

# UTOPIA AND PERFORMANCE

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*Book of Abstracts* (in alphabetical order, by first name)

**Anette Therese Pettersen (University of Agder)**

“Lingering with utopian performatives”

My research concerns itself with an affective and performative approach to critical writing. I am, both as a researcher and critic, curious to find ways of lingering with a performance experience, with the affective parts of it, and to analyze how utopian and non-utopian/dystopian or other performatives generate shared experiences which can be processed in writing. Anna Fleig writes that “affect is the dynamic relationship between bodies, including the interweaving of bodily memories, words, and worlds. In writing, affect unfolds between the writer’s body and the written text” (2019, p. 179). The act of watching and performing a performance, in a shared physical space, allows for shared experiences. I am interested in the potential of lingering with this experience in a critical and performative writing practice, and whether this process also can be a sort of re-enactment of the performative utopia or dystopia of the performance. I am currently working on a PhD project where I explore performative writing with youth, and I am interested in whether the assembly of the spectators also can be reassembled or re-staged in a writing process. I will, however, limit this paper to looking at some strategies or tools for lingering with moments of utopian and dystopian (or merely bored) performatives through performative and critical writing in possible utopian communities.

Works cited:

Fleig, A. (2019). “Writing affect” in *Affective Societies*, edited by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve, New York: Routledge, p. 178-186.

Anette Therese Pettersen (b.1979) is a theatre, performance and dance researcher, critic, editor and curator and currently a PhD research fellow at the University of Agder in Norway. She writes reviews for the weekly paper *Morgenbladet* as well as periodicals, and is a part of the performing arts podcast *Scenesamtaler*. Co-founder of projects on criticism, such as *Performing Criticism Globally*, *Solitude&Assembly*, *Writingshop*, *Critics in Conversation* and *Dansekritikerrørsla* (Dance critic movement). The PhD project is an investigation into performative writing with youth and exploring how youth experience professional performing arts within the context of the school system. Her PhD project is funded by the Norwegian Research Council together with Kulturtanken.

**Anneli Saro (University of Tartu)**

## “Building an Ideal Theatre”

Throughout the course of theatre history, many actors and directors have dreamed about their own and presumably an ideal theatre, at least from their individual perspective. And some have achieved establishing such a theatre. Many young theatre makers have followed the same path also in the twenty-first century, preferring working in their own groups with like-minded colleagues instead of joining pre-established institutional theatres. One such an attempt was made by Tiit Ojasoo and Ene-Liis Semper in 2004 when they became the leaders of the Estonian state funded theatre Vanalinnastudio and reorganized it into the Theatre NO99, because they wanted to make ideal theatre and needed an ideal institution for that. In 2018, the group decided to disband the theatre. “[F]or 14 years we have shared the same ideals, and today we apprehend jointly that it is no longer in our might to continue working to the full merit of the ideals we once set ourselves. Theatre NO99 has always been an idealistic endeavour, and when one no longer reaches the due merit of the ideals, then Theatre NO99 is no more” (NO99 homepage). In the paper, I am going to analyse the ideals of the NO99 and how they were realized, which ideals endured and which ones failed. Using this case study as an empirical example, I intend to discuss the general and potential developments of theatre institutions in the twenty-first century and how theatre has become a kind of testing ground of a utopian collectivity.

Anneli Saro is Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Tartu (Estonia). In 2010-2014, she was Lecturer of Estonian Culture at the University of Helsinki. Saro has published articles and books on Estonian theatre history and system, performance theory and audience research. Currently she is working on two projects: comparative analysis of amateur theatre fields in small European countries and poetics of playing. Saro has been a convener of the international working groups Project on European Theatre Systems (2004-2008, 2017-) and Theatrical Event (2011-2017). She has been active as the Editor-in-Chief of Nordic Theatre Studies (2013-2015) and as a member of the executive committee of the International Federation for Theatre Research (2007-2015). She also served the University of Tartu as Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

**Annelis Kuhlmann (Aarhus University)**

“Utopian Space in a Time of Change: Peace, Love and Understanding in a Danish ‘Endgame of Thrones’”

Collapses may provide visions for new situations. The large earthquakes in Sicily at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century were present in the popular imagination of Copenhagen where songs circulated in order to describe, remotely, the disasters of nature by juxtaposing them to an emerging vision of local democracy. If peace was the opposite of war, peace was the ultimate utopia in 1813 when the absolutist kingdom of Denmark was involved in several conflicts with the surrounding world. Wounds from the Napoleonic Wars had hardly healed; fumes from the great Copenhagen Fire of 1801 and the numerous fires in the city resulted in diseases of various sorts, contributing to the bankrupt situation of the country, which was also in conflict with Norway, leading to the ‘endgame of thrones’. This endgame became visible in the first Danish production of *Hamlet*, mounted at the Royal Danish Theatre in 1813. This paper demonstrates the paradox when the Royal Danish Theatre became the leading utopian stage, representing the ‘rotten’ by recycling mythological images of the state of Denmark.

Annelis Kuhlmann is Associate Professor in Dramaturgy since 2001. Her PhD dissertation, with the title *Stanislavski’s Theatre Concepts* (1997), was financed by National Council of Research (SHF). She has a large international network and is a member of several editorial boards, including *Nordic Theatre Studies*, *Il Castello di Elsinore*, *Teatro e Storia* and *Journal of Theatre Anthropology*. She is also director of the research centers Centre for Theatre Laboratory Research (CTLS) and Centre for Historical Performance Practice (CHiPP). Her current research project is titled *Danish Theatre Archives in Times of Digitalization in Research and Teaching*.

**Antoine Hirel (Université de Paris 8)**

*“Hen: Queer Puppet Cabaret, Utopian Perspectives for Sexual Bodies”*

Named after the gender-neutral Swedish pronoun, *Hen* is a queer puppet show, created and performed by the French artist Johanny Bert. In this contemporary cabaret, the body of the puppet, made of wood, foam and fabric, is used as a ‘puzzle’ – in the French understanding of assembling different pieces together in order to create and reveal a form, an image, a meaning. It becomes the material for a new vision of how we conceive and construct the body, as it deconstructs essentialising, binary, heteronormative identities, envisioning greater possibilities and pluralities of bodies. The theatre stage, as Bert himself highlights in an interview on 29 April 2020, “is the place of the fiction, indeed a protected place”, implying the danger that the ‘real world’ can pose for some bodies, especially queer bodies like *Hen*. Through the vision of a nonhuman object in the protected space of a theatre, I argue that Johanny Bert unveils and rethinks the relationship sexuality and society maintain by showing sexuality as a theatrical utopia where new forms of bodies and desires can be revealed. Guided by an interdisciplinary approach combining both Gender Studies focusing on ‘bio-technology’ (Elsa Dorlin, Paul B. Preciado), and Visual Studies (especially the approach of Maaïke Bleeker and Richard Dyer), I will talk about how the plasticity of the puppeteering object can affect the perception of our own bodies. I ask: how does the show *Hen* manifest a utopia for the human body and sexuality? What is the role of the theatre and the vision in this sexual utopia? Johanny Bert places the concept of anthropomorphism as the threshold for questioning human sexuality into the theatre, and – I contend – challenges the ways we define and circumscribe bodies and desires, inviting new perspectives for sexual and corporeal paradigms too.

Antoine Hirel received his acting training at the Cours Florent, Paris. In parallel, he studied at the Theatre and Gender Studies programme at Université Paris 8 as well as the International Master in the Performance Studies programme at Stockholm University. His master thesis, focusing on “the role of the vision in the construction of the male homosexual body on the French contemporary stage”, will be developed into a PhD in 2021. He works as a freelance assistant director, recently collaborating with the French artist Yuval Rozman, and as a translator too.

## **Astrid von Rosen (University of Gothenburg)**

“Dreaming, Debating and Doing Diversity: A Relational Database as Utopian Performer”

In this paper, a relational database, a digital technological device, constructed by humans for humans, is understood as an active agent, a precarious and even utopian performer, acting in the broader field of performing arts historiography. The database was constructed, and is still being developed, within a cross-disciplinary research project called *Expansion and Diversity: Mapping and analysing independent performance in Gothenburg 1965-2000* (funded by the Swedish Research Council). During 2021, the last year of *Expansion and Diversity*, as project leader I find it timely to reflect upon and analyse the particular role of the database in relation to the ambitions and dreams connected with its existence. For the Swedish city of Gothenburg as a case study, the role of the database was and still is to help better represent and make accessible the complex diversities of independent performing arts from 1950 to 2000. On the one hand, I demonstrate that the database is capable of doing precisely this and explain how it does it. On the other hand, since its launch in 2020, the database has been described as ugly, difficult to operate, lacking functions, or unable to meet wishes for archival representation. To debate and explore these frictions, I have started to play with the idea of understanding the database as a utopian performer, an agential feature, who affects and is affected by, the humans engaging with it. Drawing on Victor Hugo, I start by considering the database-performer “utopian” as it thrives on a scholarly dream of a future performing arts historiography that will be more just, inclusive, diverse and democratic. Second, by turning to Slavoj Žižek, I will grapple with the urgent struggles and areas of friction involving the database. For example, in what ways does it account for and represent the materialities of performance, the materialities of archival remains as well as the material dimensions of scholarly work? It is equally urgent to address the frictions between the project’s findings and common media and historiographical beliefs of which groups and features are “important” to represent. Third, the database forms part of a participatory or “dig where you stand” approach in terms of practitioner involvement in the research. As suggested by Jill Dolan, utopia “takes place now, in the interstices of present interactions, in glancing moments of possibly better ways to be together as human beings”. By including the relational database among the “beings” forming utopia in the present, I yearn to find ways of accounting for the potential community building that goes on in the here and now, in the everyday struggle to shape and shift performing arts historiography.

Astrid von Rosen is Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Gothenburg, and specializes in critical performing arts historiography. As project leader and investigator of several granted projects, von Rosen has since receiving her doctorate in 2010, conducted interdisciplinary research to confront canon and re-evaluate historiographical methods. She is the principal investigator of *Expansion and Diversity: Digitally mapping and exploring independent performance in Gothenburg 1965–2000*, funded by the Swedish research council. She is the editor (with Viveka Kjellmer) of *Scenography and Art History: Performance Design and Visual Culture* (Bloomsbury 2021).

**Babatunde Allen Bakare (American University of Nigeria)**

“Utopian Resemblance in Selected Prose Plays by Henrik Ibsen”

Norwegian playwright and theater director Henrik Ibsen illustrated dramaturgical reality and high illusions in many of his prose plays. This can be seen in many of his plays, such as *Enemy of the People*, *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House*, *The Master Builder*, *Hedda Gabler* and many others. Often, Ibsen's characters lament their condition and wish for a better world where things could and will be done better, and where hope and comfort can be experienced. This paper examines utopian resemblances in a selection of Ibsen's prose plays, drawing on textual analysis and reader-response theories. Some of the key questions this study will answer are: (1) is there a relationship between reality and utopia? (2) Is there a resemblance of utopia in Ibsen's plays? And do Ibsen's characters achieve a utopia of any sort in these plays?

Dr. Bakare Babatunde Allen is Assistant Professor of English and Literature at the American University of Nigeria. He completed his Masters of Philosophy in Ibsen Studies at the Centre of Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo in 2008. He worked as a producer and scriptwriter for African Independent Television (AIT) Abuja for over 5 years. He completed his PhD in Drama and Theatre Studies at Stellenbosch University, South Africa in 2018. He has taught theatre and drama for seven years at Nasarawa State University and Bowen University, Nigeria. Dr. Bakare areas of focus are African Theatre/Drama and Performance, Directing, Media Productions (TV, Radio and Film), Dramatic Literature, Storytelling/African Oral Performance and Literature, Theatre History, African, British, American and Norwegian Literature. Dr. Bakare has published both in local and international journals.

**Birgitta Lindh Estelle (University of Gothenburg)**

“Radical Utopias in Performances and Reception of *Sanna kvinnor* (True Women, 1883)”

In my current research I am tracking Anne Charlotte Leffler’s play *Sanna kvinnor* (True Women, 1883) through the European theatrical landscape, in order to explore the conditions for the circulation and reception of a gender-critical play by a female Scandinavian Modern-Breakthrough playwright. In this paper I will illuminate how *True Women* was staged in different Nordic productions and what utopian ideas on gender these productions provoked in the reviewers. This will be done by means of a semiotic analysis of reviews of some performances of the play in different Nordic productions from between 1883 and 1886. The theoretical point of departure is Slavoj Žižek’s notion of radical utopia (2003), that is, an alternative to be enacted in response to an impossible social situation. Accordingly, the play *Sanna kvinnor* will be regarded as a space where such a utopia is represented, mainly through the construction of the female characters. How are these presented in the *mises-en-scène* of the theatrical events? In what way do the reviewers’ interpretations relate to that which Žižek calls “the given symbolic coordinates” of the gendered social space in the 1880s?

Birgitta Lindh Estelle is an Associate Professor in Comparative Literature with a specialization in theatre, at the University of Gothenburg. Her research fields are Swedish theatre and drama, gender, historiography, and transnational studies. Her long experience of investigating gender narratives, in combination with challenges of established historiographical structures, is manifested in the monograph *Like a Wild Bird in a Cage: Identity, Love, Freedom and Melodramatic Elements in Alfhild Agrell’s, Victoria Benedictsson’s and Anne Charlotte Leffler’s Plays of the 1880s* (in Swedish 2019). In her current research she investigates gender and transnational reception by tracing Anne Charlotte Leffler’s play *Sanna kvinnor* (True Women 1883) in the fin-de siècle theatrical landscape. Her research on reception has so far resulted in articles and book-chapters. birgitta.lindh@lir.gu.se

**Charlott Neuhauser (Södertörn University)**

**“Preparing for Dystopia”**

Referring to anti-fascist scholar Nigel Copsey’s concept antifascist minimum (2016) this paper tries to define the imagined dystopian future in a number of Swedish pre-WWII plays. The dystopias portrayed in the plays are defining a destroyed ideal world. What are the values defended in the plays? What has to be sacrificed in order to withhold them? How does the ideal way of action relate to different aspects of anti-fascist resistance? Plays by Bertil Malmberg, Ragnar Josephson, Karin Boye and Dicte Sjögren, among others, will be discussed in relation to the idea of the “antifascist minimum” - both as theatre texts and performances – and how this minimum can be related to a utopian, or hopeful, way of action.

Charlott Neuhauser teaches English and creative writing in Swedish at Södertörn University. Her thesis concerned debates over Swedish drama from the time of Gustav III up till today, and the construction of Swedishness in these contexts (2016). She investigated how a discourse about the inadequacies of the Swedish drama developed during the period and spilled over into the debates about Swedish theatre and drama today. She is a dramaturg and a publisher of drama books with her publishing house Draken Teaterförlag.

**Daria Skjoldager-Nielsen (Stockholm University)**

**“When the Utopian Performative Encounters Beauty”**

I remember the first time when I came across the *utopian performative*: the butterflies in my stomach, overwhelming feeling of hope and happiness it produced. Jill Dolan (2005) points at those moments during performances, when the audience comes together and feels hopeful; moments that constitute inspiration for change: for the actor, the spectator, and maybe even the world – and which are often (understandably) politically or socially charged. But my experiences were different: my feelings of hope were not emerging after watching a political vision of the future, but during and after my encounters with beauty. I began to wonder: can a profound sense of beauty, that brings the feeling of hope and love, also have a potential to change the world? In this paper I will explore the aesthetics of the theatrical event and its effectiveness in bringing out the utopian performatives. Theoretically I draw on Erika Fischer-Lichte’s *aesthetics of the performative* and Jean Francois Llyotard’s *energetic theatre* in order to show how the language of performance analysis can access a theatrical (aesthetic) experience. I aim to show how Dolan’s theory enriches the understanding of this experience by grasping it more fully. As examples, I will discuss two performances, *Oratorium Dance Project* (Lodz 2011) and *Satyagraha* (Stockholm 2016).

Daria S. Nielsen. Holder of two MA degrees from the University of Lodz in marketing and theatre studies. PhD candidate in theatre studies, Stockholm University. Lecturer at the University of Lodz. Member of the IFTR working group The Theatrical Event. Vicechairwoman of Rococo Foundation researching cultural institutions’ management and performance. Research interests: the theatrical event; new approaches to audience development, marketing and theatre; cultural policy. Recent publications: with Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, "Para-Anthropo(s)cene Aesthetics Between Despair and Beauty: A Matter of Response-Ability", *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 32(1), 2020; "Theatre Talks – Audience Development in Three Perspectives: Marketing, Cultural Policy and Theatrical Communication", in *Zarządzanie w kulturze* 2019, Tom 20, Numer 3.

**Dirk Gindt (Stockholm University)**

“Giron Sámi Teáhter and the Decolonial Labour of Contemporary Sámi Cultural Performers”

In 1971, to protest the damming of a lake by a hydroelectric power company, a group of young Sami activists in Jokkmokk/Jåhkåmåhkke staged a play with the utopian title *Vi ska överleva* (*We Will Survive*) that is nowadays recognized as the “world premiere production of modern Sami theatre” (Veli-Pekka Lehtola, 2009). Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of modern Sami performance, this paper discusses the multifold dimensions of the struggle for cultural self-determination of contemporary Sami cultural performers affiliated with Giron Sámi Teáhter in the Swedish part of Sápmi. The paper proposes a twinned argument: It seeks to honour the decolonial labour that Sami performing artists have been engaging in for half a century and, in the process, foreground the key role played by women in these artistic and activist processes. The paper therefore importantly argues that modern Sami performance needs to be understood in an intersectional way that pays equal respect to decolonial processes as to gender. To frame my arguments and analysis, I draw upon the notion of the ‘labour of performance’, which in recent decades has been increasingly deployed by performance theorists to celebrate the personal and political investment that performing artists put into their work as well as pinpoint their generous attempts at fostering communities with their audiences, communities which in turn can form the seed for social activism. The approach is further guided by a methodology of decolonization inspired by Rauna Kuokkanen and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

Dirk Gindt holds a PhD in Theatre Studies and is a Professor in the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University. He has published over twenty refereed journal articles and book chapters, is the co-editor of the volume *Viral Dramaturgies: HIV and AIDS in Performance in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and the author of the monograph *Tennessee Williams in Sweden and France, 1945-1965: Cultural Translations, Sexual Anxieties and Racial Fantasies* (Bloomsbury, 2019). Gindt is also a member of the editorial board of *Theatre Research International*. His current research, financed by a four-year grant from the Swedish Research Council, analyses Indigenous performance cultures in the Arctic.

**Dolon Sarkar (Jawaharlal Nehru University)**

“Utopia, Dalit Environmentalism and Performance of Gambhira of North Bengal, India”

Gambhira is a folk-art form and cultural phenomena mainly performed by the lower caste such as *Kochas*, *Chi*, *Palihass*, and *Namasudra* community of North Bengal, India. It is performed as ritual, traditional art, and practice, an integral, pervasive, and vital part of the everyday life of the Dalits. The Dalits' settlement is located around the Gangetic bank because of their reliance on nature; environmental dependence shapes their understanding of nature. The study explores how the Gambhira performance evokes a utopia to sustain the environment. Utopia is crucial for the Dalit articulation of an alternative social space. The paper examines the environmental insight of the caste question as manifests in the performance of Gambhira. It argues that caste is an important category to understand the issues of the environment. The study highlights the environmental insights and the assertion of the question of caste by the Dalit communities of North Bengal.

Keywords: Caste, Utopia, Dalit environmentalism, and Gambhira

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**Emma Welton (Queen Mary, University of London)**

“Let It Burn: Sensing, Sensuality and Solidarity in Travis Alabanza’s *Burgerz*”

*Burgerz* is a one-person show by British performance artist Travis Alabanza. The performance re-enacts an incident of transphobic violence Alabanza faced in 2016, during which an assailant threw a burger and yelled a transphobic slur at them. In this paper, I argue that Alabanza troubles mainstream theatre audiences’ ingestion of traumatic, autobiographical stories from artists who are marginalised in the public sphere. I analyse the dramaturgy and aesthetics of Alabanza cooking a burger onstage with an audience participant, proposing that this functions as a performative approach which activates the audience’s personal and collective sensorial profiles. Through this, I suggest that Alabanza creates a space of politically engaged utopia; the smell of the burger linking with Alabanza’s narrative of transphobic violence, chemically twining the two in the audience’s memories, to usher spectators into remembering, caring and acts of solidarity beyond the time and space of performance. Following an interdisciplinary methodology which combines performance, sensory and queer studies, I ask: how does the combination of the audience participant strategy and cooking onstage create an intimate, utopian community? What is distinct about such performative strategies in mainstream theatrical settings? How does Alabanza’s creation of an ‘intersensorial’ (Howes) sensory collective in the audience encourage spectators to act in solidarity with marginalised individuals in the afterlife of the performance? My analysis is informed by concepts of ‘queer futurity’ (Muñoz, Dolan) and queer-feminist coalitional possibilities (Reagon, Mohanty).

Emma Welton holds an MA in Theatre and Performance Studies from Stockholm University. In October 2020, her research on contemporary British migration performance was published in *Theatre Research International*. In October 2021, she will begin her PhD on camp, austerity and queer British performance from 2010-present at Queen Mary, University of London, funded by the London Arts and Humanities Partnership.

**Hanna Korsberg (University of Helsinki)**

“Playing Woyzeck”

This paper will discuss theatrical representations of Georg Büchner’s (1813–1837) *Woyzeck*. Since the unfinished play is fragmentary, every production requires the ensemble to make dramaturgical choices. The play has been a basis for several adaptations within different art forms. I am going to discuss the cultural transformations and hybridity of the productions of *Woyzeck* by Stefan Larsson (the Royal Dramatic Theatre) and Kristian Smeds (Kajaani Municipal Theatre), both in 2003, as utopian communities. These productions created utopian spaces between performers and spectators that questioned the visions of present and future. Especially, I will look at the way music was used in both productions, the one-man-band in the Royal Dramatic Theatre production and the ‘rock opera-ness’ of the Kajaani Municipal Theatre production. The transnational utopian *Woyzeck* portrayed the globalized world and addressed societal issues on many levels.

Hanna Korsberg, PhD, Professor in Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki. She has written about the relationship between theatre and politics and is the author of several articles on theatre history, historiography and performance research. She has been an active member of the IFTR Historiography Working Group since 2001 (a convenor of the group 2006–2009), an executive committee member 2007–2015 and vice president 2015–2019. She has been actively participating in the Association of Nordic Theatre Scholars as a board member 1999–2009 and as a chairperson 2008–2009. She has served as a member of the editorial boards of *Contemporary Theatre Review* and *Nordic Theatre Studies*. Also, she holds several positions of trust at the University of Helsinki. [hanna.korsberg@helsinki.fi](mailto:hanna.korsberg@helsinki.fi)

## Harry McCallum (Ulster University)

“‘Utopian Performatives’ for Peace: A Radical Approach to Evaluating the Value of Documentary Theatre in Northern Ireland”

In the last decade, there has been an upsurge in documentary theatre projects that seek to address issues arising from the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’ by theatre and community organisations such as The Playhouse, Kabosh and The Verbal Arts Centre. This movement has been supported by a variety of funding agencies who have identified the importance of the instrumental use of theatre for generating societal development. However, with this upsurge in interest come complications surrounding the subjectivity of evaluations along with an understanding of their empirical impact on society. This largely theoretical-led discussion promotes the engagement of Jill Dolan’s ‘utopian performatives’ (2005) within the remit of documentary theatre for peacebuilding practices in Northern Ireland. ‘Utopian Performatives’ are described as being profound moments in a theatre production that *transforms* audience members into a state of ‘hopeful feeling’. As a concept, they are situated within the discourse surrounding audience reception and the ‘affective turn’ (Brennan, 2004; Clough and Halley, 2007; Ahmed, 2014), which indicates its persistence on a short-term ephemeral outlook. It is therefore important to understand how this short-term ‘affect’ can expand into a longer-term ‘effect’. Through this interdisciplinary study between ‘peace’ and ‘theatre’ studies, I am proposing a theoretical framework that examines how individual ‘utopian performatives’, at the personal level, can lead to a change at the societal level. The framework understands that ‘utopian performatives’ have the capacity to generate discussion and empower audience members to actively strive for a ‘positive peace’; something which is evidently absent in a contemporary Northern Ireland. Essentially, this research looks to examine the covert *value* of documentary theatre that overcomes the issues that arise from traditional evaluation methods such as ‘tick-boxes’ and other quantitatively focused methods that don’t address the holistic potential of theatre for social development.

Harry McCallum is a current PhD researcher at Ulster University, within the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences. After obtaining a First-Class Honours degree in Drama at Ulster University in 2017, Harry achieved a Distinction in his Masters in ‘Conflict Transformation and Social Justice’ at the George Mitchell Institute, based at Queen’s University Belfast in 2018. His current research project examines the long-term impact of documentary theatre productions for peacebuilding in Northern Ireland through *utopian performatives*. This research was inspired by his focus on the interdisciplinary relationship between ‘theatre’ and ‘peace’ studies, which is a relationship that needs to be explored further. He has worked with various theatre groups in Northern Ireland, and attended the INDRA congress in Palestine, which focused on using arts for addressing issues resolving from societies facing conflict. Harry is a keen member of Disc Golf Northern Ireland.

## Hélène Ohlsson (Stockholm University)

“Utopic sensibilities in Swedish womanhood: Swedish diva performances in the U. S.”

This paper analyzes the performances of two Swedish actresses (Greta Garbo (1905–1990) and Ingrid Bergman (1915–1982), playing two Swedish women (Queen Christina and sister Benedict) in two Hollywood productions: *Queen Christina* (1933) and *The Bells of St. Mary* (1945). Garbo and Bergman function as symbolic representations of Swedish womanhood that in these two movies is characterized by hegemonic whiteness, naturalness, independence, a quaint quality and a resistance against a heteronormative lifestyle. I will discuss how Garbo’s and Bergman’s performances, along with other representative and non-representative signs in the movies, contain a continuity in performance practices from Swedish opera divas Jenny Lind and Christina Nilsson who toured the U.S. in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Lind and Nilsson emphasized their Swedishness and hegemonic whiteness and created thereby a template of Swedish womanhood that Garbo and Bergman developed and refined in their film roles. I take the theoretical point of departure in Richard Dyer’s theory of utopian sensibilities that take off from the audience’s experience of social tension, absence or loss, and offer an escape to an alternative life dream. In combination with Catrin Lundström’s concept of white cosmopolitan femininity I will argue that Garbo’s and Bergman’s performances suggests an alternative modern womanhood, and by extension an alternative lifestyle, that is independent, intellectual, non-heteronormative and includes both loss and prospect, wildness and restraint. I will argue that the characters of Garbo and Bergman embodies hegemonic Swedish womanhood (spiced with the glamour of Hollywood) that in order to fulfil their potential have to leave, or has already left, compatriots and fatherland to embrace cosmopolitanism and become citizens of the world.

Hélène Ohlsson is a PhD in theatre studies, with an expertise in nineteenth-century theatre history with a gender perspective. Her particular research interests are the professional history of the actress, divas, dandies, acting, self-representation, critical femininity studies, and gender study. Hélène Ohlsson is currently teaching gender studies at Stockholm University, where she is also affiliated with theatre-, performance-, and dance studies. She has a background as an actress and a director.

**Iain Sands (Stockholm University)**

“Singing Trauma, Singing Hope: Melancholy and Utopia in *Aesanggok*, a Song Performed by a Choir of North and South Korean Youths”

*Unification Harmony* is a Seoul-based youth choir made up of both South Koreans and North Koreans who migrated to the South. The song *Aesanggok* was written for the choir by a South Korean member of the choir, telling the story of his maternal grandmother who lost her daughter as she fled South as a refugee during the Korean War. He tells the story in the form of a monologue written from his grandmother's perspective, expressing her struggle to cling to her memories as a brain tumor slowly extinguishes them. In the song, she recites her memories by attaching them to embodied recollections of her daughter's past actions such as touching her mother's hair, or standing silhouetted against a crescent moon. The music powerfully evokes her anguish as she fights against forgetting, but her memories inexorably fade. The performance acts as a conduit for traumatic memory, as the grandmother's private history of loss is transmitted to her grandson, who mediates and transmits it in musical form in a way that stimulates an emotional response in the listeners. Crossing from private to public memory, the grandmother's story speaks to the wider suffering of the Korean people, and the twin traumas of war and permanent division. There is scant resolution to this story; the grandmother passes away, the daughter remains in North Korea, the grandson grieves his grandmother, and the nation collectively grieves its loss. In *Aesanggok*, the future looks bleak, and the mood is distinctively depressive. However, for all its imbrications of mourning and melancholy, *Aesanggok* is not entirely devoid of hope. Through "feeling down," the people in the auditorium emote and affectively share pain, and in doing so, find a collectivity in remembering and observing the omnipresent consequences of war and its intergenerational aftermath. Furthermore, in the final bars of music, the tonalities brighten and the grandmother briefly summons an ephemeral vision of a future time in which they may indeed meet; a time after death when mother and daughter are no longer separated by formidable physical and political barriers.

Originally from New Zealand, Iain Sands has been a PhD candidate in Korean studies at Stockholm University since 2016. His research is currently focused on performance practices of amateur and professional troupes of North Korean performing artists who live and work in South Korea. Iain's work is interdisciplinary, at the conjunction of cultural studies, performance studies, trauma theory, music, dance, and gender theory. He is especially interested in exploring how live performance intersects, on an emotional level, with histories, politics, and discourses of national division and unification on the Korean Peninsula. Iain will defend his PhD thesis in Stockholm this December.

**Janne Risum (Aarhus University)**

“Layers and Contexts of Utopia(s): The Referential Dilemmas in Brecht’s *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*”

This is how Erwin Piscator, after returning to West Germany after the Second World War, in his diary classified his former friend and collaborator Bertolt Brecht, who was by now a DDR state icon: as an escapist romantic. Had he forgotten that he had been one himself? He wrote: ‘The new German Romantic. (...) A Marxist at will, a Romantic at heart. The very dialectician Brecht proves that his plays are ‘moral’, the good person of Szechwan, much more than political. His romantic escape from everyday life to foreign countries. China, India, America, etc.’ I shall test Piscator’s claim with a small case study in close-up of Brecht’s play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and its varying contexts. Brecht based it on a play from the Chinese Yuan dynasty, *The Chalk Circle (Huilan ji)* by Li Qianfu. He wrote it in his Californian exile in 1944. Encouraged by the Soviet victories over the German army beginning at Stalingrad the previous year, he switched the location of his play to medieval Caucasian Georgia, and the first bit he wrote of it was a prologue: a first scene set in this part of the country but in Soviet times. Brecht invented it to give his historical play a contemporary motivation. Actually however the prologue is a remarkable piece of romantic utopia or nostalgia. Anthropologically speaking it is a restaging of the transition from cattle breeding to agriculture. Two Caucasian kolkhozes, one raising goats and the other growing vines and fruit trees, meet in the open air over goat cheese and wine to discuss - and end up coming to the agreement that the future belongs to the ambitious irrigation project of the cultivators of plants. Upon which they all sit down to watch ‘the old play’, which, they learn, ‘is called *The Chalk Circle* and is derived from the Chinese. But we will recite it in a changed version. Yura, show the masks’. In a first version of this scene a man in a leather jacket, who is a delegate from the planning commission in the capital, acts as arbitrator and dates their agreement ‘on Sunday June 7<sup>th</sup> 1934’ (‘am Sonntag, dem 7. Juni 1934’). Continuing his work on the scene, before long Brecht preferred to change the time of the action to ‘now’: to 1944. Now the two kolkhozes have just beaten off the German army, when they convene ‘among the ruins of a badly shelled Caucasian village’ to plan their joint future with the assistance of ‘an expert of the State Reconstruction Commission from the capital’. When Brecht staged the play at the Berliner Ensemble in October 1954, he tightened up the prologue scene but kept this timing, which to the watching East Berliners set it ‘ten years ago’. In any case the scene has little foundation in Stalinist reality. The poetic licence of the prologue scene, or if you will: its wishful thinking and propaganda reality, exists nowhere but on the stage. As may be expected, when the play was first produced in West Germany, the prologue scene was dismissed as unrealistic, sham, or involuntarily comical. In East Germany however the entire play and production were dismissed as formalistic, and Brecht’s loans in it from the Chinese theatre as primitive. From which time perspective and context may we best evaluate it today is correspondingly fluid: from that of pre-war 1934 (and so of the romantic dreamer and fellow traveller), from that of 1944 when the USA and the Soviet Union were war-time allies (and so with a component of mixed nostalgia and hope), or from that of 1954 when Brecht staged his play behind the Iron Curtain while the Cold War was at its height? However that may be, Brecht remained convinced that the moving human story of Grusche who saves the noble child would lose its political dimension, if the prologue were cut. My paper shall take a closer look at the play’s homeless and vagrant utopias and their contexts.

Janne Risum (1947, Denmark) is Emeritus Associate Professor of Dramaturgy at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University, Denmark. She was co-editor and author of the Danish standard work, *Dansk teaterhistorie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2 vols, 1992-1993). She is a long-standing member of the International Federation for Theatre Research and of its Historiography Working Group; and has moreover been active in Association for Nordic Theatre Scholars since its foundation. She has published widely in English and other languages on past and present theatre and acting in Europe and in Asia, including on Meyerhold and on gender issues. Her PhD dissertation in English on the Soviet tour of the Chinese male performer of female roles Mei Lanfang and his Beijing opera troupe in 1935 and its effects, *The Mei Lanfang Effect* (2010), was based on extensive archive studies in Russia and elsewhere, as are her subsequent follow-up articles exploring complementary aspects of this seminal event.

**Julia Fries (Stockholm University)**

**“Drama as a Resource in Imagining Sustainable Economic Futures”**

There is an increasing awareness of how the economic logic of our societies is a driving force behind the sustainability crisis we find ourselves in. Collectively, we seem to have difficulties thinking beyond the current economic paradigm, however, and imagine how humans might collaborate around resources in other ways. This paper will share preliminary results from a PhD project driven by the question: How can drama be understood as a resource in imagining sustainable economic futures? Through an action-research approach, drama teaching is explored within higher education as well as with young activists outside the formal education system, with the aim of stretching the participants' imagination further and picture sustainable and equitable ways of organising societies. Preliminary results show that through the dimension of 'what if', drama can be used to bypass many of the hindrances of our minds when we try to imagine the future. The playfulness and safety created in groups when working with drama also helps us step out of our ordinary thinking, while it also supports us when facing our fears in relation to an uncertain future. Obstacles are that drama work is time-consuming, demands engagement and sometimes courage from students, and it breaks with ordinary forms of teaching in ways that does not make it feasible in all settings. However, researchers stress the need to transform the ways we teach in a changing world, and the research presented here points to drama as one possible ingredient in the transformations towards new ways of learning.

Julia Fries is a drama practitioner, clown, gardener and dancer, currently a PhD student in educational drama at Stockholm University. Her research interest is drama in learning for sustainable development, with a particular focus on economics. Her PhD uses drama to explore 'imaginaries' for how sustainable societies can be organized. Clowning, theatre and pedagogical drama have been some of the ways in which she has explored economics and futures in imaginative ways. This has been done mainly through work with the theatre group Teater K, but in the last years also within the academy.

**Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen (Stockholm University)**

“2020: A Viral Oddity - Covid-19 and Beyond (the Infinite?)”

In November 2020 a so-called “monolith”—a silvery pillar of triangular shape was spotted from a surveying helicopter in a remote desert ravine in a Utah nature reserve in USA. The odd artefact stood out against the desert surroundings in an outlandish way. There were no indications as to how it ended up in this remote place. News of the monolith went viral in social media. And speculations about its alien origin mentioned Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke’s epic Sci-Fi movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The movie’s monolith is an extra-terrestrial object, which interferes with the evolution of humankind to secure its survival. Into 2021, manifestations of more or less similar monoliths appear without explanation around the planet. Besides the Utah monolith no one has conclusively claimed responsibility. In this paper, I will explore the phenomena of these monoliths as utopian (hope-bringing)/dystopian (warning) staged events in the context of the pandemic as symptom of the much larger anthropogenic Sixth Extinction in the history of life (Kolbert). Theoretically, I discuss the monoliths as staged events (Skjoldager-Nielsen), which activates utopian (Dolan) and dystopian performatives (Knowles). As intermedial concept, I suggest they are one unlimited viral performance (Felton-Dansky) building on the mythos of *2001* that a god-like Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence will intervene to make Mankind stop its destruction of planetary ecosystems and ultimately itself. This has been a popular myth of salvation since the Cold War and sparked UFO religions (Rothstein). Can the monolith performance inspire a sense of unifying emergency that may reach beyond the pandemic times? Not by alien salvation but self-instigated changes.

Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen holds a PhD in theatre studies from Stockholm University. Currently conference coordinator at Theatre and Dance Studies, Stockholm University. With the International Federation for Theatre Research, former elected ExComm member, and cofounder of the working group Performance, Spirituality, and Religion. Founding Co-editor of *PRS Journal* and participant of Performance Studies Space Programme. Research interests: cosmo-aesthetics; science exposition; spirituality; ecology; contemporary staged events; ritual; performance art intermediality; performance analysis; dramaturgy. Recent publication: with Daria Skjoldager-Nielsen, "Para-Anthropo(s)cene Aesthetics Between Despair and Beauty", in *NTS* vol. 32, no.1, 2020.

**Knut Ove Arntzen (University of Bergen)**

“Religious Utopia or Climatic Dystopia: Hotel Pro Forma’s *Jesus c odd size* and *Neo Arctic*”

The question of utopian religiosity can be seen as a mirror the climatic dystopia. This paradox can be defined as part of an artistic strategy, which comments on the real without trying to copy it. The utopia of truth in the Danish Folkekirken is recycled in the affection of the arctic as a symbol of climatic changes towards the dystopia of breakdown. One can speak of a conscious search for circumstances in religious and climatic surroundings that opens for the feeling, on behalf of the artist as well as of the spectators, of being authentic, fully present and able to make use of the aesthetic feeling of being a material in the anthro-scenic sense of new materialism. I will exemplify this with two Hotel Pro Forma productions: *jesus\_c\_odd\_size* (2000/2002) and *Neo Arctic* (2016), which reflect the artist’s own experience and conscious relation to obtaining utopian truth by showing dystopia in both religious and political senses. These convey the artist’s experience of what may be transferred to the spectator as a co-experiencer, and how this may be done; through a virtual, interactive game that does not put any obligation on the artist with regard to what is perceived as authentic. The pretending becomes a play on sharing something authentic with someone in *jesus\_c\_odd\_size*, or on what may be true in a utopian sense, turning into dystopian reflections in *Neo Arctic*. Both productions were staged by Kirsten Dehlholm.

Knut Ove Arntzen is, since November 2020, professor emeritus in Theatre Studies, University of Bergen. He was, from 1987, associate professor and, from 2010, full professor, and has published widely and internationally in areas like visual dramaturgy, marginal theatre and directing, as well as theatre in Greenland and the Arctic. He was a co-organizer of the last ANTS conference in November 2020, via Zoom from Bergen, on the topic of Scan-Aesthetics. He is also a coordinator of EASTAP, the European Association of Theatre and Performance. His latest book, *Staging and Re-Cycling: Retrieving and Re-Framing the Archive* (London: Routledge, 2020) was co-edited with John Keefe.

**Leo Marko (Stockholm University)**

“Heaven is a place on earth: Experiencing no-place as ‘uncarved wood’”

Utopia is usually thought of as a place removed from the actual world. However, utopia can also be thought of as a “no-place”—echoing the word’s Greek origin—as suggested by performance theorist Jill Dolan (2005). By locating utopia within the space and time of performance events, Dolan’s work links utopia both to imagination and to real life. This paper develops this idea of utopia and suggests that although utopia is different from the world we live in, it does not offer another world in its stead. It is rather the negative of the present world. I explore this negativity of “no-place” in light of the Daoist classics *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and the concept of “unworked wood” (*pu*).

At the center of the discussion is a personal experience of the thick darkness in the woods on an evening run. As the lights ended for a long part of the road, I realized that there was no controlling what could be lurking in the woods, but also no way for society to control me and what I would do then and there. At that time, utopia, nature, and what is undefined and unpredictable seemed more real than the world as I knew it. This experience, and the way it relates to Daoist philosophy, points toward a different understanding of what Dolan names utopian performatives.

Leo Marko is a doctoral student in Theatre Studies at Stockholm University. He has an MA in Aesthetics and has written a thesis on Zeami’s treatises on *nō* performance. He is currently working on a dissertation about stage presence, *nō*, and the limitations of sense.

**Luule Epner (Tallinn University)**

“Three Estonian Theatre Utopias Against the European Background”

The multi-layered relationship between performance and utopia includes, among other things, theatre utopias: visions of a new, presently non-existing theatre which is being dreamed of and pursued as an ideal. From a historical perspective, such utopian visions have often been inherently linked with innovative, avant-garde theatre projects that have sought to change art and/or society. To be sure, not every innovative project needs to be driven by a utopian vision: the search for utopia means that ideas and ideals that function as the driving force of a project are radical, maximalist, or impossible to implement. This paper takes a closer look at three utopias in Estonian theatre over the last century. These are: 1) the short-lived amateur Hommikteater (Morning Theatre) in 1921-24 (the early years of the newly created Republic of Estonia); 2) the radical theatre innovation in the theatre Vanemuine in 1969-71 (during Soviet rule); 3) the establishment and the first season of the Theatre NO99 in 2004-5. The general aesthetic background of the Hommikteater was German expressionism, that of the Soviet-period theatre innovation was the Western avant-garde theatre movement of the 1960s (incl. Grotowski); by contrast, the NO99 emerged in the era of the decline of postmodernism characterised by a lack of any predominant theatrical style. The paper will focus on the following issues: 1) how Estonian theatre utopias were related to European (especially Nordic) artistic trends and ideas in the respective time periods; 2) to what extent these projects imitated Western examples and to what extent they offered original ideas arising from the specific situation in Estonia; 3) whether or how the three Estonian theatre utopias were interconnected.

Luule Epner, PhD, is an Estonian theatre and literary researcher. She is Associate Professor at the School of Humanities of Tallinn University. Her main research fields are Estonian theatre history, theory and practices of postdramatic theatre, and drama theory. She has published widely in different journals. She is the author of *Draamateooria probleeme I-II (Problems of Drama Theory, 1992, 1994)*, and the co-author of *Eesti kirjanduslugu (Estonian Literary History, 2001)* and *Eesti sõnateater 1965–1985 (Estonian Dramatic Theatre 1965–1985, 2015)*. Her most recent book, *Mängitud maailmad (Worlds in Play)*, was published in 2018.

**Magnus Tessing Schneider (Stockholm University)**

“Heavenly, Musical Feasts: Karen Blixen and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*”

Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) played a special role in the life and thinking of world-famous Danish writer Karen Blixen (1885-1962). After she first saw the opera in Copenhagen in her youth, it often came up in her letters and interviews, and it figures prominently in three of her short stories: *Carnival* (written in the 1920s), *The Dreamers* (1934) and *Babette’s Feast* (1950). To Blixen, the opera clearly possessed a transformative and revolutionary power that allowed people to reinvent themselves, showing us a way towards a blissful coexistence. The female protagonists in the stories are each related intertextually to one of the three female characters in the opera, but they are also each of them a female Don Giovanni: an image of the artist as seducer, performer, liberator. While the earlier stories focus on the subversion of gender identities in the experimental spirit of the interwar period, the harrowing experience of the rise and fall of Nazi Germany added a broader political subtext to the last story, which became a manifesto for her aestheticist convictions. Possibly in a response to Bertolt Brecht’s diatribes against ‘culinary theatre’, Blixen pointed to *Don Giovanni* and the well-prepared meal as her primary examples of art’s utopian potential. When attending a performance of the opera we are, in fact, the supper guests of both Mozart and Don Giovanni, but we are also partaking in the Eucharist, as the feasts of Don Giovanni and Babette are reflections of the Last Supper of Christ. The paper will discuss Blixen’s concept of the aesthetic experience as *la grâce de Dieu*, which she juxtaposed to the Nietzschean concept of the Will that she thought dominated Nazi ideology as well as the capitalist societies of the post-war era.

Magnus Tessing Schneider is a researcher in Theatre Studies at Stockholm University. He specializes in relations between dramaturgy, aesthetic theory, and scenic-vocal performance practice in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian opera as well as in Shakespeare. He has edited *Mozart’s La clemenza di Tito: A Reappraisal*, together with Ruth Tatlow (Stockholm University Press, 2018), and Felicity Baker’s essays on Da Ponte, *Don Giovanni’s Reasons: Thoughts on A Masterpiece* (Peter Lang, 2021). His monograph *The Original Portrayal of Mozart’s Don Giovanni* will soon appear with Routledge. He is currently working on a three-year project funded by the Swedish Research Council, with the title “Enlightenment Anthropology and Italian Opera: The Revolutionary Theatre of Ranieri Calzabigi.”

**Maria Mårzell (Södertörn University)**

“Peace and Future – The Potential of Utopia in the Plays of Frida Stéenhoff”

What is peace beyond negations such as non-war, non-conflict, non-violence? And what are the social and aesthetical consequences of its not-yet-here quality? In a letter to Ellen Key, written around the turn of the twentieth century, Frida Stéenhoff emphasizes the contemporary idea of the social, ethical and aesthetic as provisional, a veil, not comparable to what will be coming. Stéenhoff was aware of art’s aesthetic potential of representing the future, and reflected on the relation between the fictional and actual. The affinity between drama, literature and theory, as well as the investigation of peace as an idea, are distinctive features of her writing. In her work, peace can be understood as the immanent potential of Being – a potential that has not yet been realized. By reading Stéenhoff’s plays on peace through Giorgio Agamben’s term *potentiality* and Ruth Levitas’ suggestion that utopia is a method rather than a goal in itself, peace does not appear negatively, as absence, but as possible presence.

Maria Mårzell is a PhD Student in comparative literature at Södertörn University. Her PhD project, with the working title *Peace and Future. The Potential of Utopia in the writings of Frida Stéenhoff, Elin Wägner and Hagar Olsson*, explores the utopian potential in peace as a literary theme. The starting point is a systematic study of ideas about peace in the authorships, with a special focus on the interaction between theoretical and fictional works.

**Meike Wagner (Stockholm University)**

“Amateur Theatre around 1800 and the utopian concept of ‘citizenship’”

Amateur theatres not only provide their audiences with an aesthetic experience, but they also give their members the opportunity to become involved in social gatherings and in particular performative schemes of self-learning and self-education. In the historical period of late Enlightenment amateur theatricals inherited utopian aspects driving their activities for a ‘betterment of society’. Therefore, they became an important medium to practice and promote both concepts of citizenship and the idea of theatre as a key educational factor in society – as pronounced by many journalistic and literary publications of the time. Through the lens of ‘utopian performatives’ (Dolan), I investigate how citizen identities were shaped and consolidated through amateur performance practices (on page, on stage and behind the scenes). Focusing on the Berlin based amateur theatre association *Urania* (1792-1944), I will thus spell out how the aesthetic and social practices within such bourgeois theatrical frames tested, mainstreamed and contested the political utopia of a free and equal society. The research presented here is related to her ERC-funded project “Social and Political Agency in Non-Professional Theatre Practice in Germany, France, Britain, Sweden and Switzerland (1780-1850)”.

Meike Wagner is professor of theatre studies at Stockholm University. In her book *Theater und Öffentlichkeit im Vormärz (Theatre and the Public Sphere in the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century)* (Berlin 2013) she explores how ideas, models and practices of theatre, which materialized in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of social, political and aesthetic transformations influenced the development of modern theatre as we know it today. Her research focus on amateur theatricals around 1800 sheds light on the impact of their aesthetic and social practices on the development of a citizen identity. In 2021 she received an ERC Advanced Grant for her research project “Performing Citizenship. Social and Political Agency in Non-Professional Theatre Practice in Germany, France, Britain, Sweden and Switzerland (1780-1850)”.

**Orestes Pérez Estanquero (Universidad de las Artes de Cuba)**

“The Scenic Poem *Memory Migrations*: Experiences of Utopia”

In the present study, I will return to the pedagogical artistic process entitled ‘migrations of memory’: a process that I designed and directed as a professor of an experimental course at the Theater Faculty of the Higher Institute of Art of Cuba in the 1990s. Each student constructed their own stage poem from sequences of (pre-expressive) actions, from a poem by the Cuban poet Lina de Feria, from a specific theatrical form and from a certain fragment of Cuban history. Between everyone, the scenic poem was performed collectively. I return to the scenic poem *Migrations of Memory* to reflect on what Jill Dolan calls ‘experiences of utopia.’

Orestes Pérez Estanquero is an artist and a PhD candidate in Theatrical Studies at the Universidad de las Artes de Cuba (ISA). After his degree in Dramatic Art (1985) and his Master degree in Arts at ISA (2002), he earned an MA in Performing Art Research at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (2008). As an actor he has played, among others character, Prospero in *Otra Tempestad* by Teatro Buendía at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. He worked as a theatre director with, among others, Semaver Kumpanya: in *Chamaco* (2006) at Istanbul. In Cuba he taught from pre-gradual to post-gradual universities courses (as Senior Adjunct Professor of Acting at ISA). He has participated in several festivals at Perth, Cadiz, Caracas, Edinburgh, etc. His research focuses on the areas of theory and practice in acting. He has published in theatre journals such as *Assaig de Teatre*, *Conjunto*, *Gestos*, etc. He has presented his research at the annual conferences of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFRT) (Barcelona, 2013 and Warwick, 2014, Belgrade, 2018, Shanghai, 2019). He is a member of the National Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba (UNEAC).

**Pranab Kumar Mandal (Jadavpur University)**

“Being *Herself* and Creating *Herspace*: A Critique of Feminist Utopian Possibilities in Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*”

Ernst Bloch argues that the principal energy of utopia is ‘hope’. Referring to the ontology of *Not-yet-Being*, he speaks of the, human will for achieving a transformed future, which Mumford refers to as “will-to-utopia”. Considering the socialist concern of utopia, Ruth Levitas comments in her book *The Concept of Utopia* that “utopia is not just a dream to be enjoyed but a vision to be pursued”. This notion of utopianism is instrumental in organizing an egalitarian society where everyone can enjoy equality despite their class, caste and, more importantly, gender. Fundamentally, the genre of feminist utopia attempts to subvert capitalist patriarchy with socialist feminism, a state of inequality with a community of equals. The creation of feminist utopia was necessitated by stereotyped representation of women in traditional utopias which, although trying to build an egalitarian society for all, did not bother to elevate women’s position in society. Feminist utopian literature in general and theatre in particular attempt to completely transform hegemonic practices like, as Adrienne Rich says, “the visions, and the thinking...sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community...thinking itself will be transformed’. Building on this theoretical premise, my paper critiques Caryl Churchill’s play *Cloud Nine* which uses exclusive female solidarity, including lesbianism, as a crucial strategy for subverting oppressive patriarchal ideology. The play’s utopian potential lies in its representation of a society exclusively inhabited by women and homosexuals with every woman’s financial and sexual independence. Although a society without men is impossible, denying men any emotional and sexual space is certainly possible, and this is what Churchill explores in her feminist utopian play. Each of the prominent female characters in the second act finds *herself* excluding domineering men from *herspace*. More importantly, the play does not represent an achieved utopia, but rather represents a process of achieving a utopian existence. Hence, *Cloud Nine* is not concerned with combining *perfectibility* and *finality*. With its attempt to produce a blueprint for a better way of being and organizing a better society for women through a practical realization of those possibilities, *Cloud Nine* represents a *concrete utopia* in Bloch’s notion of the term.

Pranab Kumar Mandal is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English of Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur, which is affiliated with the University of Calcutta in Kolkata, India. He is also a doctoral candidate at the Department of English of Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He is a member of the Asian Theatre Working Group and Theatre Historiography Working Group of the IFTR and has participated in its colloquiums in Singapore (2016) and the Philippines (2018). He received a grant from the Shanghai Municipality Government to participate in a three-week summer school on Chinese opera at the Shanghai Theatre Academy in 2018. He is also the recipient of a John McGrath Scholarship that allowed him to attend the Scottish Universities’ International Summer School (SUISS) at the University of Edinburgh in 2021. His edited book *Theatre Practice: Text and Performance, Interpretation and Experimentation* was published by the Jadavpur University Society for American Studies (JUSAS) in 2018.

**Ragnhild Tronstad (Kulturtanken - Arts for Young Audiences Norway)**

“Ready to fly, with a lust for life’ – Utopia and Performativity in The Cultural Schoolbag, Norway”

The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS) is a national programme designed to provide all school pupils in Norway access to professional art and culture. In average three times a year, in their school time, children and youth get to experience art and culture in various forms, spanning literature, film, music, visual arts, cultural heritage, theatre and dance. To build and maintain Norway as a democracy is an explicit aim of the programme. Securing all children and youth equal access to professional art and culture, regardless of geography, economy, religious or cultural background is but one aspect of its democratic scope. Important is also the belief that exposition to art and culture is instrumental in educating future citizens who are able, ready, and willing to take active part in a democratic society. Reflecting this rather utopian vision of TCS, the former county municipality of Vestfold used to launch their TSC programme under the motto: “Livslysten og flyvedyktig”, in English; “Ready to fly, with a lust for life”. To what extent, however, does the democratic rationale behind TCS influence the program that is offered in the schools? In particular, how do theatre and dance performances played in TCS reflect the utopian vision of serving democracy? In my talk, I will present examples of theatre and dance performances in TCS that display or provide a space for the enactment or negotiation of democracy, providing either a ground for participation, or a space for reflection. I will then discuss how these “utopian spaces” may take performative effect in influencing the lives of the participating children and youth.

Ragnhild Tronstad works as a senior adviser responsible for the area of performing arts in Kulturtanken – Arts for Young Audiences Norway. She holds an MA in theatre studies and a PhD in media studies and aesthetics from the University of Oslo.  
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**Rashna Darius Nicholson (The University of Hong Kong)**

**“Profound Banality, Banal Profundity”: Three Exercises in Reading the Global City”**

Following interpretations of disappearance and erasure as transformation rather than consummate loss, this paper analyzes how public discourse in Hong Kong has been transduced into artistic installations between June and October 2020. Through silent methods of archiving, reading, and critically interrogating the city during what was, possibly, its most historically definitive moment, the three works under examination are: Mark Chung’s *Wheezing*, Nadim Abbas’s *Homeless Forms for Formless Homes*, and Christopher Ho’s *Always Stop Eating While You’re Still a Little Hungry*. These works allow audiences to study what constitutes “home” with a distance and sensitivity that conventional academic analyses, traditional publishing outlets, and social media do not allow. These installations exceed a manifestly “live” encounter while demonstrating an active re-mediatization of performance and theatricality. For each of these works, the city above all, retains its political salience as a symbolic field within which new self-governing forms of modern consciousness, the banalization of life, the concomitant anthropomorphization of the market, and the legitimation of the state are played out through corporeal interaction. The paper begins with an analysis of *Wheezing* which probes how infrastructure or human and non-human substructures keep global cities and their “creative hubs” running. This biopolitical theme is further developed by Abbas who examines how “homely” objects embody a prosthetic governmentality linked to quotidian politics and self-surveillance. If architecture, as Abbas alludes, operates within us, Ho through a painstakingly built miniature of Ford’s theatre, compels viewers to untangle the complex crosshatch between the monumental neoliberal city, the individual citizen, and the spectacle of nationalism. As this paper proceeds to show, these three illocutionary frames: the performing city (infrastructure), the theatre of domesticity (private), and the spectacle of statehood (public), underscore the aesthetics of possibility in equivocal critique, constituting an uncanny murmur of the utopic, post-democratic possibilities of oblique demurral.

Rashna Darius Nicholson is Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Hong Kong. She is Barbro Klein Fellow at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study and Luce East Asia Fellow at the National Humanities Center in 2021-22. In addition to her published monograph *The Colonial Public and the Parsi Stage*, her recent work on nineteenth and twentieth century theatre history and historiography features in *Theatre Research International*, *Theatre Survey*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance Historiography*, and *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Theatre History and Historiography*.

**Rikard Loman (Lund University)**

“Nordic Gore: Re-enacting the Past / Reshaping the Future”

This paper is about a rare – and, at that, an unusually bloody and messy – Swedish-Danish theatre collaboration, *Stockholms blodbad* (*The Stockholm Bloodbath*), which was staged at Malmö City Theatre in the fall of 2016. The production was unusual in that actors from Sweden and Denmark collaborated in an attempt to reawaken an important, 500-years-old historical event in the intertwined past of the countries and to speak beyond the local community and attract a Swedish-Danish audience from the Öresund region. I will explore how this production and its playful but gory approach to a very serious and significant historical event was exploited to articulate national differences, i.e. to spell out what it actually is that prevents Danes and Swedes from becoming part of something larger than their nation, such as a Nordic community. Even though the production had a short run – 15 performances – and was seen by no more than 2.633 spectators, it did touch upon important issues. On the surface it made fun of nationalist sentiments and tried to convince the audience that we all had transitioned happily from a world of conflict, war and brutality to a (post)modern world of theatrical playfulness, but it also probed and contested the utopian, wish-oriented idea of a shared Nordic identity in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Rikard Loman is Associate Professor in the Theory & Practice of Theatre at the Department of Language and Literature at Lund University/Theatre Academy in Malmö. He is the author of a book about theatre history, *Historiska perspektiv på teater* (2019), of one about play and performance analysis, *Drama- och föreställningsanalys* (2016) and of a forthcoming book about Ingmar Bergman's breakthrough as a theatre director in Malmö. His research interests include performances of the past, nationalism on stage and border studies.

## **Sandra Grehn**

“Utopian Citizenship and Backa Theater’s Staging of *Rött kort* (2014)”

In the autumn of 2014, the production *Rött kort* (Red Card) premiered at Backa Theater in Gothenburg, directed by Gabriela Pichler. Backa Theater is part of Gothenburg Civic Theater, playing for children and young people. The production was based on 11-year-old Leo's lived experiences as hidden and undocumented in Sweden and was also a collaboration with the playwright America Vera-Zavala and Botkyrka Community Theater & Dance. On stage were the actor Rasmus Lindgren and Leo himself. The metaphor of football and Leo's bodily experiences of being undocumented and hidden were a recurring element in the staging. By taking this place, Leo shares a story that seldom is told in Swedish cultural life, despite the national discourse about Sweden as a country at the forefront of children's rights. Performing arts with undocumented children on stage is unusual in Sweden and in this way the staging connects, among others, to Jill Dolan's notion of the utopian when ideas about children's civil rights are problematized and staged. *Rött kort* shows examples of utopian ideas about children as citizens in their own right. By combining semiotic performance analysis with critical discourse analysis, I analyze a filmed performance of *Rött kort* where I focus on the following research questions: How does the staging tell about living as an undocumented child in Sweden in the 2010s and by what means? What discourses concerning the undocumented child are staged, and how do they relate to contemporary dominant discourses? What significance is created in the form of Leo himself being on stage, and what difficulties does this entail? How and by what means does the staging become decolonial or utopian when focusing on Leo's experiences as an undocumented child, living in Sweden?

Sandra Grehn holds a PhD in Comparative Literature with a focus on Theatre Studies. In 2020 she defended her dissertation *They Mess around and Scuffle and Throw Stones: The Staging and Hybridization of Dominant Discourses in Backa Theatre's Productions* Little King Matt, Gangs of Gothenburg and 5boys.com at the University of Gothenburg. Grehn has been teaching Theatre Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Gothenburg and Stockholm University. She has been on the board of the Association of Nordic Theatre Scholars since 2016 and is a member of the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network since 2015. She also works as a dramaturge and recurrently collaborates with performing arts scenes, analyzing productions and repertoires.

**Sanni Lindroos (Stockholm University)**

“Utopias, Margins, and the Finnish *lähiö*: The Politics of Location and Tolerance in Turku City Theatre’s *Varissuo the Musical*”

The Finnish word *lähiö* is hardly translatable: it refers to residential areas that offer affordable housing, but it also describes specific working-class aesthetics, socioeconomic conditions and multicultural dynamics. In 2018, Turku City Theatre premiered *Varissuo the Musical*, which depicted people of different backgrounds facing challenges relating to identity, belonging, class, race and ethnicity in *Varissuo*, the largest *lähiö* of my hometown Turku, Finland. Having seen the production, I apply the concept of performative utopias to address the following questions: can an uplifting vision of a brighter, more equal future for a socially and geographically marginalized *lähiö*, located far from the city centre’s loci of mainstream cultural consumption, be experienced within the walls of a traditional downtown repertoire theatre? Does a potential for social discourse and change emerge from the live event of middle-class spectators gathering to observe stories about working-class and minority populations? Can performative utopias turn into a patronizing force? Drawing on Victor Turner’s notion of *communitas*, Jill Dolan explains performative utopias as fleeting moments between spectators and performers where a better future materializes through a sense of collective belonging and hope. Arguing that utopian performatives are born from “a complex alchemy of form and content, context and location,” Dolan advocates for considering the material details of performance consumption, with an emphasis on how one feels throughout the event of theatregoing (Dolan, 2005). Using this affective approach to performance analysis as its methodological point of departure, the paper follows a narrative of my reflections on *Varissuo the Musical* as a theatregoer who grew up in a *lähiö* herself. I discuss how empathy and stereotypes were utilized to make the characters digestible for the spectators, and how the *lähiö* environment was represented in the theatre lobby space through an appropriation of aesthetics. In dialogue with Homi Bhabha’s criticism of the notion of multiculturalism and bell hook’s theorization of the margin as a potential site of counter-hegemonic resistance, I argue that the musical’s characters, plot, and central theme of ‘hope’ contributed to an atmosphere of tolerance – rather than acceptance – of difference.

Sanni Lindroos is a student in the International Master’s Programme in Performance Studies at Stockholm University. Her work has previously been published through Lake Forest College Publications and she is currently writing her Master thesis on activist interventions at Finland’s annual Independence Day Reception.

**Vitalija Truskauskaitė (Vytautas Magnus University)**

“A Vision of the Future Theatre from the Nazi Concentration Camp in Stutthof”

In 1943, Balys Sruoga, a writer and theatre critic, was imprisoned at the Stutthof concentration. During this time, he wrote articles on “The Romance Theatre”, “Reality in Theatrical Art” as a letter to his daughter Dalia. In this article he created a vision of theatre as a new theatre of poetics to be established after the war. In these articles he discussed the concepts of poetic theatre and of realistic theatre. Here, Balys Sruoga gave an idea of a possible future theatrical development that encourages the search for new means of expression in poetic theatre and new paths leading to humanism, by spelling out the purifying powers of catharsis and theatre as therapy for a person (or humanity) in crisis. Contemporary theatre practice in Lithuania encourages one to continue the dialogue with Balys Sruoga. Is Balys Sruoga’s poetic theatre alive in the works of individual directors, and does his vision still have the power to inspire contemporary Lithuanian theatre practices? My contribution will discuss individual performances, and their creators who deliberately maintain a dialogue with Balys Sruoga’s concept of poetic theatre or extend the horizons of poetic theatre aesthetics into the contexts of contemporary Lithuanian theatre. Hence, the performance of Kaunas National Drama Theatre and Utopia Theatre “Nathan the Wise” will be analysed as an example of a migrating utopia.

Vitalija Truskauskaitė is a lecturer of Theatre Studies, at the Faculty of Arts, Vytautas Magnus University. From 1992 to 1994 she was vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts, Vytautas Magnus University. Since 2010 she has edited the journals: Česlovo Milošo skaitymai. = Czesław Miłosz readings. Kultūrų sankirtos : patirtys ir pokyčiai = Intersection of cultures : experiences and developments. 2010, Vol.3. Česlovo Milošo skaitymai. = Czesław Miłosz readings. Tėvynės ieškojimas ir tremties patirtys = The search of Homeland and Experiences of Exile. 2011, Vol.4.

## **Wolf-Dieter Ernst (University of Bayreuth)**

### **“Jessner’s Acting School as Utopian Performance”**

Leopold Jessner (1878-1945) is known as the director of the Prussian State Theatre 1918-1931, Berlin’s former court theatre, which he helped transform into one of leading state-funded theatres during the short period of the young German democratic ‘Weimar Republic’. The time period after WWI, of course, could be related to Žižek’s notion of a crisis which calls for utopia. Especially Jessner’s production of Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*, which caused a scandal in 1919, not least due to its sparse, expressionist scenography, as well as the polemic writings of his numerous opponents from the far right and the extreme left, which targeted him both as a representative of the Social Democratic Party and as a Jew, would suggest such a line of thought. We know less about his communal work, which related him to Dolan’s idea of ‘utopian performances’. In this sense, this paper will focus on his continuous effort to bring together progressive minds and to change autocratic hierarchies within the theatre’s organization. In a case study, I will look at some of the social reforms and pedagogical activities that finally led to the foundation of Germany’s first state-funded acting class, at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin in 1925. By examining this historically important case, based on archival material, I will reveal an inner tension of utopian performance: the school as a safe space for peer-to-peer learning certainly has a potential for creating a temporal ‘utopian’ community. By the same token, nothing is more restricted than a formal education and professionalization. This was well understood by the school’s many outside opponents who would rather have seen Jessner closing down his institution than allowing pupils from all social strata to obtain degrees and get equal access to the stage profession funded by public money.

Wolf-Dieter Ernst is Professor of Theatre at Bayreuth University. He has published widely on postdramatic theatre, performance and media art. He is review editor of *Forum Modernes Theater*, and his books include *Psyche-Technik-Darstellung: Schauspieltheorie als Wissensgeschichte* (with Anja Klöck, Meike Wagner, Munich: ePodium 2015), *Der affektive Schauspieler: Die Energetik des postdramatischen Theaters* (Theater der Zeit 2012), *Performing the Matrix: Mediating Cultural Performance* (with Meike Wagner, Munich: ePodium 2008), and *Performance der Schnittstelle: Theater unter Medienbedingungen* (Passagen Publishers 2003). Wolf-Dieter Ernst has also contributed substantially to the development of the IFTR Intermediality, Theatre & Performance working group and he is convener (with Anja Klöck) of the Society for Theatre Research working group on Actors’ training.