wisselt weer van oog.
00:06:38		(tekst)
00:07:33 00:07:54	+	De projectie toont de mond van de vrouw terwijl ze lippenstift opdoet. Haar witte tanden en haar tong zijn duidelijk zichtbaar terwijl ze spreekt.
00:07:55		(tekst)
00:08:31 00:08:33	++	Projectie linkeroog vrouw.
00:08:47		Het volledige gezicht van de vrouw komt in beeld. Ze strijkt met haar vingers door d'r haar en kijkt recht in de camera.
00:08:58	+	Het wordt donker.

Appendix 6: Wintervögelchen

Introduction

(We have performed the intro twice, a long and a shorter version. The parts between brackets were left out in the shorter version.)

Goeieavond en welkom in de Rode Zaal van de internationale kunstcampus de Singel. Binnen een half uur begint de voorstelling van het stuk *Wintervögelchen* van Jan Decorte en Bloet VZW in samenwerking met het Kaaitheater en Compagnie Marius. Voor de audiobeschrijving zorgen vanavond twee Masterstudenten Vertalen aan het departement Vertalers en Tolken van de Artesis Hogeschool in Antwerpen. Nu aan het woord Kristien Dubois en later Nina Reviers. Wij zitten in een aparte ruimte naast de Rode Zaal en zien het podium via een camera. Deze audiobeschrijving is een initiatief van Intro events, een organisatie die evenementen toegankelijk maakt voor mensen met een handicap.

U bevindt zich in een grote zwarte rechthoekige ruimte van 15m breed en 20m lang. De tribune waarop u zit, biedt plaats aan ongeveer 180 toeschouwers. Ze neemt de helft van de ruimte in beslag. De andere helft wordt gebruikt als podium.

Wintervögelchen is een creatie van Jan Decorte. Hij studeerde voor dramaturg en filmmaker aan het Rits in Brussel. Hij werd bekend als artistiek leider van het toneelgezelschap Het Trojaanse Paard, dat later Bloet vzw werd. Jan Decorte stond in de vroege jaren zeventig al bekend als een zeer eigenzinnige kunstenaar. Hij durfde experimenteren met het klassieke theaterrepertoire zowel op het vlak van taal en scenografie als op het vlak van acteren. De taal die Jan Decorte hanteert in zijn stukken wordt soms omschreven als kinderlijk, als een soort parodie op de taal van de grote tragedies die hij vaak bewerkt. De encenering is over het algemeen sober, soms zelfs kaal. De personages worden uitgebeeld op een karikaturale manier, als stripfiguren. De bewegingen van de acteurs zijn vaak 'houterig' en kunstmatig. Op die manier doorbreekt Jan Decorte de traditionele, realistische theaterconventies. Over zijn werk zei hij ooit zelf: "iets betekent nooit iets en alles betekent altijd alles."

(Met Wintervögelchen keert Jan Decorte terug naar zijn grote voorliefde voor Shakespeare en de poëzie van de Duitse dichter Hölderlin. Het stuk is gebaseerd op Shakespeare's A Winter's Tale. Van deze tragi-komedie maakt Jan Decorte een heel eigenzinnige en lichtvoetige versie. Hij omschrijft Wintervögelchen zelf als: "een vrolijke voorstelling over macht, jaloezie, wanhoop, liefde en een vogeltje".)

Het decor ziet er als volgt uit:

Het podium zelf is 15m breed en 10m diep. In het midden staat een licht-houten constructie die bestaat uit een vloer van 5m op 5m met 3 muren van 2m hoog links, achteraan en rechts. In de rechter- en linkermuur is een opening van 1m breed waardoor de acteurs opkomen en afgaan via een trapje. De vloer van deze ruimte helt af naar voor waardoor een diepte-perspectief gecreëerd wordt. Vlak voor het publiek, liggen 9 geweien op een rij. links en rechts van de houten ruimte liggen de attributen klaar op de grond.

De houten ruimte in het midden van het podium doet dienst als speelruimte. Rechts en links van deze ruimte staan 5 stoelen tegenover elkaar: drie stoelen staan links van het podium en twee stoelen staan rechts. Naast elke stoel staat een glas water. Wanneer de acteurs niet spelen, zitten ze op deze stoelen en luisteren ze naar het verhaal.

Links vooraan op het podium, op een drietal meter voor de houten speelruimte, staat een lessenaar. Daarachter zal Jan Decorte plaatsnemen. Hij is de verteller en leest voor uit het stuk.

Het verhaal wisselt voortdurend tussen Jan Decorte als verteller en de andere acteurs die in de houten constructie het verhaal spelen. De scènewissels worden aangegeven door de belichting: wanneer Jan Decorte voorleest, verlicht een spot de voorkant van het podium waar de lessenaar staat. Rechts en links naast de houten ruimte gaan op hetzelfde moment een rij fel witte gloeilampen branden. Wanneer de andere acteurs in de houten ruimte spelen, gaan alle lichten uit en wordt enkel de speelruimte verlicht.

Op deze manier wordt een soort "kijkdoos" gecreëerd - waarbij Jan Decorte de verteller is en de acteurs in hun houten kijkdoos het verhaal tot leven brengen.

Wintervogelchen wordt gespeeld door 5 acteurs: Jan Decorte, Sigrid Vinks en Kris Van Trier zitten links op de stoelen en Waas Gramser en Herwig Ilegems zitten rechts. Ze dragen allemaal dezelfde vormeloze kleren: een donkere blauw-groene broek en een jasje. Het jasje heeft een rij knopen vooraan en een klein kraagje. De kleren zijn gemaakt uit een glanzende stijve stof die ritselt bij het bewegen. De acteurs zijn blootsvoets.

Niemand heeft een vaste rol: de acteurs spelen meerdere personages en één personages wordt door twee acteurs gespeeld. Soms spelen vrouwen ook mannen en omgekeerd. Een bepaald personage herken je aan zijn of haar attributen en aan een naamplaatje dat de acteurs rond hun nek hangen voor ze de houten speelruimte betreden.

(Er zijn 9 personages

Konink S, de koning van Sicilië. Hij heeft een valse grijze baard en een kartonnen gouden kroon

Hermione, de vrouw van Konink S. Zij draagt een kartonnen gouden kroon.

Konink B, de koning van Bohemen. Hij draagt ook een kroon en een valse korte baard.

Perdita, de dochter van Konink S en Florizel de zoon van konink B.

Enkele dienaars:

Camillo. Hij heeft een korte bruine baard die voortdurend afzakt.

Paulina en haar man Antigonus

Tenslotte zijn er nog:

Autolycus den dief, een inwoner van Bohemen.

Twee inwoners en twee edelen van Sicilië.)

Opmerkelijk aan deze voorstelling is de speciale motoriek en overdreven mimiek waarmee de acteurs hun personage spelen. Als ze zich in de houten ruimte bevinden, bewegen ze op een houterige en statische manier, alsof ze poppen zijn die door touwtjes bestuurd worden. Bovendien richten ze zich vaak tot de toeschouwers en betrekken hen zo bij het verhaal.

Wintervogelchen is geschreven en geregisseerd door Jan Decorte. De volgende personen werkten mee aan de productie:

Voor het spel:

Jan Decorte als verteller

Sigrid Vinks als Konink S, koningin Hermione en hun dochter Perdita

Kris van Trier als: een inwoner van Sicilië, een edelman, Antigonus, en op het einde van het stuk koningin Hermione.

Waas Gramser als: Camillo en Paulina

en Herwig Ilegems als: een inwoner van Sicilië, een edelman, Autolycus den dief en Konink B

Koningin Hermione is dus het enige personage dat door twee verschillende acteurs gespeeld wordt: Sigrid Vinks en Kris van Trier.

Kostuums: Sofie D'hoore

Decor: Johan Daenen
En techniek: Luc Schaltin

Wanneer de rest van het publiek de zaal binnenkomt, zitten de acteurs al klaar op hun stoel. Bij de aanvang van het stuk gaan alle lichten uit en hoort u een hele tijd muziek. Tijdens het spelen van de muziek wordt de voorkant van het podium steeds feller verlicht. De acteurs zitten op hun stoel te wiebelen en kijken naar elkaar. Er heerst een gevoel van verstandhouding tussen hen.

De opvoering duurt een uur en er is geen pauze voorzien.
Deze inleiding zal binnen enkele ogenblikken herhaald worden/

(The short version was ended with the following lines)

Wij wensen u een aangename avond en zien u graag terug na de voorstelling in de foyer voor een drankje en een praatje.

Het wordt donker. Tijdens de muziek wordt het podium steeds feller verlicht. De acteurs, zitten te wiebelen op hun stoel, ze kijken naar elkaar, naar het publiek, ze knikken op het ritme van de muziek, ze glimlachen, bewegen met hun tenen.

Description

Draft version

Indications: the text in bold is the text read by the audio describers. The text in italics are the first and the last sentences of the actors' text. They function as cues.

AD title	Speech indication	AD + first and last sentences of the actors' text
1		Jan Decorte staat recht en loopt naar de lessenaar. Hij neemt zijn bril, die op de lessenaar klaarligt, en zet hem op. Ook de gloeilampen boven het podium gaan aan. Jan Decorte slaat het script open. Hij zet een stap naar achter.
		<i>Es Gab einmaal ein vogelchen, twiedelidoo, twiedelidei.</i>
2	+	Jan Decorte draait een pagina om, zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten. Het licht op het podium gaat uit en de spot op de houten ruimte gaat aan. Twee inwoners van Sicilië komen op, één van links en één van rechts. Ze staan tegenover elkaar.
		<i>Het waren broers zeg kik de koningen.....met vogeltjes die kirren en fluiten, soms z'n het er meer dan duizend</i>
3		De spots op de houten ruimte gaan uit en het licht op het podium aan. Jan Decorte gaat achter de lessenaar staan. Hij zet zijn bril op.
		<i>fwieet fwieet, fuut fuut, so einzaam zang, witsiflou</i>
4		Hij draait de pagina van het script om, zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten. Spots op de houten ruimte.
		<i>'t moet pliezant zijn... de jaloesie is in zijn hart gekropen</i>
5	+++	Beide mannen kijken naar Sigrid, die links op het podium zit.
		<i>Hier komt 'm</i>
6		Beide mannen gaan af, één links, één rechts en gaan terug op hun stoel zitten. Links staat Sigrid recht en doet de baard, de kroon en het naamplaatje van Konink B aan. Rechts doet Waas de baard en het naamplaatje van Camillo aan.
	//	Ze komen op. De konink kijkt naar het publiek.
		<i>Grom grom grom, maakt van mijn hart ne steen.... dan zal ik mij better voelen, ik hem gezegd</i>
7	++	Konink B. gaat links af. Camillo blijft.
		<i>Nu is 'm helemaal zot geworden..... maar eerst boheme spreken</i>
8	++	Links verkleedt Sigrid zich nu als koningin Hermione. En komt op. Camillo wil weggaan, maar ziet Hermione.
		<i>Dag madam de koningin</i>
9	+	Het licht op het podium gaat aan. Hermione drukt zich tegen de achterwand, en zwaait traag met haar armen. Jan Decorte (loopt naar de lessenaar).
		<i>Zo unglücklich bi eine schwalbe bin ich...maar dat zal niet gebeuren omdat kik het zeg</i>
11	+++	Jan Decorte zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten.

		Spots houten ruimte. Hermione is tegen de wand blijven staan.
		<i>Schoon weer vandaag, madam....Ge ziet er nogal uit, wattis er?</i>
12	++	Hermione komt los van de muur.
		<i>In heel Sicilie lopen mannen rond die ik had kunnen krijgen....ongeboren kind in mijnen buik.</i>
13		Hermione loopt naar voor.
		<i>maar hij zegt dat 't gelogen isik ga nu maar salut</i>
14		Hermione af links.
		<i>en ik ga naar de konink....voor dat ik hem verraad en met boheme praat</i>
15	++	Camillo af rechts. Dezelfde acteur verkleedt zich als Paulina.
	//	Hermione links op, Paulina rechts op.
		<i>de konink, mijne meester, is kwaad madam....Mamilius heeft de geest gegeven ...Ik zal goed op u passe. vertrouwt mij maar, kom.</i>
16		Hermione en Paulina af. Ze leggen hun attributen neer en gaan zitten.
17	//	Licht op het podium. Jan Decorte gaat achter de lessenaar staan en zet zijn bril op. Hij trekt zijn broek op.
		<i>Kierewiet...Hier komt 'm</i>
18	++	Jan Decorte gaat weer zitten. Sigrid (links) staat recht en doet de kroon en het naamplaatje van Konink B aan. Waas (rechts) hangt het naamplaatje van Paulina om. Houten ruimte.
	/	Paulina komt van rechts op. Konink B komt van links op en kijkt naar het publiek.
		<i>grom grom grom, diene van Boheme...met mijne vorte kop</i>
19		Konink B zet een stap naar achter.
		<i>.... hij moet het doen</i>
20	++	Paulina nadert hem...
		<i>de koningin is dood majesteit...het stuk krapuul</i>
21	++	Fel tegen Paulina
		<i>en gjj....of ik doe u iets</i>
22		Paulina af langs rechts, het hoofd gebogen. Konink B draait zich om en stapt kordaat af links. Beide acteurs leggen hun attributen weer op de grond en gaan zitten. Licht op het podium. Jan Decorte.
		<i>Hij is weer kwaad met zijn wenkbrouwen.....Ik zijn is curieus wat dat ze te zeggen hebben</i>
23		Jan Decorte gaat zitten. Kris staat links op en Herwig rechts. Spots houten ruimte: twee edelen. ...
		<i>Ik durf het niet te gaan zeggen van het bericht aan de konink... We sulle zien</i>
24		Edelen af.
25		Sigrid verkleedt zich links als Konink B.
	//	Konink B komt op. Hij haalt zijn schouders op en laat zijn armen hangen.
		<i>ik heb het gelezen van Apollo, 'k was mis.... en niet meer grommen</i>
26	++	zijn armen naar de hemel

		<i>ik vraagt vergiffenis aan de god...kzal boete doen</i>
27	+	Konink B gaat links af. Licht podium. Sigrid legt haar attributen neer en gaat zitten. Jan Decorte staat op.
		<i>kwik kwak kwek....of er niemand komt dieje nen kindje wilt</i>
28	++	Houten ruimte: vlekkelig licht, als in een bos. Kris staat recht en neemt een baby-pop mee. Hij komt op als Antigonus. Hij houdt de baby vast aan haar linkerarmpje. De baby bungelt boven de grond.
		<i>Hier stan ik nu met mijn heilig mandje....Het is van hem en van niemand anders</i>
29		Antigonus kijkt rond.
		<i>er komt niemand hier op da strand....de verlorene</i>
30		Antigonus bekijkt de baby
		<i>(jachtgeluid)</i>
31		Antigonus kijkt rechts
		<i>(jachtgeluid)</i>
32		Antigonus kijkt links
		<i>(blaffen)</i>
33		schrikt
		<i>'khoor jagers,....'k zal moete vluchte.... help</i>
34	++	loopt naar links..
		<i>(roept enzo...)</i>
35	++	Hij doet alsof hij wordt opgegeten door een beer. Hij rolt met de baby van de houten vloer op het podium.
		<i>...Antigonus af tis te belachelijk</i>
36		Kris gaat via de houten ruimte af met de pop, legt de pop neer en gaat terug zitten. Licht podium: Jan Decorte
		<i>tis te belachelijk zij 'm... Ich fule mich so seldsam. Datist</i>
37	+++	(meteen na Decorte) De acteurs doen hun jasje uit. De mannen staan in bloot bovenlijf en de vrouwen in zwarte beha. De acteurs en de verteller, Jan, lopen naar de geweien vooraan op het podium en rapen ze op. Gedurende enkele minuten dansen ze uitbundig in het halfduister en zwaaien ze wild met de geweien.
		(muziek)
		Ze leggen de geweien terug en gaan zitten. Ze laten hun jasjes uit. De houten ruimte wordt in vlekken verlicht.
	/	Een man komt op langs rechts, in bloot bovenlijf.
		<i>...Thcikchak tevelaar ...</i>
38	++	Buigt zijn halfkale hoofd en schudt er wild mee.
		<i>op ne kletskep</i>
39		wijst naar het publiek
		<i>staat geen haar</i>
40		De man gaat af langs rechts
41		Links verkleedt Sigrid zich als Perdita en Kris als Florizel. Rechts verkleedt Herwig zich als konink S en Waas als Camillo. Perdita en Florizel komen al dansend op. Ze draaien een tijdje in het rond en houden elkaars hand vast. Perdita wiegt met haar heupen en Florizel danst wat onhandig.

	+	Konink S. en Camillo verstoppen zich elk in een hoek achteraan om het koppel te bespieden. Konink S. draagt ook een bh.
		<i>Gij zijt nu de konink... 'k wordt daar niet goed van</i>
42	++	Ze laten elkaar los.
		<i>da ge zijt op mij</i>
43	++	Perdita stopt met dansen.
		<i>Ik zien u graag petoeterke...en nie flauwvalt in mijn armen</i>
44	+	Florizel zwijmelt.
		<i>Wat moet er met ons gebeuren Florizel....Geef mij liever nog e kuske</i>
45		(kus) Perdita danst weer.
		<i>Ik hem is me Camillo geklapt..... goe van jetje geven als ge wilt</i>
46	+++	Florizel houdt zijn kruis vast (met twee handen) en draait in het rond.
		<i>bwaa tis te gevaarlijk.....we zulle wachte, komt</i>
47	+	Perdita en Florizel af links. Konink S en Camillo komen uit hun schuilplaats.
		<i>Ik heb ze wel gezien die twee... 't is schoon en tis ni schoon... ge kunt daar niks aan doen</i>
48		Camillo laat zijn armen hangen. Camillo af rechts. Konink S volgt.
49		Waas en Herwig leggen hun attributen neer en gaan zitten. Licht podium. Jan Decorte
	//	<i>en zo gingen ze allemaal naar Sicilië...en ze zei</i>
50		De acteurs staan op en trekken hun jasjes weer aan die op de stoelen hangen . Sigrid verkleedt zich als Konink B, Kris als Florizel en Herwig als Konink S.
		Spots op de houten ruimte
51	//	Konink B en Florizel komen op langs links, Konink S. langs rechts. Ze dansen als poppen met overdreven gebaren (gelach): ze huppelen van het ene op het andere been, met de armen in de lucht.
		(meteen) Paulina komt op van rechts en blijft in de deuropening staan.
		<i>meester</i>
52		Ze stoppen met dansen
		<i>ik moet u iet late zien...van haar moeder</i>
53	//	Sigrid draait haar naamplaatje om en wordt Perdita
		<i>oh ja vaderke... ohja papaake</i>
54		Ze draait het plaatje weer om
		<i>Tis goe Paulina... brengt ons naar u huis</i>
55		Konink S
		<i>dat wille kik ook wel zien..... maar ik zou het toch willen zien</i>
56		Iedereen gaat af.
	//	Licht podium. Jan Decorte
		<i>enzo ginge z'op weg....met zijne mond open van verbazing</i>
57		Waas verkleedt zich in Paulina en Kris in Hermione. Spots op de houten ruimte. Hermione komt op van links met een kroontje in haar rechter hand. Paulina komt op van rechts met een rood doek en een driehoekig houten blok. Ze zet het blok rechtsachter

		<p>in de hoek. Hermione staat voor het houten blok met haar armen gespreid.</p> <p>Paulina verstoopt Hermione onder het rode doek en helpt haar op het houten blok.</p> <p>Konink B en Konink S op. Kijken verbaasd naar het publiek. Konink B.</p>
		<i>doet diejen doek weg Paulina.... Ja meester...kijkt en zie..hier ist</i>
58		<p>Paulina neemt het doek weg.</p> <p><i>woetsiflou, het wintervögelchen.....de ijskoninging</i></p>
59		<p>Sigrid draait naamplaatje: Perdita</p> <p><i>is da mijn moeder dan, z'is schoon</i></p>
60		<p>Konink B</p> <p><i>et rare is....toen ze stierf</i></p>
61		<p>Konink S raakt het beeld aan.</p> <p>Perdita zegt</p> <p><i>en ze beweegt... Pas op ze komt van haren troon</i></p>
62		<p>Konink B</p> <p><i>ge hebt gelijk....en ik heb haar ook vertelt van Perdita</i></p>
63		<p>Hermione</p> <p><i>en nu staan ik voor uen nu zien ik mijn dochterke lief</i></p>
64		<p>Sigrid draait haar naamplaatje: Perdita</p> <p><i>...kom in mijn armen</i></p>
65		<p>Ze knuffelen...</p> <p><i>tis just.... nu ist feest</i></p>
66		<p>Konink S danst</p> <p><i>op mijn dochterken en op mijn levende koninging</i></p>
67		<p>Perdita</p> <p><i>joepie...twideloe jocheire</i></p>
68		<p>Konink B</p> <p><i>en gij Paulina...en maakt nog gauw wat kindjes....ja meester</i></p>
69		<p>met een guitige blik</p> <p><i>ik heb het altijd al ne knappe gevonden</i></p>
70		<p>Perdita</p> <p><i>dan is het nu dubbel feest...tis feest</i></p>
71		<p>Ze dansen met houterige, overdreven bewegingen (gelach), ze zwaaien met de armen en springen van het ene been op het andere.</p>
72	/	<p>Het licht gaat uit.</p> <p>(applaus)</p>
73		<p>Het licht gaat weer aan. De acteurs groeten op een rij (.....)</p>
74		<p>(na applaus)</p> <p>Wij danken jullie en zien jullie graag terug in de foyer voor een drankje.</p>

Final version

AD title	Speech indication	AD + first and last sentences of the actors' text	Improvisation
1	//	Jan Decorte staat recht en loopt naar de lessenaar. Hij neemt zijn bril, die op de lessenaar klaarligt, en zet hem op. Ook de gloeilampen boven het podium gaan aan. Jan Decorte slaat het script open.	wrijft met z'n handen fladdert met z'n handen/armen maakt golfbewegingen met z'n handen, zet een stap/been naar achter, buigt zijn hoofd
		<i>Es Gab einmaal ein vogelchen, twiedelido, twiedelidei.</i>	
2	++	Jan Decorte draait een pagina om, zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten. Het licht op het podium gaat uit en de spots op de houten ruimte aan. Twee inwoners van Sicilië komen op, elk van een andere kant. Ze staan tegenover elkaar.	
		<i>Het waren broers zeg kik de koningen.....met vogeltjes die kirren en fluiten, soms z'n het er meer dan duizend</i>	
3		De spots op de houten ruimte gaan uit en het licht op het podium aan. Jan Decorte gaat achter de lessenaar staan. Hij zet zijn bril op.	
		<i>fwieet fwieet, fuut fuut, so einzaam zang, witsiflou</i>	wrijft met z'n handen fladdert met z'n handen/armen maakt golfbewegingen met z'n handen zet een stap/been naar achter, buigt zijn hoofd
4		Hij draait de pagina van het script om, zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten Spots op de houten ruimte	
		<i>'t moet plezant zijn...op een mannemanier, alle nie op die...</i>	
5		suggestief gebaar	
		<i>mannemanier...de jaloesie is in zijn hart gekropen</i>	
6	+++	(Beide mannen) turen naar Sigrid.	
		<i>Hier komt 'm</i>	
7	+	Beide mannen gaan af en gaan terug op hun stoel zitten. Links: Sigrid staat recht en verkleedt zich als Konink S met de baard, de kroon en het	

	//	naamplaatje. Rechts: Waas doet de baard en het naamplaatje van Camillo aan. Camillo komt in de deuropening staan. De konink komt op en staat vastberaden voor het publiek.	
		<i>Grom grom grom, maakt van mijn hart ne steen....dat moet gestraft worden</i> <i>dan zal ik mij better voelen, ik hem gezegd</i>	kijkt nors fronst zijn wenkbrauwen
8	++	Konink S gaat kordaat af. Camillo kijkt verontwaardigd naar het publiek	
		<i>Nu is 'm helemaal zot geworden.....ik kan hem ni veraaien, ze hebben niks gedaan</i>	
9		haalt zijn schouders op, twijfelt	
		<i>maar dans zal onze konink kwaad zijn.....maar eerst boheme spreken</i>	
10	++	Sigrid verkleedt zich nu als koningin Hermione. En komt op. Camillo wil weggaan, maar ziet Hermione.	
		<i>Dag madam de koningin</i>	
11	+	Het licht op het podium gaat aan. Jan Decorte loopt naar de lessenaar. Hermione neemt een elegante pose aan, als een balletdanseres, en luistert naar wat hij zegt.	
		<i>Zo unglücklich bi eine schwalbe bin ich...maar dat zal niet gebeuren omdat kik het zeg</i>	wrijft met z'n handen fladdert met z'n handen/armen maakt golfbewegingen met z'n handen, zet een stap/been naar achter, buigt zijn hoofd
12	+++	Jan Decorte zet zijn bril af en gaat weer zitten. Spots houten ruimte.	
	//	Hermione staat nog altijd in pose.	
		<i>Schoon weer vandaag, madam....Ge ziet er nogal uit, wattis er?</i>	
13	++	Hermione kijkt bedrukt	
		<i>In heel Sicilie lopen mannen rond die ik had kunnen krijgen....ongeboren kind in mijnen buik.</i> <i>maar hij zegt dat 't gelogen is....ik zou d'r de seskes van krijgen, hoort ge't...</i>	teneergeslagen
14		(bezorgd)	
		<i>.....ik ga nu maar salut</i>	
15		Hermione gaat ontredderd af (links).	
		<i>en ik ga naar de konink....voor dat ik hem verraad en met boheme praat</i>	
16	++	Camillo af rechts. Dezelfde acteur verkleedt	

	//	zich als Paulina. Paulina rechts op, Hermione komt al lopend/in paniek op.	
		<i>de konink, mijne meester, is kwaad madam....Mamilius heeft de geest gegeven.....ik breng u naar Mamilius, hij wacht op u</i>	H. trekt grote ogen, schrikt aangeslagen
17		Hermione slaakt een zucht	
		<i>dat arm ventje...Ik zal goed op u passe. vertrouwt mij maar, kom.</i>	
18		Hermione en Paulina af. Ze leggen hun attributen neer en gaan zitten.	
19	//	Licht op het podium. Jan Decorte gaat achter de lessenaar staan en zet zijn bril op. Hij trekt zijn broek op.	zet een stap naar achter wrijft in zijn handen. wrijft met z'n handen fladdert met z'n handen/armen zet een stap/been naar achter, buigt zijn hoofd
		<i>Kierewiet...Hier komt 'm</i>	
20	++ +++	Jan Decorte gaat weer zitten. Sigrid verkleedt zich in Konink S en Waas in Paulina. Houten ruimte. Paulina komt op. Konink S komt stampvoetend binnen en kijkt nors (naar het publiek).	
21		<i>grom grom grom, diene van Boheme... 't is 't kind vannet verraad</i> (tegen het publiek) <i>'k heb twee edele gestuurd...met mijne vorte kop</i> Hij fronst (zijn wenkbrauwen) <i>.... hij moet het doen</i>	
22	++	Paulina aarzelt...	
23		<i>de koningin is dood majesteit</i> (De konink kijkt op/schrikt) <i>z'is in't kraambed gestorref... het is nie van Boheme, zegt hem dat ni waar is</i> (konink twijfelt/herpakt zich) <i>G" had beter haar tong afgesneeën...het stuk krapuul)</i>	De koning schrikt
24	+++	Fel tegen Paulina <i>en gij.....of ik doe u iets</i>	

25		Paulina af, het hoofd gebogen. Konink S draait zich om en stapt kordaat af. Beide acteurs leggen hun attributen weer op de grond en gaan zitten. Licht op het podium. Jan Decorte.	
		<i>Hij is weer kwaad met zijn wenkbrauwen.....Ik zijn is curieus wat dat ze te zeggen hebben</i>	
26	+	Jan Decorte gaat zitten. Kris en Herwig staan op. Spots houten ruimte: twee edelen. Ze trekken bezorgde grimassen en kijken naar Sigrid met grote ogen (op het podium).	
27		<i>Ik durf het niet te gaan zeggen van het bericht aan de konink...</i> met grote ogen naar het publiek	
28		<i>ik ook ni....als 'm het leest</i> Zijn ogen worden groter / bedenkt plotseling iets (tot het publiek)	
29		<i>misschien heeft hij geen berouw</i> <i>We zullen zien.....</i> Nadrukkelijk en met een uitgestreken gezicht	
30		<i>We sulle zien</i> De edelen knikken met hun hoofd, aarzelen even en gaan dan af	
31	//	Sigrid verkleedt zich als Konink S. Konink S komt op en kijkt beteuterd (naar het publiek)	
		<i>ik heb het gelezen van Apollo, 'k was mis.... en niet meer grommen</i>	Hij haalt zijn schouders op
32	++	(zijn armen naar de hemel) <i>ik vraagt vergiffenis aan de god...kzal boete doen</i>	
33	+	Konink S gaat verslagen af. Licht podium. Sigrid legt haar attributen op de grond en gaat zitten. Jan Decorte staat op.	Hij spreidt zijn armen
		<i>kwik kwak kwek....of er niemand komt dieje nen kindje wilt</i>	
34	+	Houten ruimte: vlekkerig licht, als in een bos. Kris staat recht en pakt een baby-pop met een kaartje aan haar enkel. Hij komt op als Antigonus, met voorzichtige stappen. Hij houdt de baby hulpeloos vast aan haar linkerarmpje. De baby bungelt boven de grond.	
35		<i>Hier stan ik nu met mijn heilig mandje...te wachte tot er iemand voorbijkomt die het wilt</i> Kijkt verwachtingsvol naar het publiek	

		<i>'k zal 't hem geve.....Het is van hem en van niemand anders</i>	
36	+	Antigonus speurt de omgeving af. Rechts, links, afwachtend, opgetrokken wenkbrauwen, bijna wanhopig	
		<i>er komt niemand hier op da strand....de verlorene</i>	
37		Antigonus bestudeert de baby <i>het staat haar goed, tis ne schone naam</i>	Antigonus draait de baby ondersteboven
38		<i>(jachtgeluid)</i> Antigonus kijkt op	
39		<i>(blaffen)</i> schrikt	
		<i>'k hoor jagers,....'k zal moete vluchte.... help</i>	
40	++	Hij loopt naar links, deinst terug... <i>(roept enzo...)</i>	
41		(komt naar voor) tegen het publiek (hij gaat terug) <i>Ik wordt aangevallen door nen beer</i>	
42	++	Met de baby rolt hij al vechtend van de houten vloer op het podium en klautert recht <i>...Antigonus af tis te belachelijk</i>	(met een teleurgesteld gezicht)
43		Kris legt de pop neer en gaat terug zitten. Licht podium: Jan Decorte <i>tis te belachelijk zij 'm...da weet ekik nie</i>	
44		(hij kijkt naar het publiek) <i>ofwel 't is nen herder...nen dief bij</i>	
45		Hij wijst naar Herwig (rechts) <i>Autolycus ne schoft... Ich fule mich so seldsam. Datist</i>	
46	+++	(meteen na Decorte) ledereen neemt een gewei vooraan op het podium. Ze dansen ermee als wilden op muziek. ledereen, (behalve Jan Decorte) is in bloot bovenlijf en de vrouwen in zwarte beha. Ze herhalen steeds dezelfde mechanische bewegingen. (muziek) Ze leggen de geweien terug en gaan zitten. Ze laten hun jasjes uit. De houten ruimte is in vlekken verlicht. Autolycus komt enthousiast op in bloot bovenlijf.	
	/	<i>(...Thcikchak tevelaar ...op ne kletskep)</i>	buigt zijn halfkale hoofd en schud er wild mee.
47	++	(verwachtend) naar het publiek <i>staat geen haar</i>	
48		Autolycus gaat af	
49		De acteurs verkleden zich als: Perdita,	

		<p>Florizel, Konink B en Camillo. Konink B en Camillo zijn verkleed als vrouwen en verstoppert zich in een hoek om het koppel te bespieden.</p> <p>Perdita en Florizel komen op en dansen verleidelijk: schalkse blikken, heupwiegen, rond elkaar draaien, kronkelen van plezier. Florizel danst op kromme benen en kijkt scheel. Ze kijken ondeugend. Hun ogen fonkelen (van plezier/verliefdheid)</p>	
		<i>Gij zijt nu de konink...om u te bekore</i>	ze dansen verleidelijk, springen, draaien, Florizel is het noorden kwijt
50		Florizel is het noorden kwijt	
		<i>uw oogskes draaie nogal...'k wordt daar niet goed van</i>	
51		Florizel loent	
		<i>'k zal stoppen als ge't mij zegt....maar eerst moet ge 't zegge, da ge..</i>	
52		(Met een) verwrongen gezicht	Florizel met een verkramppt gezicht
		<i>da ge zijt op mij</i>	
53	++	Perdita lacht ondeugend (als een klein meisje)	
		<i>Ik zien u graag petoeterke...en nie flauwvalt in mijn armen</i>	Florizel draait met zijn ogen, guitige blik
54	+	Florizel zwijmelt.	
55	+++	Het gezicht van Perdita betreft	
		<i>Wat moet er met ons gebeuren Florizel.... als ik ni beter zou weten, ik zou denken dat 'm achter ons staat...bibberaties.....Geef mij liever nog e kuske</i>	
56	+++	(kus) Florizel heeft weke benen	
		Konink B en Camillo Kijken toe vanuit hun schuilplaats	
		<i>Ik hem is me Camillo geklapt.....onder uwen hoed zit nen duitser (!!)</i>	ze lachen Perdita danst, beweegt traag; kijkt ondeugend
57		billengeklets	
		<i>... wat zij die Camillo dan...of roept in de nacht</i>	
58		samenzweerderig	guitig
		<i>maar schatteke...goe van jetje geven als ge wilt</i>	
59		Florizel houdt zijn kruis vast (met een verwrongen gezicht)	
		<i>bwaa tis te gevaarlijk....we zulle wachte, komt</i>	
60	+	Perdita en Florizel huppelen af. Camillo en Konink B komen uit hun schuilplaats.	

		<i>Ik heb ze wel gezien die twee...trouwens ik staan hier in mijnen blote</i>	Konink worstelt met BH
61		knipoog - naar het publiek	
		<i>kijkt goe en spoelt dan uw ogen uit, ouwe zwabber</i>	
62		Konink B kijkt verongelijkt	
		<i>ik was kwaad dat had ze niet mogen zeggen en hoe zag ze d'r uit in haren blote</i>	
63		met fonkelende ogen	
		<i>ni slecht, zis schoon met haar tettekkes... 't is schoon en tis ni schoon... ge kunt daar niks aan doen</i>	
64		Camillo haalt gelaten zijn schouders op. Camillo af. Konink B volgt.	
65		Waas en Herwig leggen hun attributen neer en gaan zitten. Licht podium. Jan Decorte	
	//	<i>en zo gingen ze allemaal naar Sicilië...en ze zei</i>	
66		De acteurs staan op en trekken hun jasjes weer aan die op de stoelen hangen. Ze verkleeden zich als Konink S, Perdita, Florizel en Konink B.	
	+++		
	//	Spots op de houten ruimte	
67		Ze komen op. Ze dansen als marionetten met overdreven gebaren (gelach): ze huppelen van het ene op het andere been, en zwaaien wild met de armen in de lucht, (opengesperde ogen, mechanische glimlach)	
		<i>(meteen) Paulina gaat in de deuropening staan.</i>	
		<i>meester</i>	
68		Ze stoppen met dansen	
		<i>ik moet u iet late zien...van haar moeder</i>	
69	+++	(Sigrid wordt) Perdita	
		<i>oh ja vaderke... ohja papaake</i>	
70		Konink S	
		<i>Tis goe Paulina... brengt ons naar u huis</i>	
71		(Konink B)	
		<i>dat wille kik ook wel zien..... maar ik zou het toch willen zien</i>	
72		Iedereen gaat af.	
	//	Licht podium. Jan Decorte	
		<i>enzo ginge z'op weg.....met zijne mond open van verbazing</i>	
73		Waas verkleedt zich in Paulina en Kris in Hermione. Spots op de houten ruimte. Hermione komt op met een kroontje in haar hand. Paulina komt op van rechts met een rood doek en een driehoekig houten blok. Ze zet het blok	

		rechtsachter in de hoek. Hermione staat voor het blok en houdt de deuropeningen in de gaten. (Ze kijkt uit naar de rest).	
	//	Paulina verstopt Hermione onder het rode doek en helpt haar op het houten blok.	
	++	Konink B en Konink S op. Kijken met open mond naar het publiek. Konink S.	
		<i>doet diejen doek weg Paulina.... Ja meester...kijkt en zie..hier ist</i>	
74	++	Paulina neemt het doek weg.	
		<i>woetsiflou, het wintervögelchen.....de ijskoninging</i>	
75		Perdita	
		<i>is da mijn moeder dan, z'is schoon</i>	
76	+	Konink S	
		<i>et rare is....toen ze stierf</i>	
77	+++	Konink B raakt het beeld aan. (Perdita zegt)	
		<i>en ze beweegt... 't is toverij, 't is een heks</i>	
78		Konink S	
		<i>ge hebt gelijk....en ik heb haar ook vertelt van Perdita</i>	
79		Hermione	
		<i>en nu staan ik voor uen nu zien ik mijn dochterke lief</i>	
80		Sigrid wordt Perdita	
		<i>...kom in mijn armen</i>	
81		Ze knuffelen ostentatief	
		<i>tis just.... nu ist feest</i>	
82		(ze dansen)	
		<i>op mijn dochterken en op mijn levende koninging</i>	
83		Perdita	
		<i>joepie...twideloe jocheire</i>	
84		Konink S	
		<i>en gij Paulina...en maakt nog gauw wat kindjes....ja meester</i>	
85		met een guitige blik	
		<i>ik heb het altijd al ne knappe gevonden</i>	
86		Perdita	
		<i>dan is het nu dubbel feest...tis feest</i>	
87	//	Ze dansen met houterige, groteske bewegingen (gelach), ze zwaaien met de armen en springen van het ene been op het andere. Slaan op hun hoofd, wiebelen met hun poep, zwiepen met hun baard, zwaaien met hun handjes, billengeklets..... (schoppen met hun benen,...)	
88	//	Het licht gaat uit.	
		<i>(applaus)</i>	
89		(LUID) Het licht gaat weer aan. De acteurs groeten op een rij (.....)	
90		<i>(na applaus)</i> Wij zien jullie graag in de foyer	

Improvisation list

Jan Decorte

Wrijft in zijn handen
Fladdert met zijn handen/armen
Maakt golfbewegingen met zijn handen
Zet een stap naar achter
Buigt zijn hoofd
Kijkt op / naar het publiek
Hij trekt zijn broek op
Wijst naar rechts
Wijst naar Herwig
Spreadt zijn armen

Scène 1: Twee inwoners van Sicilië

Scène 2: Konink S. en Camillo

Hij fronst, verbolgen
Hij haalt zijn schouders op
Hij kijkt nors

Scène 3: Hermione en Camillo

Teneergeslagen
Bezorgd
Met een wanhopige blik

Scène 4: Hermione en Paulina

Hermione trekt grote ogen
aangeslagen
Hermione slaakt een zucht

Scène 5: Konink S. en Paulina

Hij fronst zijn wenkbrauwen
Zijn ogen worden spleetjes

Scène 6: Twee edelen

Bezorgde grimassen trekken
Ze kijken verschrikt naar het publiek

Scène 7: Konink S.

Haalt de schouders op
onthutst
verslagen
teneergeslagen
beteuterd

Scène 8: Antigonus

Kijkt vol verwachting naar het publiek
verwachtingsvol
hoopvol
De baby bestuderen
De baby ondersteboven draaien

Scène 9: Dans geweien

Dansen als wilden
mechanisch, werktuiglijk dansen
Steeds dezelfde bewegingen herhalen

Scène 10: Autolycus

Scène 11: Perdita, Florizel, Konink B en Camillo

Florizels ogen draaien
kromme benen
weke benen
Florizel is het noorden kwijt
Florizel zwijmelt
verkramp/verwongen gezicht
ondeugend/guitig/schalks kijken
billenkletsen/billengeklets
verleidelijk dansen, springen, draaien
onstuimig

Scène 12: Konink B. en Camillo

verontwaardigd, geërgerd, verongelijkt
worstelt met BH
met fonkelende ogen/met ondeugende blik

Scène 13: Konink S., Perdita, Florizel, Konink B.

dansen als marionetten
billengeklets
zwaaien met hun poep
wild met de armen in de lucht zwaaien
huppelen
opengesperde/grote ogen
brede/mechanische glimlach

Scène 14: Paulina, Hermione, Konink S., Perdita, Florizel, Konink B.

houterige, groteske bewegingen
armen zwaaien
springen van ene been op andere
slaan op hun hoofd
billengeklets

baarden zwiepen in het rond
zwaaien met de handjes
grote/opengesperde ogen
grote/ mechanische glimlach
wiebelen met hun poep

17, 18, 19 & 20/12/2008 – 20:30 – KAAISTUDIO'S
première | ca. 60 min.

**Jan Decorte / Bloet, Kaaitheater
& Comp. Marius** [Brussel/Antwerpen]

**KAAI
THEATER**

Wintervögelchen

'Ik hou van de manier waarop Shakespeare zijn tekst op een blad smijt. Hij gooit er duidelijk met zijn pet naar. Je moet eens lezen wat Willy Courteaux schrijft in zijn inleiding bij *Wintersprookje*. Dat stuk is zoals de *opera seria's* van Mozart. Dat zijn aria's en muziekstukken die aan elkaar gebreid worden tot een opera. Alle kenners zijn daartegen: zij vinden dat niet *heel* genoeg, niet perfect genoeg. Terwijl, ik vind dat juist de mooiste opera's van Mozart. *Wintersprookje* omschrijft Courteaux om dezelfde reden als een totaal vreemd stuk dat geen eenheid van stijl heeft, per bedrijf van personage wisselt, kortom: vol fouten zit. Maar daar geniet ik van, van de onafheid van alles.' (...) 'Ik wil niks helemaal begrijpen. Ik ben het meest gerust als de dingen uit elkaar vallen. Omdat ik me dan op mijn plaats voel. Dan ben ik bij het brokje wereld waar ik bij hoor te zijn, waar ik me thuis voel. Ik ben ook niet heel, niet af.'

Jan Decorte in gesprek met Stefanie de Jonge, *Huma*, 16 december 2008

tekst & regie: Jan Decorte
met: Jan Decorte, Sigrid Vinks, Waas Gramser, Kris Van Trier, Herwig Ilegems
decor: Jan Decorte, Johan Daenen
kostuums: Jan Decorte, Sofie D'Hoore
licht: Jan Decorte, Luc Schaltin (Kaaltheater)
met dank aan: Danny Willems, Stefan Loeckx, Stijn Vandeputte
productie: Bloet vzw (Brussel)
coproductie: Kaaitheater (Brussel), Comp. Marius (Antwerpen)
met steun van: de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, de Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie

tournee jan-feb 2009:

3 jan. Rotterdamse Schouwburg
9 jan. Warande Turnhout
15 jan. Stadsschouwburg Brugge
21 jan. STUK Leuven
22, 23, 24 jan. Vooruit Gent
29 jan. CC Maasmechelen
4, 5, 6, 7 feb. deSingel Antwerpen
10, 11 feb. Kaaistudio's Brussel

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Internationale Kunstcampus

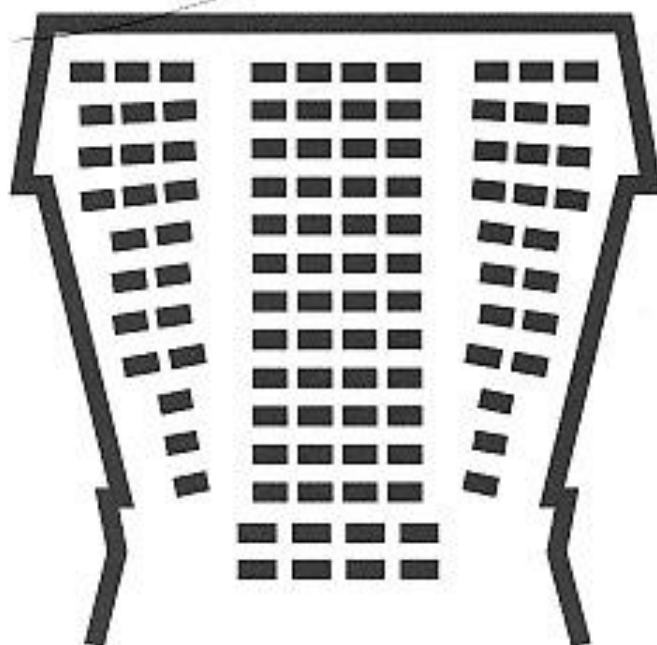
2008-2009

RODE ZAAL

**JAN DECORTE
BLOET VZW & COMP.
MARIUS**

WINTERVÖGELCHEN

WO 4, DO 5, VR 6, ZA 7 FEBRUARI 2009



JAN DECORTE . BLOET VZW & COMP. MARIUS WINTERVÖGELCHEN

tekst, regie **Jan Decorte** met **Jan Decorte, Sigrid Vinks, Waas Gramser, Kris Van Trier, Herwig Ilegems** decor **Jan Decorte, Johan Daenen** kostuums **Jan Decorte, Sofie D'Hoore** licht **Jan Decorte, Luc Schaltin** met dank aan **Danny Willems, Stefan Loeckx, Stijn Vandeputte, Damiaan De Schrijver** coproductie **Kaatheater (Brussel)** met steun van **de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, de Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie**

De voorstelling duurt **ongeveer één uur**.
Redactie programmaboekje **deSingel**

OVER WINTERVÖGELCHEN DOOR WOUTER HILLAERT

Wie Jan Decorte in *Wintervögelchen* weer bezig ziet in zijn simpele Vlaams, vraegt zich af waarvoor Shakespeare ooit zoveel woorden nodig had. Diens 'Winter's Tale' wordt opnieuw wat het altijd al was: een vertelingske over twee stoemelingsse koningen en hun gevolg.

De eerste koning is die van Sicilië, de tweede die van Bohemen, in Sicilië op staatsbezoek. In hun hechte bloedbroederschap komt het klad als de eerste de tweede gaat verdenken van een geheime relatie met zijn vrouw, de trouwe Hermione. Staatsmannen en de liefde: het levert alweer een hoop doden op, en dan nog vooral in eigen gezin. Op een verzoening tussen beide gekroonde hoofden, dankzij het huwelijk van hun kinderen, is het zestien jaar wachten. In diezelfde tijd switcht 'Een Wintersprookje' van een tragedie naar een komische pastorale.

Decorte trekt zich van die genrewissel weinig aan. Hem interesseert vooral het verhaaltje zelf. Aan zijn puplter, met leesbril, speelt hij de verteller, maar de vertelling zelf laat hij aan Sigrid Vinks en de drie kompanen van Compagnie Marius in de houten box achter hem. Zij spelen, met aangeplakte baarden en hoekige gestes, niet zozeer dialogen, maar een reeks monologen vanuit hun personages. Het is hun naïviteit zelf, in de kindertaal van Decorte, die de grove stijlbreuken in Shakespeares origineel weer lijmt tot één poppenkastshow met levende acteurs. "Mijne valse man mèsijne rattenbaart mag stikken insij vel, datterem ontploft, de viezerik, de kluppel."

Uit: De Morgen, 8 januari 2009

INTERVIEW MET JAN DECORTE

DOOR WOUTER HILLAERT

Precies vijf jaar na zijn crisis bij de première van 'O death' is Jan Decorte weer helemaal de oude. "Ik heb voor het eerst weer een stuk in 'kindlijk Vlaams' geschreven. In amper vierhonderd minuten!"

In 'Wintervögelchen' knoopt Decorte opnieuw aan bij zijn aloude voorliefde voor Shakespeare. Met 'A Winter's Tale' koos hij wel niet meteen diens sterkste stuk om te bewerken. "Het valt in stukken uiteen, ja. Maar dat vind ik er net zo goed aan."

Decorte zit er in zijn Brusselse stamcafé Daring Man bij naar dagelijkse gewoonte: statig in zijn lange jas, achter een wijntje en met naast zich steun en toeverlaat Sigrid Vinks. Vrolijk strooit hij opmerkingen rond tegen al wie aan de toog komt plakken. Moet hij dan niet repeteren? "Moete gij niet eerst ne zoen geven?" Vragen staat bij Decorte vrij, maar zijn prijs is een kus.

We betalen prompt en proberen opnieuw. Of er aan 'Wintervögelchen' niet gerepeteerd moet worden, nu hij voor het eerst weer samenwerkt met een hele acteursgroep. Of gaat het met Waas Gramser, Kris Van Trier en Herwig Ilegems van Compagnie Marius (met wie hij ooit 'Bêt noir' en 'Sasja danse' maakte) dan vanzelf?

"Ik kies alleen maar mensen aan wie ik niets hoeft uit te leggen", aldus Decorte. "En zij zijn echt goeie spelers, met een grote intelligentie en veel vertrouwen. Zij begrijpen meteen wat ik in mijn hoofd heb. Want ik haat repeteren. Zo hadden we pas nog een repetitie over de scèneovergangen, oervervelend! Die overgangen kunnen me echt niets schelen. Als er vragen komen, zeg ik dat ook. Dan lossen de problemen zichzelf op."

Zoveel moge duidelijk zijn: Decorte heeft zichzelf weer helemaal teruggevonden na wat hij zelf zijn 'zotte periode' noemt. Die brak eind 2003 aan toen er vlak voor de première van zijn Orestes- bewerking 'O Death' bij het Toneelhuis iets in hem knapte. Omdat er niet langer te repeteren viel, moest de productie afgelast worden. In de psychiatrie schreef Decorte veel en verward, maar vanuit een grote noodzaak.

Het resultaat was de reeks 'Zeldzame werken', waarvan Decorte het stuk in Avignon opvoerde in een habijt. Ook 'Burgeudine' en 'Dieu & les esprits vivants' speelden in een andere taal en met verwarde beelden. "Die stukken zijn de neerslag van mijn leven toen ik zat aan de grond." Pas met de moolle, uitgepuurde opera 'Dido & Aeneas' kregen we twee jaar geleden opnieuw de kunstenaar in plaats van enkel de man te zien.

Brute mix

En vandaag kan zelfs Shakespeare weer. Hij is de auteur in wie Decorte het vaakst zijn spitse pennenmes heeft gezet, om er zijn eigen simpele taal uit los te snijden. Van 'Een wintersprookje' blijft het onbeslist wanneer het juist geschreven is, maar over de kwaliteit ervan zijn de meeste exegeten het wel eens. Het overspeldrama tussen de jaloezige koning Leontes van Sicilië, zijn vrouw Hermione en koning Polyxenes van Bohemen gaat door voor onaf, voor een brute mix tussen psychologisch drama en vrolijke komedie.

Het zal Decorte deren. "Naar de maatstaven van Willy Courteaux is het inderdaad een heel slecht stuk. Maar een 'well made play' is aan mij ook niet besteed. Ik doe liever een 'worst written play', met heel grote stijlbreuken. Fantastisch hoe sprookjesachtig dat stuk is, en hoe wild. Die koning van Sicilië is zo'n zak!"

Hoe hebt u het stuk bewerkt? Waar focust u op?

Jan Decorte: "Zoals altijd heb ik de versie van Shakespeare één keer gelezen in het Engels. Daar begrijp ik dan maar één derde van, maar toch blijkt alles in mijn kop te zitten. "In vierhonderd minuten heb ik dan mijn eigen versie geschreven. En daar komen we niet meer aan. Ik zeg niet dat die tekst perfect is, maar hij is zo uit mij gekomen en dat vind ik oké. Zelfs de tikfouten spelen we erbij."

Maar waar gaat 'Wintervogelchen' dan precies over?

Decorte: "Oei, dat vind ik een moeilijke vraag. Het gaat over alles, het is de wereld gevat in een adem: liefde, haat. Elk goed stuk gaat daarover." Hermione en koning Polyxenes van Bohemen gaat door voor onaf, voor een brute mix tussen psychologisch drama en vrolijke komedie.

Heeft uw 'zotte periode' iets aan uw stijl van vroeger veranderd?

Sigrid Vinks: "Jans schriftuur is nog gebalder geworden, en tegelijk chaotischer."

Decorte: "Ja, dit stuk is vooral wilder, heftiger."

Vinks: "De encensering zit al in de schriftuur van de tekst zelf, door zijn demonstratievere manier van vertellen. Het neigt bijna naar het Japanse notheater. Dit stuk staat dus verder dan de stukken van vijf jaar geleden."

U staat ook weer zelf mee op scène?

Decorte: "Ja, maar wel met mijn tekst in de hand. Ik wil nooit meer tekst

vanbuiten leren. Dat gebruik is het enige wat aan onze theaterkunst nog steeds middeleeuws is."

Waar komt die vreemde titel 'Wintervogelchen' vandaan?

Decorte: "Dat is zomaar. Sigrid zegt mij altijd wanneer we een nieuw subsidiedossier moeten indienen, en dan vraagt ze mij om een titel. Dan flap ik er iets uit. Ik denk veel na, maar als het moet, kan ik mijn gedachten altijd goed comprimeren!"

Uit: De Morgen, 13 december 2008