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Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών *Υποκριτικής και*

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Μεταπτυχιακή Διατριβή



**Gay Theatre in Cyprus: Performance, Perception and
Reception**

Αντιγόνη Περικλέους

**Επιβλέπων Καθηγητής
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Η παρούσα μεταπτυχιακή διατριβή υποβλήθηκε προς μερική εκπλήρωση των απαιτήσεων για απόκτηση μεταπτυχιακού τίτλου σπουδών
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ΛΕΥΚΗ ΣΕΛΙΔΑ

Περίληψη

Το ομοφυλοφιλικό (Gay) θέατρο στην Κύπρο: Παραστάσεις, Προσλήψεις και Αντιλήψεις. Το θέμα της παρούσας μεταπτυχιακής διατριβής αποτελεί την εκτενή έρευνα σχετικά με το τι είναι Ομοφυλοφιλικό Θέατρο στην Κύπρο και την ανάδυσή του στο νησί. Η έρευνα επικεντρώνεται σε τρεις συγκεκριμένες παραστάσεις οι οποίες είναι: το μιούζικαλ *Το κλουβί με τις τρελές* του Ζαν Πουαρέ από το θέατρο ΕΝΑ σε σκηνοθεσία του Αντρέα Χριστοδουλίδη (2014), ο *Σκοτεινός Άγγελος* ένα ψυχολογικό δράμα βασισμένο στο ομώνυμο έργο του Φίλιπ Ρίπλεϊ *Βίνσεντ Ρίβερ* που ανέβηκε στο Θέατρο ΕΝΑ σε σκηνοθεσία του Μαρίνου Ανωγυριάτη το 2015 και, τέλος, η παραγωγή του έργου *Ποιο σώμα* βασισμένο σε αληθινά γεγονότα από ανώνυμο άτομο με δυσφορία γένους που παρουσιάστηκε στις Αποθήκες του ΘΟΚ σε σκηνοθεσία Κορίνας Κονταξάκη και Ελένης Κοσμά, το 2014. Οι πιο πάνω παραστάσεις επικεντρώνονται στα θέματα ταυτότητας και φύλου καθώς εκδηλώνουν και την αρχή του νέου θεάτρου στην Κύπρο: του Gay θεάτρου.

Η διατριβή, υποδιαιρείται σε Πρόλογο, δύο κεφάλαια, τα οποία είναι: αφενός το κεφάλαιο «Παραστάσεις»-και αφετέρου το κεφάλαιο «Προσλήψεις και Αντιλήψεις» και καταλήγει στον Επίλογο και τα αποτελέσματα της διατριβής μου. Το πρώτο κεφάλαιο, εναποθέτει μια εντατική έρευνα από τα επιλεγμένα έργα και τις παραστάσεις εκθέτοντας και δικαιολογώντας έτσι τα στοιχεία της εμφάνισης του Ομοφυλοφιλικού Θεάτρου στην Κύπρο. Το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο αρχίζει με μια ιστορική αναδρομή στην πρόσληψη της ομοφυλοφιλίας στον ελληνικό χώρο από την Ομηρική Εποχή, ενώ παράλληλα παρουσιάζει την έκφραση της σεξουαλικότητας και ανακαλεί τα στερεότυπα στη μοντέρνα εποχή. Στη συνέχεια αναφέρεται η αντίληψη του Ομοφυλοφιλικού Θεάτρου από τους Κύπριους θεατές. Η μεθοδολογία της έρευνας βασίζεται κυρίως πάνω στην ανάλυση των συγκεκριμένων παραστάσεων, όπως και επίσης και σε προσωπικές συνεντεύξεις με ηθοποιούς και σκηνοθέτες σχετικά με την ανάδυση του Ομοφυλοφιλικού θεάτρου στην Κύπρο. Επιπλέον, μέρος της έρευνάς μου πραγματοποιήθηκε μέσα από τη συμμετοχή μου, σε διάφορες εκδηλώσεις της ΛΟΑΤ (Λεσβία, Ομοφυλόφιλος, Αμφιφυλόφιλος και Transgender=Διαφυλικά) κοινότητας με αποτέλεσμα να διευρύνω και να κατανοήσω καλύτερα το συγκεκριμένο του θεματός μου. Περαιτέρω, η διατριβή αυτή βασίζεται σε δική μου έρευνα και διαμέσου προσωπικών προσπαθειών, συνεντεύξεων, ηλεκτρονικού ταχυδρομείου

και προσωπικής επικοινωνίας αφού δεν υπάρχει οποιαδήποτε κυπριακή βιβλιογραφία όπου μπορεί να στηριχτεί η έρευνά μου. Όλες οι προσπάθειες για να συγκεντρώσω τις πληροφορίες έχουν γίνει σε δια-προσωπικό επίπεδο και είχαν ως στόχο τη συλλογή ενός ευρύτερου φάσματος πληροφοριών έτσι ώστε να ολοκληρωθεί η έρευνα με τον πιο αξιόπιστο δυνατό τρόπο. Μέχρι τώρα, μια σειρά από σκέψεις, ιδέες και εμπειρίες, καθώς και απόψεις σχετικά με αμφιλεγόμενα θέματα, έχουν συγκεντρωθεί και εκπονηθεί για την εκπλήρωση των ερευνητικών μου στόχων. Ο σκοπός αυτής της έρευνας είναι σχετικός με το βαθμό που ρίχνει φως στις συνεισφορές της ΛΟΑΤ κοινότητας στον τομέα αυτό και αναγνωρίζει την ιδέα ότι η κοινωνική ισότητα πρέπει όχι μόνο να αγκαλιασθεί αλλά και να προωθηθεί.

Summary

Gay Theatre in Cyprus: Performance, Perception and Reception. This study entails a thorough investigation, centred on various performances, of Gay Theatre in Cyprus and its evolving emergence on the island of Cyprus. It also researches the terminology associated with and indicative of that theatre. My main focus lies in three specific presentations which are: *La Cage aux Folles* a farce by Jean Poiret, presented by TheatroEna and directed by Andreas Christodoulides in 2014; *Dark Angel* a psychological drama based on the play 'Vincent River' by Philip Ridley, also presented by TheatroEna and directed by Marios Anogiriatis in 2015; and lastly the *Which Body* production, which is a play based on an anonymous personal archive, presented at Apothikes of Cyprus Theatre Organisation, directed by Korina Kontaxaki and Elena Kosma in 2014. These performances focus on gender identity and may be recognised as manifesting the beginnings of a new theatre in Cyprus: Gay theatre.

This dissertation is consisted of: an Introduction, two chapters 'Performance, Perception and Reception' and a conclusion of my expectations. The main focus of research is based on the above three performances analysed in terms of performance, perception and reception. It starts with the first chapter and involves a thorough analysis of the three selected plays and their performance, thereby elucidating and validating the elements and the appearance of Gay theatre. The second chapter reflects on a historical account of perception going as far back as the Homeric era, illustrating attitudes to sexuality and opening perspectives on the

stereotypes of our modern times and moves on to reception where I examine how the general public conceives, reacts and relates to the appearance of Gay theatre in Cyprus. For the past year research has been carried out through attendance at a variety of performances and subsequent communication with the actors and directors involved in order to embrace their thoughts and ideas on what constitutes and justifies Gay theatre in Cyprus. Part of the research has been through personal attendance as a volunteer at several of the events organised by the Accept/LGBTI community. Furthermore, this research has had to be based on my own personal efforts at the micro-level, through individual interviews, emails and Facebook communication since there is no specific bibliography on Gay theatre in Cyprus or any useful information which my research can be based on, particularly given the fact that the subject is underexplored and that relevant written sources are scarce. So far, an array of thoughts, insights and experiences, as well as views on controversial issues, has been gathered and has been elaborated on. The purpose of this research is relevant to the extent that it throws light on the contributions of the LGBTI community in this field and acknowledges the idea that social egalitarianism is being embraced and promoted.

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Introduction

I believe in the classical liberal view of fundamental equality for all. However, it is a naive position to believe that this view is universally supported and adhered to. Despite the commitment to equality¹ and freedom from discrimination² expressed in the UN Declaration of Human Rights we still live in an era where discriminatory and prejudicial treatment of people exists, with a range of intolerant attitudes displayed towards others typically based on inequitable good examples of progressive attitudes can be seen in the more enlightened communities of the world. Revealingly, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated in a recent report (Associated Press Report, *Guardian*, 2015) that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people are victims of “pervasive violent abuse, harassment and discrimination” in all regions of the world, citing in evidence hundreds of hate-related killings from across the globe (Associated Press Report, *Guardian*, 2015). While Cyprus is free of the worst of these horrors the island still has its own repressive context for gay people.

To be gay in Cyprus means to live a life which should be understood as a compartmentalised and, in many ways, restricted existence. The structural forces which shape our society-namely our institutions, laws and media-in general reflect and, in some cases insist on, heteronormative compliance. The Church, for instance, as we shall see, expresses its own strident viewpoint in marginalising the ‘other’. Television plays a large part in reinforcing this attitude through depiction of homosexuality in narrow, stereotype forms. In his study of ‘Gay Dramaturgy in Modern Greece’ George Sampatakakis makes the point that Modern Greek culture took care not only to depoliticize the public image of “gay”, but also to simplify it, producing it in such a way as to allow the opt of heteronormative to be seen. Precisely because it is a process of construction and organization of social knowledge, a so-called sister (sissy) is traditionally tolerated in modern Greek myth only as comic not withstanding masculinity (examples are many such as: Fifi of

¹ UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 1) see in https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-5/8_udhr-abbr.htm

² UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 2) see in https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-5/8_udhr-abbr.htm

S.Parava, the Fairy, the Lelos of popular ads and the hairdressers of L.Lazopoulos) (Sampatakakis, 4). By reduction to stereotype the individual can be contained and traduced as caricature and parody.

There exists, however, a medium whereby repressive social conditions can be and are being challenged. Theatre is that medium. As Greeks, we are in direct line of descent from the Classical dramatists, the originators of what we understand as theatre. It was at this time that it was recognised that the medium has the potential, not only as entertainment but also as a power for political influence, for influencing the mind of the spectator. As Susan Bennett reminds us “In Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, the audience is marked as the recipient of the poets’ work: *Poets intend to give either pleasure or instruction or to combine the pleasing and instructive in one poem. As Aristotle’s Poetics became prescriptive text for the form of tragedy, so Horace’s dictum of delight and instruct has been used to judge the merits or otherwise of subsequent drama*” (Bennett, 1988,5).

For the LGBTI³ community equal rights are fundamental and they are warranted in expecting and enjoying the same level of equal rights as anyone else. This struggle for recognition of their human rights should not only be supported but also proclaimed in order to underwrite our own human dignity and integrity. As regards doing so, any form of Art can be seen as the vehicle for countering and ameliorating the bias of stereotypical attitudes. In this context, for every gay-themed theatrical performance it is the creation of a substantial, effective relationship between the performer and the receiver that enhances/ builds up the hope for, the awareness and finally the realisation of the acceptance and endorsement that every human being is entitled to; to be free from oppression, regardless of any sexual orientation or gender identity. With this in mind, the present work intends to look at what performances do to challenge heteronormative controls, examine the nature of the challenge facing Gay theatre in Cyprus in making positive use of its potential for influencing or even breaking the stereotype mould, elucidate the elements of its message, gauge its social relevance, for gay and non-gay, and to estimate the chances for its successful delivery.

My research, *Gay Theatre in Cyprus: Performance, Perception and Reception*, is a small contribution to the struggle for acceptance of the rights of the

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex

LGBTI community in the world but, more particularly, is aimed at supporting the Accept Community in Cyprus that strives for its human rights and dignity not only socially but politically and ethically. It is only recently that Gay Theatre here in Cyprus has made an entrance and has troubled the slumber of a passive, narrow-minded society which needs to be awoken; a society whose uninformed element needs to be enlightened about the bias of its stereotypes and patriarchal norms so that future generations may gain awareness and cultivate a spirit of equality, acceptance and co-existence within the community.

In defining what constitutes Gay theatre and what are its variables in the way of terminology, one may include the current commitment to free expression through the writing, staging and performance of homosexual life as it is to the general audience/public, without restrictions or biased inclinations. The nascent Gay Theatre in Cyprus has only recently made its debut on the stage, as it were; hence there is a need for new perceptions and it is an opportune moment for confronting homophobia amongst the Cypriot community. However, Queer Theatre is probably the term which is closer to my chosen gay-themed plays but I will maintain the term Gay Theatre for the fact and only that Queer Theatre derived from the gay theatre movement. 'Queer Theatre is the accepted generic term for the Gay theatre movement which embraces both men and women, that covers plays, musicals, cabaret and just about everything else' [which is non-heteronormative] and which has been going strong in Britain and America for well over forty years' (Billington, *TheGuardian*, 2012)

The rationale of my research leads me to an examination of whether Cypriot society is ready to embrace the appearance of Gay Theatre. It also entails exploration of the potential for the sustainability and further development of such types of Theatre, playing as it does to an audience which, at least in part, needs to confront its fear of anything coded as gay or different and which needs to liberate itself, even while the actors are facing their own fears when performing on stage in front of an unevenly receptive audience. Such attitudes and behaviour from both sides will be further explored and elaborated.

The virtue of personal freedom is a broad theme that is manifest throughout the theatrical world and validates the idea that Gay Theatre has much to offer to the Cypriot community. Nowadays, more and more directors are staging gay-themed plays which deliver the message that homosexual life or 'otherness' contains no inherent evil but, more positively, which characterise social behaviours that are just

as open to dramatization as heterosexual life. It is a call for change but change does not take place overnight. As it is, Gay theatre, in reaching out to the public, engages the individual in its endeavour; it cultivates the ground for raising awareness and sets the foundations of a new era against homophobia.

In other words, it seems almost inconceivable today, with the present abundance of openly gay playwrights and gay-themed plays, that less than fifty years ago a western drama critic for *The New York Times* felt the need to call for “social and theatrical convention” to be “widened so that homosexual life may be as freely dramatized as heterosexual life, may be as frankly treated in our drama as in contemporary fiction” (Roger, *The Julliard Journal*, Oct 2010). The impetus for Stanley Kauffmann’s 1966 article was his contention that three unnamed ‘reputed’ homosexual playwrights - clearly identifiable then and now as Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and Edward Albee - were presenting a “badly distorted picture of American women, marriage and society.” Although Kaufmann’s premise certainly may be debated, he does end up advocating that the gay playwright be free to write about himself and his world without having to “disguise his nature” (Roger, *The Julliard Journal*, Oct 2010). On this point hinges the idea that a playwright, a director, an actor and theatre as a whole should have the freedom to express gay themes and, in doing so, prepare the ground for a new kind of theatre in and for a society where prejudice and homophobia seem to thrive.

If Gay Theatre is defined as being by, for and about uncloseted gay people and ‘is taken to mean plays written by and for homosexuals, then it is true that there was almost no ‘gay theatre’ before that produced in the aftermath of the gay liberation movement of the early 1970s’ (Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002, 304). Consequently, such a definition contradicts and disarms the official diversity of twentieth-century gay culture hence it fails to take account of the inconsistencies and difficulties which were formed by the double movement of that culture since its establishment. There were two direction movements which were working simultaneously-the one towards the expansion of an autonomous subculture with its own sites and styles; the later towards the integration (often superficial and always troubled) of gay images, languages and individuals within the culture as an integrated part of a whole (Bartlett & Schiavi, (2002) 304). Therefore a range of theatres such as a glam drag act in a working-class pub, a radical drag version of Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in a fringe arts venue, a lesbian comedy thriller

in the same venue or a play about AIDS with a gay cast and an utterly straight staging of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* in which both director and star are gay men should be placed under the same umbrella (Bartlett & Schiavi, (2002) 304) and in such case an intersex person who suffers from gender dysphoria in the *Which Body* play and in which the play itself interpellates the issue of gender identity. However, regardless of the extensive social, cultural or political changes that took place over the twentieth century for the gay culture yet the writing and the production of theatre in general had remained largely a male operation (*Ibid.*, 304). On many occasions even today in the twenty-first century such sexist attitude is observed (an example towards female gender) when a man uses mansplaining⁴ on a woman which signifies that the male patronizing attitude continues to thrive in many aspects of our modern world. Nevertheless, it is only in the early 70s that the term 'gay theatre' can be honestly used to describe work by, for or about lesbian women as well as gay men'(Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002, 304).

Whilst all the above mentioned have been gathering pace in western civilization in an island like Cyprus the potential for social and cultural change for gay people has only just started to appear. The Cypriot community in general today is not ready to accommodate the 'different', nor it is ready yet to fully understand terms such as Lesbian or Queer Theatre for a plethora of reasons including its geographical position being at the cross-roads between East and West. Following centuries of foreign hegemony we are left with cultural, legal and religious influences from both sides that are not necessarily as beneficial to the gay community as it would perhaps like classifying the island closer to the Oriental/Middle-East civilization. Having said this, I do not mean that I imply or support the idea that Cypriot society has no potential for change, no means of accepting the 'different'; on the contrary my dissertation is an attempt to generate and influence future change in the upcoming generations through time and it is an attempt to promote, to voice the *other*, to empower people to come out, to strengthen gender identities and to raise awareness of homophobia and its issues.

⁴ Mansplaining: 'Stating accurate, verifiable facts. Especially when these facts are inconvenient to the feminist worldview, or contradict feminist talking points. It is often used by a feminists who makes an incorrect claim in support of their narrative, and someone responds with something refuting the feminist's claim, which she (usually it's a she) cannot counter. By claiming "mansplaining," she tries to pretend to have invalidated her opponents claim, even though she has not addressed it at all' see in <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=mansplaining>

This dissertation focuses on three performances which were staged in 2014 and consist of three different categories: **the queer comedy** (which plays with the social and cultural differences between straight and gay, where humour is created out of them rather than being directed at them – for instance the self-acknowledged theatricality of camp performance), **the homosexual genre** (which can be defined as those productions with explicitly gay themes and characters) and **the intersex genre** (which takes on socio-political gender constructs and reflects more subtle biological variation). The three specific performances are: the queer comedy, *La Cage aux Folles* (1978) a farce by Jean Poiret, presented by Theatro Ena and directed by Andreas Christodoulides; the homosexual genre *Dark Angel* (2014) a psychological drama based on the play *Vincent River* by Philip Ridley presented by Theatro Ena and directed by Marios Anogiriatis; and last the intersex genre *Which Body* (2014), which is a play based on the real notes of an anonymous writer presented at Apothikes of Cyprus Theatre Organisation directed by Korina Kontaxaki and Elena Kosma. The above performances revolve on gender orientation and identity and manifest the beginning of a new theatre in Cyprus: Gay theatre.

I have divided my paper into two chapters – ‘Performance’ and ‘Perception and Reception’. The main focus of my research is based on the above three performances and the impact they may entail on these fields of performance perception and reception. My research methodology is based on the general bibliography of Queer theory, which concerns the Gay theatre, and on those scholars working in the field such as David M. Halperin and his article «The Normalization of Queer Theory» where he states that ‘Queer theory has effectively re-opened the question of the relations between sexuality and gender both as analytic categories and as lived experiences’ (p.341); Bruce Henderson with a studied article on the theorist Eve K. Sedgwick in «Eve Kosofsky Sedwick and the development of gay literary studies» where we find revolutionary work in reorienting the definitions of sexuality and sexual identity in text and reader and the mutual implicative of both (p.378); the theorist Judith Butler who ‘questions the binary of sex, gender and the body [which] can be shown as productions that create the effect of the natural, the original, and the inevitable’ (p.viii) in *Gender Trouble* (1990); the theorist Susan Phelan with her essay «The Shape of Queer: Assimilation and Articulation» (1997) and who evaluates the usefulness of ‘queer’ as a political identity and whether it lends itself to coalitions and alliances for challenging heteronormativity (p.56); Susan

Benett and her book on *The Role of the Theatre Audience: A Theory of production and Reception* (1988) whose theory on reception has helped me understand how 'cultural systems, individual horizons of expectation and accepted theatrical conventions all activate the reception process and that all these are open to revision in the experience of performance' (p.iv); George Sampatakakis who has encouraged me to reflect on our Greek classical ancestors and their dramaturgy through his articles «Biology is not Destiny: Mask and Gender construction in Greek Theatre» illustrating that the mask in Greek theatre being used as a medium of gender concealment and gender construction (p.99) and «Gay Dramaturgy in Modern Greece: from the ideology of Sin to Queer Tragedies» which has helped me to understand the 'aesthetic and ideological typologies of gay dramaturgy in Greece' in 'gay plays with thematic motifs and ideological stereotypes'(p.1); finally, the theorist Sue Ellen Case observing in *Feminism and Theatre* observing that 'Reading within the text is quite a different matter from reading within the practice' (Ashton, 2008, x) and illustrating new directions in performance art.

I start with a thorough going analysis of the chosen plays and their performance, thereby exposing and justifying the elements and the appearance of Gay theatre. For the past year, I have been researching in the field by attending an array of performances and communicating with actors and directors, to embrace their ideas and thoughts on what constitutes Gay theatre in Cyprus. A further part of my research has been through attendance as a volunteer at several of the events organised by the Accept community in Cyprus the consequence of which is a broader, deeper understanding of the issues.

The second chapter is a historical account of perception going as far back as the Homeric era, examining how the spectator reads or decodes a theatrical play and illustrating the expression of sexuality while reflecting on the stereotypes of our modern times. In order to have a thorough understanding of the definition of audience perception we can say that in general the concept of perception is how we see the world, the way we think about, notice or understand someone or something by using one of our senses (*MerriamWebster*, 2016). However, in terms of theatrical conventions perception has a broader spectrum and its understanding lies in a plethora of interpretations and concepts made by contemporary cognitive scientists, linguists, psychologists, philosophers and dramatists who have studied cognitive areas such as perception, empathy, spatiality, emotions and meaning-making that

are crucial in enacting, producing and responding a theatrical image on stage (MacConachie & Hart, 2006,2). To be more precise, when performers represent on stage they produce an image, they act out their own visual interpretation of the story- a theatrical representation. A specific theatrical representation is transmitted to the spectators but it is interpreted by each one of them individually based on their 'background, maturity and social context' (Pantouvaki, 2012,120). We may reflect on the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty who would say that 'perception involves "lived bodiliness" and that "to perceive is to render oneself present to something to the body" since phenomenology and a cognitive approach to human minding begin at much the same place' (MacConachie & Hart, 2006,6).

Furthermore, in this chapter emphasis is also given to reception and I examine how the general public reacts to the appearance of Gay theatre in Cyprus. In terms of defining the audience's reception it may be described as 'the desire to know what people believe on the 'artefact or the experience' of the performance after leaving the theatre premises' (Reason, 2010,15). A theatrical representation or 'any work of art can only be completed through the engagement and within the experience of an audience' thus 'within this context the exact nature of the experience and its relationship to the social context, the reflective utterance and the performance event becomes vital' (*Ibid.*,15). This research has had to be based on my own personal efforts at the micro-level, through personal interviews, emails and Facebook communication with directors, actors and audiences since there is no specific bibliography on Gay theatre in Cyprus or readily available relevant information that my research can be based on, given the fact that the subject is sociologically and politically underexplored and relevant written sources are scarce. Personal interviews with directors and actors are intended to give perspective from one side of the curtain, to delineate on the one hand the rationale that lies behind production-that is, in terms of choice of play and organization of the technical and human elements that give it life-and on the other hand to get a sense of what motivates and informs performers in this kind of production. With audiences, given the potential numbers involved, personal interview must take second place to methods intended to elicit responses from as great a number as possible. The format for this is in the shape of a two part questionnaire. The first part (p.86) logs anonymous general details regarding age, gender, educational background, sexuality and basic perceptions of the gay scene. By its nature this part of the

questionnaire is limited in depth but the linked second sheet (p.88), which was handed out to willing interviewees for completion, has more potential for insight inviting, as it does, free comment on individual expectations, understanding, perceptions and reception of Gay theatre.

All attempts to glean information have been made at an inter-personal level and have had as an aim the gathering of as wide a spectrum of information as possible in the circumstances about the interviewees' attitudes and responses to both the context and actuality of the performances. So far, an array of thoughts, insights and experiences, as well as views on controversial issues, has been gathered and is being elaborated on in the fulfilment of my research purpose. The purpose of this research is relevant to the extent that it throws light on the contributions of the LGBTI community in this field and acknowledges the idea that social egalitarianism is being embraced and promoted not only via the messages conveyed regarding homosexuality but in the simple fact of putting on theatre of this type.

Chapter 1

Performance

This chapter provides a broad historical account of the emergence of Gay Theatre in western culture as well as reflecting on some current theories and discourses of how cultural systems influence the experience of performance. I examine how the plays are presented and look at how different genres are used to re-present gay individuality and counteract the 'mythologies' of stereotype in a Cypriot audience. I also provide a thorough analysis of the chosen plays and their performance thereby exposing and justifying the elements and the appearance of Gay theatre in Cyprus.

A story to be told

'Every performance is a kind of ritual. The story must be told. The dead must be remembered. The creation of the world must be explained. The feast requires song and celebration' (Miller & Roman, 1995,178).

Over this past year, I have been researching in this field by attending a range and variety of performances, talking with actors, directors and theatregoers in order to delve into and understand their ideas and viewpoints on what constitutes Gay theatre in Cyprus. Andreas Christodoulides, the director of *La Cage aux Folles*, was helpful from the outset. His personal views rested on the distinction between commercially interested productions chasing the money, as it were, and those which invited the audience to engage at a deeper intellectual and emotional level. On reflection and with this in mind, the selected three plays: *La Cage aux Folles* (2015) *Dark Angel* (2015) and *Which Body* (2014) have proved to be the ones which made most impact not only in reaching the audiences but also in drawing from the actors themselves a level of performance which so profoundly and professionally got to the heart and soul of the plays. They gave their utmost to the audience. Their personal engagement with each role was impressive to the extent that the story which was meant to be told could not fail to find its place in the heart and mind of the recipient (see Annex 1:C, 2:C, 3:C). Overall, the theatrical elements of each play - the director, the set design, the sound and lighting, the costumes and the actors' performances - were assembled, bound together and presented with such magnificent skill, style and conviction that audiences were unremittingly enthralled (see Annex 4:C, 5:C, 6:C) The ability to have a spellbound audience is a signal indication not only of the technical, professional aspects of the delivery but also reflects the engaging nature of the subject matter of the plays. Their success in capturing and impressing their audiences is significant insofar as they demonstrated an ability to transmit concept and message, wrapped in a magnetic aura. It is through this magical spell of the moment that the audience is able to consciously receive and understand the true meaning of the play and eventually find awareness of the underlying moral.

As a perspective on the process of how gay performance came out of the 'closet' it is essential to examine Bartlett's book *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre* who made the point that 'the twentieth century has been a period of extraordinary rapid social change for gay people, but within all this diversity and change one factor has remained until recently constant. The writing and production of theatre have remained largely male operations, and it is not until the early 1970s that the phrase 'gay theatre' can be honestly used to describe work by, for or about gay men' (Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002, 304-308). It is further explained that

the 'complications of what might be meant by the phrase 'gay theatre' pre-date the coining of the terms (and identities) 'homosexual' and 'gay' in the late nineteenth century. By the turn of the nineteenth century, at the end of a forty-year period in which both the subculture and its collisions with the world of culture had produced increasingly confident gay styles, the distinctive features of the gay theatre of our own century had been set' (Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002,304).

By this time, namely the end of the nineteenth century, what could be seen as Gay theatre had settled into two modes. On the one hand, the most continuous and the richest theatrical tradition has been that of the drag artist, developed from the theatrical devices surrounding the 'men only' conventions of the early stage. Their work, more often than not unscripted and undirected, has been the least honoured and the least documented because it is a popular (i.e. working-class) tradition. It must also be said that not all drag artists have been or are necessarily homosexual. The second mode is typified by what Bartlett calls the 'problem play' undoubtedly, built upon early works such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) by Oscar Wilde, *At St. Judas* (New York, 1896) by John B. Fuller and *The Black Cat* (1893) by John Todhunter, to name a few.

The gay element of such plays reflects homosexuality as some kind of complication, dilemma or issue for one or more of the characters. Bartlett and Schiavi, described the 'problem play' as 'the most extensive section of any bibliography of gay theatre; it will include both plays in which homosexuality is a minor, decorative problem (*The Black Cat*) and plays in which 'the problem of homosexuality' is the main dramatic interest (*The Blackmailers* or Mart Crowley's infamous *The Boys in the Band*, 1968).

By 1969, the year in which the Stonewall riots in New York signalled the beginning of the Gay Liberation movement, the ground had been well prepared for a new bloom to appear. Gay liberation was the vehicle and the catalyst for a type of theatre which had not only gay writers, performers and producers but also a gay audience; a theatre not only by and about but also, significantly, entirely for homosexuals. It entirely disrupted the spectrum of theatrical forms as well as changing forever the meaning of 'gay theatre'. Although there had been explorations of the idea of playing to a gay audience in the club and cabaret culture of, for instance, the Harlem Renaissance and pre-Hitler Germany, this theatre had in fact never existed before (Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002,306). 'It proposed that gay women and

gay men should work together to create a radical gay culture. Its main political tactic, 'coming out' - ceasing to pretend, behaving in public as an evident homosexual - made the enormous number of plays in which straight writers and performers had made such a drama of speaking as or for gay people seem immediately dated and rather distasteful' (*Ibid.*,306).

When Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* opened for an extensive run in 1968 New York audiences, amongst whom gay people, were invited to see gay characters portrayed openly onstage. Despite the justifiable objections raised by many gay people, undoubtedly self-empowered in the new atmosphere of militancy brought on by the Stonewall riots, which recognised unwelcome stereotyping in the characterisation of homosexuality, what it effectively meant was that the stage was now set for plays with specific gay themes. Of course, these now began to appear much more frequently.

On analysis, the majority of gay themed plays from the 1970s can be variously categorised. The preponderance of writing at this time, however, was keen to explore, in a heady atmosphere of newly found freedom, the exact nature of gay relationships. Sometimes it concerns two gay men who are lovers and are living together (as in *La Cage aux Folles*), sometimes two gay men who are only roommates or simply getting acquainted with each other. In the event, playwrights became concerned with the ways that gay men might find to deal with each other while, in their structuring of the dramatic technique, avoiding falling into the trap of using conventional heterosexual role models. Following on as a subdivision of the 'relationship' play are those centred on the difficulties encountered in relationships specifically between men who are of significantly different ages. Perennial objections within the gay community have been raised about the unwarranted and unrealistic emphasis placed on youth and beauty in some gay male subcultures. It is usually to address this reaction that the 'old/young' scenario is set. 'Coming out' plays, too, describe a significant proportion of the new theatre. In the face of possible negative reaction from family, friends, colleagues or the public in general, open admission of homosexuality can be fraught, to say the least. 'The recent political emphasis on conservatism and the "new morality" have made it difficult for another generation of gay people to acknowledge their homosexuality openly; these plays delineate the difficulties gays encounter' (Bartlett & Schiavi, 2002,306).

In terms of the performance itself Graff claimed that it 'opens up an ephemeral space of autonomy for alternative voices that allows for the resignification of official history and culturally institutionalised 'truth' (Graff, 2001,14). Furthermore, he argued that 'performance has become a cultural practice for marginalised groups, while Kistenberg argues that it is precisely the transitory nature of performance that makes it attractive for oppositional political intervention' (*Ibid.*,14). Graff, when talking about the rise of performance art in America in the context of anti-Vietnam War activism in the sixties and seventies, reflects Kistenberg's comments: "performance [may be] considered valuable because of its ephemeral quality-a quality that makes it economically subversive" (*Ibid.*,14). 'More important however performance art has been theorised as an instrument of constant negotiation, as an incessant series of unrepeatable events, a sort of artistic counter strategy aiming at destabilising political, economic, social and—in the case of early feminist performance-gender relations' (*ibid.*,14).

Yet in ontological terms Graff illustrates the Phelan theory (Phelan, 1993,146) in which:

'Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being...becomes itself through disappearance' (Phelan,1993,146).

In other words, as Graff examines in his article referring to Phelan's theory performance is no longer primarily defined as social and political intervention, but as a 'cultural practice resisting the logic of reproduction and storage' (Graff, 2001,15). While reproduction transforms representation into a commodity, an entity which circulates within global capitalism, and is inevitably appropriated by a postmodern knowledge of sending and storing sustained by contemporary information technology, performance opens up a space which eludes this system of general availability (*Ibid.*,15). Moreover, Graff claimed that the reproduction of representations, by transforming a cultural practice into an entity which can be stored and identically reactivated, not only necessarily generates an identity effect but simultaneously negates the absence of what is excluded in representation (*Ibid.*,15).

And he continues arguing that 'representation in Performance Theory, if fixed in a text, is conceived of as an artistic cult of the dead; what is absent in representation is buried within the text, fixed as and in an absence which is again negated in every actualisation of that text. Performance, in contrast is recast as a temporary and instable enactment of (self)-disappearance, an enactment which can be neither repeated nor reproduced. Therefore, it does not attempt to negate what is excluded by negatively fixing it in a text; it is the space of an always already impossible utopia' (Graff, 2001,15).

Similarly, in every performance, as Davy mentioned, there is a reader or spectator implicit in and necessary for every text or performance, rejecting the concept of an '*a priori*' text. The text only has value as a result of the activity of reading. 'While reader response theory does not assume that a text is an objective entity that exists totally separate from our reading of it, it also does not imply that the text is merely a subjective invention generated by the reader's imagination. During the process of reading, the reader's imagination fills in what is not there, but that which is not there is nonetheless directed by the text's intention. Intention is immanent in the text. The reader both fills in and fulfils what is already implicit in the text, including the presumed gender and sexual orientation of the reader' (Davy, 1986,44).

Furthermore, Davy posited that 'while performance concretises physically-visually and aurally-what a text merely suggests, it is no less dependent on a reading of it than its words would be in scripted form. If a script demands more effort-requires more on the part of the reader's imagination-a performance is infinitely more complex in the demands of its reading patterns and codes. In the dimension of time alone, a performance does not allow the reader to stop and reread a passage-the spectator must keep pace with the performance, moment-to-moment deciphering its codes while responding intellectually and emotionally to them'(Ibid.,44).

In relation to the first play, *La Cage aux Folles*, it can be said that here was a play where the director and the performers needed to build up their narrative and present it in such a way that alienation would be avoided, the audience would be retained and the homosexual voice would be heard. As a parallel, Davy's insights regarding the content of lesbian performance are illustrated in that, 'while the content is not exclusively lesbian, lesbians and lesbian issues are presented alongside heterosexual concerns throughout the performance'(Ibid., 45) Similarly, the director

of *La Cage aux Folles* has presented a gay performance which 'included all of the performing styles which constitute gay theatre such as the combination of blue rhythm, mime, 'dancing drag queens' (as designated in Helbing's article on *Gay Plays, Gay Theatre, Gay Performance*) some strenuous tap routines, androgynous politics and old-fashioned star quality' (Helbing, 1981, 44).

In this particular comedic play the aim was to carry over a picture of those same problems of life, love, career and general *Weltschmerz*⁵ as would be recognised in any heterosexual outlook. It was not a play whose main concern was simply to entertain but rather a play reflecting and dependent on the complexity of the main characters Armand and Albert who have been in a relationship for over twenty years. They run the eponymous nightclub. Together they have both raised their son (Armand's offspring from a previous short-lived involvement) in a relationship modelled on the nuclear family. Albert, also known by his stage name Starina, is the star of *La Cage* - a nightclub drag queen so extrovert and unconstrained in his effeminate affectations that the audience might feel that he is about to self-ignite right before their eyes. The actor who takes on the role of Albert/Starina (Sotiris Mestanas) has taken to his/her character and mannerisms with such aplomb and determination that subtlety takes a back seat to theatrical swagger. Never mind that he doesn't have that classic singing voice. Instead he uses his unrestrained energy to capture the moment and delivers his renderings with such energy that the songs have a real, dramatic impact on the audience. His partner Armand (played by Manolis Michaelides), the owner of the club, although initially presented as apparently straight, actually comes over as explicitly gay. His character

⁵ *Weltschmerz*, German for "world pain," was also coined during the Romantic Era and is in many ways the German version of *ennui*. It describes a world weariness felt from a perceived mismatch between the ideal image of how the world should be with how it really is. In German philosophy it was distinguished from pessimism, the idea that there is more bad than good in the world, because while pessimism was the logical conclusion of cool, rational philosophical pondering, *weltschmerz* was an emotional response. Though *weltschmerz* and *ennui* are pretty close synonyms, *ennui* foregrounds the listlessness brought on by world weariness (it can also be a term for more simple boredom), and *weltschmerz* foregrounds the pain or sadness. There is perhaps a greater sense of yearning in *weltschmerz* (part of the pain is that the sufferer really wants the world to be otherwise). Also, as an English word, *weltschmerz* is not as common as *ennui*, so there are fewer connotations about the type of person that comes down with it. Its very German sound (that "schm"!) makes it seem more serious and grim than *ennui*. (Okrent, 2014) in <http://mentalfloss.com/article/58230/how-tell-whether-youve-got-angst-ennui-or-weltschmerz>

is more subtly animated, only occasionally revealing a deeper, controlled energy. Alongside them is Spartakos (played by Diomedis Koufteros) who revels in the role of butler/maid and where he seems to relish every second of his appearances (see Annex 1:C). In his various wigs, make up, heels and revealing, feminine costumes he takes on the persona of an apparent weightlifter moonlighting as a drag queen.

As a Broadway musical the play would take to being presented on a larger scale, on an overblown stage with all the Folies Bergères⁶ style costumes, sparkly makeup, extravagant hairdos and high-kicking, show-girl legs that go with it. However, in the smaller and more intimate setting of Theatro Ena the show has a different impact and would appear to stay closer to its original intentions. Those familiar with the background to the show - its beginnings in 1973 as a French farce followed by the ground breaking French film, the Broadway musical, then the non-musical American film version - should be familiar with the idea that La Cage nightclub on the Riviera was always intended to be an intimate scale, underground club for adults, something similar to the setting of the cabaret. The Theatro Ena stage nicely captures that smaller and more intimate setting, which allows for the development of the farcical elements of the performance far more effectively than any larger arena could ever hope to manage. The music director and choreographer George Demopoulos has contributed to the flavour of the production with his sense of verve and energy. Niovi Kostandinou's set design was eye-catching and effective in its use of available space and then brought to life by director Andreas Christodoulides' brilliant, psychedelic, semi-hypnotic lighting. It has to be said that under Christodoulides' sharp direction *La Cage Aux Folles* can be easily be called a small triumph of a production. With its showbiz glitz, memorable songs - such as 'Raining Men' and 'Queen of the Night' - and its outrageous humour, *La Cage*, in many ways, is the show that the Theatro Ena team must have felt had been written especially for them.

Moving on to the second selected production, *Dark Angel*, director Marinos Anogiriatis has taken on the theme of Philip Ripley's play *Vincent River* to powerfully illustrate the circumstances surrounding an appallingly sadistic killing. It is presented with a stark simplicity that belies the intricacies of its language and

⁶ 'A Parisian music hall founded in 1869 and noted for the lavish spectacle and mildly risqué content of its entertainments' in <http://www.dictionary.com/browser/foles-bergere>

imagery. The play itself conveys powerfully the way in which strongly held beliefs can be shown to be empty chimaeras and insubstantial fictions. Within families, while they remain unchallenged, they prop up the familial construct to the detriment of the group, via its interrelationships and the individuals defined and constricted within them. Ridley scatters poetic fragments throughout, like Ariadne's thread leading to the supposed safety of home and the director builds the play at a measured, slow pace without losing emotional intensity. Erica Begeti as Anita and Andreas Makris as Davey barnstorm their roles, bringing substance to the text and clear articulation to the subtext of the play.

A 53-year old woman, whose son Vincent has recently been the victim of a brutal hate crime, finds herself a victim on the receiving end of the malicious intolerance of her neighbours. She is driven to abandon the flat in the East End of London that has been her family home for over thirty years. Instead she is forced to move into a dingy, isolated apartment (Michalis Stylianoudis skilfully evoking a depressing, funereal atmosphere with his minimalist set and costume design). Unexpectedly a distraught, seventeen year old youth appears at her door claiming to have been the one who first discovered the beaten, broken body of her son. There then follows a bleak, and ultimately heart-breaking, exposition of the way bigotry and prejudice can wreak havoc in the lives even of two ostensibly well-meaning and caring souls. The two actors between them take on homophobia with a vengeance. They connect the casual acceptance of prejudice to real lives, and deaths, and grieve over the results of hatred. Through Ridley's adaptation, the preconceptions of an unquestioning, narrow mindset are shown to lead almost inevitably to disaster even as the nature of sexual prejudices make it difficult to open up to those closest to us. The two characters, Anita and Davey, in facing up to the failures and misjudgements of their individual histories are forced to come to terms with the taint of prejudice and to recognise the fragility of even the most sacred of family bonds in the corrosive environment it engenders. Anogiriatis has drawn from Erica Begeti a highly effective performance in portraying Anita as the resilient and resourceful but calloused product of a demanding and overburdened life while allowing us at the same time to see through the veil to the vulnerable, caring heart that lies behind it. Before she has had a chance to develop any level of empathy with her visitor Anita is allowed to take out her frustrations on him, cool, dismissive and disdainful. Even at a moment of implicit motherliness, as she treats the black eye with which he first

appears, she is standoffish and tries to maintain her indifference with casual humour. Nonetheless, Anogirgiatis' Anita has retained sufficient sensitivity to allow some seeds of compassion to take root. In a climactic monologue Davey delivers a speech that has a profound effect on Anita, although her reactions appear on the surface to be cold and unmoved. In fact the hard shell is maintained so well that when the tiniest of cracks appear, the slightest of tears, the smallest expressive movement, they are by contrast all the more telling. As for Davey, a troubled psyche, a complex of emotion, bewilderment and diffidence, Andreas Makris succeeds in drawing in the audience, getting it to empathize with what might otherwise have come across as a pathetic and weak personality. He particularly made us feel the tension created by seeing Anita as a mother figure reflected in the dark mirror of his real mother.

The director has set the stage in a frame to give the appearance of a picture or a stage within a stage. It is used as an active device for instance when one actor can step out of it, step out of the audience's focus, while still remaining on stage. More interestingly though, it allows for the director to set up action which appears at one more dramatic remove from reality. 'The conditional mode of a world on the stage, presented from an individual and subjective point of view, remains visibly merely in the deliberately displayed unnaturalness of movements and gestures, in the theatricality of stage figures and their relations' (Sugiera, 2002, 234). This is highly effective in those scenes where Davey is relating his own personal dreams and memories. They are played out, recreated in fact, as photographic elements within this context. The dead Vincent can come back to life. The director's intention is evidently to transform the play into reality through the use of 'mental operations: the laws of memory, imagination and dream' (*Ibid.*,234).

As the final curtain falls there is a feeling in the air that redemption is possible-it is through honesty in our personal relationships that absolution can be found.

The third play *Which Body* directed by Korina Kontaxaki and Eleni Kosma makes shivers run up the audience's spine. Korina Kontaxaki and Eleni Kosma employ as perhaps some of Tony Kushner's powerful incentive tools in terms of imagination (which will be elaborated at a later stage) in transforming the real writings of an anonymous person with 'gender dysphoria' from something hopeless into something promising and great. Joanna, played by Marina Mandri, is

given to sequestering herself in her room, unsociable and introverted, as a shield against the intrusive demands of others. Her conflicting inner self is played by Giorgos Anayiotos as a separate male character, Paris. As she grows older the conflict develops with Paris starting to express his own identity more and more, particularly through his art work. His demands on her increase in the search for external recognition until Joanna is pushed to confide in her close friend Katie (played by Nayia Anastasiadou). When Paris and Katie fall in love with each other the conflict shifts to involve a resolute mother who cannot see her daughter as anything other than female. Love cannot be sustained and the tragedy plays itself out.

Which Body was selected from amongst several productions submitted under the PLAY programme, co-organised by the Cyprus Theatre Organisation and the Cyprus Centre of International Theatre Institute. At the culminating award ceremony the Best Acting Male Award was given to Giorgos Anayiotos for his role as Paris and this is probably an official acknowledgment about a theatrical gay-themed play insinuating/assuming the official rise of Gay Theatre in Cyprus.

The set and costume design (by Giorgos Chiotis), notable for their simplicity, were instrumental in pushing characterisation to the forefront of the performance. The use of subdued lighting against a dark background led to the creation of a stage setting where focus necessarily fell almost exclusively on the actors themselves. In this way the characters stood exposed to the scrutiny of the audience whose attention then could be directed to the arguments being vocalised before them. The production corresponds nicely with the assertion that 'drama is not safely located in an affirmative community but is a cultural practice of negotiation between queer communities and society at large' where 'the stage can be defined as the 'debating platform of society' and the 'debates' triggered off by gay plays often enough expose the structures and strategies of homophobia by effecting reactions making explicit the limits for the representation of gay men on mainstream stages'(Graff, 2001,23).

Marina Mandri's role as Joanna was more than challenging but her characterisation and delivery succeeded to the extent that the audience could take her message to heart (see Annex 7:C) In an interview at the City Press monthly magazine she stated that 'it was the most difficult and interesting role I had undertaken to perform' (City Press, 29/10/2014). The director Korina Kontaxaki

also stated during personal online communication with her that 'this play wasn't to shock or provoke the audience but to make it remember the play' (messenger, 13/01/2016). She avoided sex scenes and made the production as minimalist as possible so that the audience would not be distracted by the setting from registering the viewpoints expressed by the protagonists-that people dealing with gender dysphoria may well be living right next door and that they are human beings just as entitled as us to respect for their individuality. In essence we learn from the play that the external aspect of a body does not necessarily coincide with the spirit within and that for someone our misrecognition of this truth can only bring misery.

However, it is essential here to reflect on Schechner's reference that 'Performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories. Performances-of art, rituals, or ordinary life-are "restored behaviours", "twice-behaved behaviours"' (Schechner, 2002,28) and that 'restored behaviour includes a vast range of actions' in which people 'perform on their daily lives without even being aware of performing' therefore as Schechner suggests 'because performances are marked, framed and separate' then restored behaviour can be worked on, stored and recalled, played with, made into something else, transmitted, and transformed'(Schechner, 2002,35).

Graff in his article illustrates that 'the absolute presentness of performance, the fact that it can neither be linked to the past in a definite or normative way nor be stored for or reproduced in the future, marks performance as a cultural practice which is a copy without original and at the same time an original without a copy' (Graff, 2001,17-18). Whilst Schechner points out on his ritual theory which conceives itself as an inter-discipline that 'Accepting, 'inter' means opposing the establishment of any single system of knowledge, values or subject matter' (Schechner, 2002,24). The focus on the 'inter' on the liminality constitutive for any ritualistic practice defines performance exclusively (in terms of structure) and inclusively (in terms of subject matter) as a "mode of embodied activity whose spatial, temporal, and symbolic 'betweenness' allows for dominant norms to be suspended, questioned, played with, transformed" thus establishing a "liminal-norm" which claims an imperative of transgression' (Graff, 2001,18).

However, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter* theorises both the restrictive and productive/transformational dimensions constitutive for any

performance' (*Ibid.*, 19). In this specific performance, *Which Body*, we need to recall Butler's differentiation between performativity as a compulsory citational logic of discourse and performance as a citational practice of embodiment claims a constitutive gap or fissure within any performative act, thus introducing a difference which marks the point of "disidentification" (Graff, 2001, 19). Butler gives the following explanation by illustrating an example: if 'one is said to assume a 'sex' the grammar of the phrase creates the expectation that there is a 'one' who, upon waking, looks up and deliberates on which "sex" it will assume today, a grammar in which "assumption" is quickly assimilated to the notion of a highly reflective choice. But if this assumption is compelled by a regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality, one which reiterates itself through the forcible production of "sex" then the assumption of "sex" then the "assumption" of sex is constraint from the start. And if there is agency, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands. The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity' (Butler, 1993, 12). Therefore in explaining the term performativity Butler claims that «performativity» is not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' and that 'this act is not always theatrical since its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated (and, conversely, its theatricality gains and certain inevitability given the impossibility of a full disclosure of its historicity)' (Butler, 1993, 12-13) In conclusion 'within a speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (*Ibid.*, 13) For instance in *Which Body* Joanna's friend Kate utters " Are you a Lesbian?" (Scene 6, 2014, 15) it appears that it is 'virtue of the power of a subject or its will that a

phenomenon is named into being' (Butler,1993,13). In terms of disidentification⁷ the subject goes through a subjugation. The term itself illustrates that 'disidentification is about cultural, material, and psychic survival. It is a response to state and global power apparatuses that employ systems of racial, sexual and national subjugation. These routines protocols of subjugation are brutal and painful. Disidentification is about managing and negotiating historical trauma and systemic violence' (Munoz,1999,161) Similarly, in the *Which Body* play the protagonist Joanna inner self is in a constant struggle with the outer self. The moment where her friend Kate utters the word 'Lesbian', it is in that moment where Joanna uses disidentification upon herself (see Annex 8:C).

Moreover, 'queer theatricality, as theorised by Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter* must be understood as a field of sexual contestation in which resignifying practices can be mobilised by a performative excess' and in 'contrast to Schechner's definition of ritual, Butler's broader understanding of performance as a necessarily theatrical practice of everyday life;' 'in fact her definition of performance as a citational practice producing viable subjects reconceptualises performative acts not only as constitutive elements of a regulatory social compulsion to repeat, but at the same time as the basis of identity itself'(Graff, 2001,20). And 'while Performance Studies promotes a detheatricalising of dramatic practices, that is, favours attempts to create a space in which the authentic can temporarily appear and generate an effect on the organisation of society, Butler opts for a metatheatricality exposing all authenticity as a cultural construct generated by a theatrical citational logic' (*Ibid.*,20). In other words, 'Queer drama is metatheatrical drama' and by theatricalising theatricality, that is, by exposing the necessary excess defining theatricality itself, queer plays aim at the denaturalisation of sex and gender through strategies of resignification'(Graff, 2001,21)

⁷The capacity for disidentification can develop in two ways: The first is by increasing the capacity to tolerate greater distance from certain self-representations, which allows us to experience being more easily. The second way for the capacity for disidentification develops is that our overall self-representations becomes so much more complete that our identity becomes very flexible. This ultimately leads to a strong general capacity for disidentification such that we can be disidentified for the overall self-representation while still maintaining our identity. This capacity requires thorough clarification that is, objective understanding and seeing through delusions regarding the various segments of our self-representation. It also requires a measure of balance in our spiritual development : balance in relation to mind, heart and body for example; balance in relation to stillness and movement, knowledge and expression and so on' (*The Point of Existence*, p.128)
<http://www.ahalmaas.com/glossary/disidentification>

So, just as ‘Tony Kushner’s production in *Angels in America* which serves as precondition for the possibility of a metatheatrical theatre which exposes conventions of both realistic theatre and magical moments in drama’ (*Ibid.*,22) the same can be alluded in *Which Body* when, for example, in the sixth scene Katy sees for the first time Paris and hugs him (Scene 6, p.16) and (see Annex 8:C). Therefore, this scene ‘exposes the magic to be culturally fabricated but simultaneously reintegrates the transcendence’ that in this case Paris ‘is supposed to represent into the cultural sphere’ (*Ibid.*,22) Graff further concludes that in Kushner’s essay “On Pretentiousness”⁸ that the ‘overstuffing of a play that cannot contain all it is supposed to contain, breaks up any conventional form and generates an excess which must be understood to be an exposure of the theatrical’ (*Ibid.*,22); and also that ‘Kushner employs to describe the denaturalising effect his metatheatrical plays aim at is *fabulousness* and it is precisely this fabulousness that he defines as a practice of resignification: ‘I think that there is a way in which people take hatred and transform it into some kind of style that is profoundly moving to me because it shows people’s enormous capacity, or the enormous power of the imagination to transform suffering into something powerful and great’(Graff, 2001,22).

To conclude this chapter, I will cite a quote from Heraclitus (535-475 BCE)⁹ in his effort to establish his notion that the universe was in flux. He used the example of a river and stated that “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man”(www.goodreads.com) Every

⁸ “Kushner writes amusingly ‘On Pretentiousness’ about his method of playmaking, comparing it to the preparation of his mother’s recipe for lasagne. “American Things” provides an intellectual autobiography of Kushner, sketching in those events of the last forty years of political and social history in America that have most influenced his thinking, and “With a Little help from my friends” offers Kushner’s expression of gratitude to the numerous individuals he credits with guiding him toward the completion of *Angels*’ (Fisher, (2001)209) see also “Embracing pretentiousness as a trope, as a stratagem and a tool, becoming ironically aware rather than ashamed of grandiosity, enables us to make literary and perhaps political hay out of the distance between what we would like to have done, and what we have actually accomplished.” (122)

Not only does allowing grandiosity on stage make apparent the playwright’s spectacular imagination, but it also depicts the yawning chasm between the social “need for action” and the writer’s ability to urge its audience to act upon the proposed need. To attempt this is an act of pretentiousness, according to Kushner.

<http://christiine-mc.livejournal.com/1938.html>

⁹ ‘Heraclitus believed that the universe was governed by a divine *logos* or reason. This fundamental law of the universe held all things in perfect balance. According to Heraclitus, the unity of the universe is composed of a balancing of opposites. Day becomes night and hot will become cold. The continuous changing of reality was the one fundamental constancy within the cosmos. This belief lead Heraclitus to the conclusion that all things are always in flux and that the only thing that did not change was change itself’ see in <http://classicalwisdom.com/heraclitus-535-475-bce/>

performance is an existence, a repetition of a previous repetition and has a new story and meaning to decode. In my attempt to illustrate the three gay-themed plays I have come to the realization that in terms of extracting information, it was not as easy as I initially thought mainly in contacting the directors. I have only managed to meet with Korina Kontaxaki, director of *Which Body*. I feel that she and her team have proven to the public that homophobia is a concept that diminishes the Cypriot community not only culturally but also spiritually and that sexual identity and gender orientation is a human right. Her contribution in directing this play was enormous and worth mentioning since *Which Body* is the first Cypriot gay-themed play which was chosen and hosted by the Athenian director Menelaos Karantzas to go on stage on the 9th of May 2016 at the Angelon Vima Theatre in Athens, Greece.

Chapter 2

Perception and Reception

In this chapter, I reflect on our Greek ancestral tradition of homosexuality and seek answers to what has brought the change of behaviour in our times in the case of Cyprus. I also make reference to the division of the island, the religious imposition and impact that affect the perception and reception of the modern Cypriot as well as the government's perspective on sexual relationships. I also explore theories on the context of modern Gay Theatre within the three plays, the difficulties that arose from the mythologies of the director, actors and audience. Last but not least, I explore the actual reception of the productions in audience participation, their reaction and acceptance.

Heroes and lovers

We Greeks have a deep historic attention to the expression of sexuality. This expression is characterised in many forms going even back to the time of Homer and beyond. We only need to think of the relationships between the heroes and their 'Hetairoi', famous men and their boyfriends of whom Achilles and Patroclus, Pylades and Orestis, Harodius and Aristogeiton, Solon and Peisistratus, Socrates and Alcibiades, Epaminondas and Pelopidas are among the most well-known.

Philosophers, statesmen and presumably the ordinary man in the street had no conception of abnormality in this aspect of sexual relationships; in fact on the contrary they looked on it as one of the institutions of society and mostly as an educational medium in 'moulding noble and virtuous citizens' (Neill, 2009,169). More graphically, illustrations abound on cups and vases showing the homosexual interaction of Greek orgiasts as well as the seductions of Zeus and the other gods. The 7th century BC lyricist and performance artist Sappho has become the paradigm exponent of Lesbian love. Right up to the present century Sappho's name is synonymous with female homosexuality, lesbian and Sapphic.

Furthermore, instances and examples of cross dressing can be found presumably dating back to pre-literate times, evidenced in the cult of *Aphroditus*¹⁰. Numerous passages have also been passed down to us in literature that convey the same level of equanimity toward open discussion of homosexual attraction and displays of cross-dressing.

Perhaps the classical Greek view can best be summed up in the words put in the mouth of Aristophanes in Plato's *The Symposium*:

“Each of us is the mere broken tally of a man...and each of us is perpetually in search of his corresponding tally. Those men who are halves of a common sex... are lovers of women. Women who are halves of a female whole direct their affections toward women... But those who are halves of a male whole pursue males...Such are the best of their generation... It is not shamelessness which inspires their behaviour, but high spirit and manliness and virtue.” (Plato, 1951,62)

However, there is also evidence that the Greeks disapproved of homosexuality and these can be found in the negative comments about homosexuality such as those made by Xenophon, and the scathing parodies in the plays of Aristophanes of prominent Athenians known for their homosexual proclivities (Neill, 2009,174). In James Neill's book *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (2009) the author cites from an array of scholars who have claimed that homosexuality was not accepted by all Greeks. Arno Karlen, a psychiatrist who produced a widely read study of homosexuality in 1971, claimed that homosexuality was never widely accepted by Greeks, only by a “tiny leisured upper class.”(Neill, 2009,173). He wrote in 1980 that only “a minority, even of the Greek upper classes,

¹⁰ *Aphroditus* or *Aphroditos* (Ancient Greek: Ἀφρόδιτος) was a male Aphrodite originating from Amathus on the island of Cyprus and celebrated in Athens in a transvestite rite.

Aphroditus was portrayed as having a female shape and clothing like Aphrodite's but also a beard and phallus, and hence, a male name. This deity would have arrived in Athens from Cyprus in the 4th century BC. In the 5th century BC, however, there existed hermae of *Aphroditus*, or phallic statues with a female head. According to Macrobius, who mentions the goddess in his Saturnalia, identifies this male-female god with the Moon and says that; at its sacrifices men and women exchanged clothing. Philostratus, in describing the rituals involved in the festivals, said that the image or the impersonator of the god was accompanied by a large train of followers in which girls mingled with men because the festivals allowed "women to act the part of men, and men put on woman's clothing and play the woman."

In the western culture of theater, acting and dram, this god was worshiped as the inspiration of theatrical expressions' See in <http://d4nations.com/webpubl/articles/aphroditus-or-aphroditos-.html>

encouraged, approved or easily tolerated homosexuality,” and that “clearly heterosexuality was the encouraged norm, as it has been in every society past and present.”(Neill, 2009,173). As it is, Karlen here repeats the common assumption which places homosexuality in opposition to heterosexuality, assuming that encouragement of heterosexuality proves a disapproval of homosexuality, and evidently unaware of the great number of societies where homosexual traditions play a complementary role to heterosexual marriage(*Ibid.*,173). He also illustrated that the attitude of most Athenians toward homosexuality was revealed by Aristophanes, who, Karlen says, “in reality mocked homosexuality as harshly in his plays as any twentieth century burlesque comedian. It was he, not Plato, who spoke for the majority of the Greeks.”(Neill, 2009,174). However, Neill is emphatic when he says that it is “the increasing habit of extending homosexual relations beyond the proper age limit” that is criticised, in fact “to the extent that, according to Aristophanes, all Athenian men had become katapygones, a slang term for passive homosexuals with connotations comparable to the modern ‘slut’”. He asserts that “Aristophanes was not condemning homosexuality; rather he was bitterly decrying the degeneration of a sexual institution that had for centuries played an important role in inculcating moral values and virtue in Athenian citizens (*Ibid.*,174).

The fact remains though that homosexuality in the Early or Classical Greek period was practised amongst the Greeks; an abundant of evidence can be found in nude statues of the late seventh and sixth centuries B.C. illustrating of their appreciation of the beauty of young males: by one count the Greeks in this period erected more than 60,000 statues of nude male youths(Neill, 2009,163); in the sixth century the paintings of vases which were produced in Athens painted with illustrations of young males, usually in the nude, many of which were inscribed with the word, *kalos*, or “beautiful.” The young males are shown in a variety of activities, from hunting to athletics, and in many cases are depicted being courted by or in a sex act with older men. The overwhelming preference for young males as subjects on vases in this period is demonstrated by the fact that vases with nude males vastly outnumber those painted with scenes of women (Neill, 2009,163); in the courtship literature such as the poetry of Strato and Julius Diocles (Neill, 2009,169) and (only to name a few) in the writings of Xenophon, in his history *Anabasis* and in his *Symposium*, in Aristotle in his *Politics*, in Plato in his *Symposium* and even Aristophanes in his play *Knights* (Neill, 2009,170, 171,174).

So we see that this openness to and valuing of what would be called today in some circles 'deviant behaviour' is historically rooted in our culture yet and is no longer endorsed by all. The fact that what once was accepted as normal and positive can now be viewed as abnormal and negative, not to say anathema in some circles, tells us that something radical has changed. If we are in any way going to restore the balanced world view of our ancestors regarding these modes of life we would then do well to understand this change.

The purpose of this proposal is to examine this change of behaviour, to illustrate how the LGBTI community is successfully challenging these deracinated views where amongst these forms of challenge would be the drama, cinema and poetry which have led us to the inauguration of Gay Theatre in Cyprus. It is an attempt to restore that 3000 year-old openness of mind which is built into the Greek-Cypriot psyche.

What has changed?

So what has brought this change of behaviour in perception and reception to modern Cypriot society thus shaping it to what it is today? Can this change of attitude and perception in the Cypriot public be brought about by the various intrusions over the centuries and, more particularly, from the 1974 Turkish invasion? Have the Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek-Cypriots impacted each other negatively in their perception of sexuality or has our 3000 Greek years of open attitude inspired the Turkish-Cypriots and informed the way they perceive the freedom of sexuality, despite all that suppression that the Turkish occupation evokes? Is it the island's geographical position which situates the island to the cross-road of two civilizations the East and the West thus the interpellation of such position signifies that Cyprus is influenced by it?

Certainly, the consequences of the Turkish invasion have been a catalyst and have had an impact in terms of the change of behaviour and perception within the two communities: the Turkish-Cypriot and the Greek-Cypriot. The post-traumatic effect has been that it has significantly disturbed the island's progress at social, political and ethical levels. In the course of one summer the once fruitful, beneficent infrastructure of the island was demolished and hatred over the following years has

been fostered and developed. The fact that both societies were involved in conflict, meant that each, after the invasion, had to restructure and repair themselves not only externally but also internally. The island had to be rebuilt and reconstructed from the ashes, the chaos and the disaster; and what was once a friendly and peaceful environment had now become hostile and filled with hate and racism between the two communities. At this point, in an atmosphere of poison and mistrust, the perception of the “other” was at its zenith, engendering anger and an enduring mutual hatred. It is only quite recently that both sides have even started to become reconciled, with mutual recognition of our interdependence and of the need for joint efforts toward the same end. The urge for justice and equality is essentially linked to the fact that the division of the island needs to come to an end—a situation in which both sides would find peace and, eventually, rejoice.

However, what is most crucial in seeking for answers and in my attempt to extract information for my research I contacted a Greek/Historian philologist Andreas Constandinou¹¹ who also taught sociology at Cypriot Senior Schools and who illustrated that Cyprus’ geographical position in practical terms puts it further away from the Western civilization but closer to the Eastern. He stated that the island’s location brings the Cypriots into the sphere of the near East area and to the Middle East area and thus closer to the eastern-Muslim civilization. Even though there is no clear separation between cultures (Eastern Muslim and Western European) mainly because there is no uniformity in either of the two, and while our community separates the two cultures in clarity, unfortunately it is singularly characterised in one dimension—that of perception. So while truths are many and are based on tolerance and dialogue, the formation of the one and only, the one-sided perception of a single truth does not allow the formation of any further perceptions and even more, it does not accept any notions of gender or any sexual preference other than heteronormativity. On top of that, in Cyprus there is no separation of church and state and consequently the Greek Orthodox Church with its doctrinal concepts has a direct and indirect impact on the social, cultural and political life of the Cypriots. Nayia Kamenou in her doctoral thesis *Cyprus is the country of Heroes, Not of Homosexuals: Sexuality, Gender and Nationhood in Cyprus* (2011) claims that ‘religion and religiosity, predominant narratives about nationhood and national

¹¹ Personal Communication, Paphos, 6th of April 2016.

identity, as well as traditional understandings of gender and sexuality continue to have a great impact on Cypriots' lives (Kamenou, 2011,25). She also points out that 'the Orthodox Church of Cyprus exerts a pivotal role in the country's political affairs, even though Cyprus is nominally a liberal democratic state' (Kamenou, 2011,25). Overall, it is only through the division/segregation of the state and church that new political forces will be released and shape new progressive concepts which will be incorporated in the legislative framework acceptable by our society.

Religion and interventions

As regards the official church of Cyprus (an independent branch of the Greek Orthodox Church) Trimikliniotis and Karayanni when conducting a Cyprus Report on social aspects in the Policy Document for SIMFILIOSI¹² were illustrative in that 'the church of Cyprus is powerful in economic and political ways and controls strongly the dominant ideologies that determine Greek Cypriots' thought, behaviour and actions. For centuries the Church body has posed as the undisputed guardian of the nation's moral fibre and the cornerstone of the Greek Cypriots' Hellenic identity. It is strict, relentless, open, and vocal about its opposition to any form of what it considers to be sexual deviance -anal sex- even in a straight couple is condemned' (Trimikliniotis & Karayanni, 2008,20).

In this context it is not so surprising to expect that, during the decades of Archbishop Chrysostomos I's reign-1997 to 2006-(the Church leader at the time of the colonial sodomy law amendment¹³), the Church of Cyprus was wont to assert its

¹² Reconciliation.

¹³ 1) Anal or oral intercourse between human beings or any sexual relations between a human being and an animal, the act of which may be punishable as a criminal offence. The word sodomy acquired different meanings over time. Under the Common Law, sodomy consisted of anal intercourse. Traditionally courts and statutes referred to it as a "crime against nature" or as copulation "against the order of nature" see in <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/sodomy>

2) Cyprus was a British colony until 1960, when the island became an independent republic. Until independence the legal system was based on the English legal system. The laws enacted for the colony applied to Cyprus the principles of common law and equity. Many of those laws are still in force today.

After independence in 1960 the English legal system was largely preserved. The laws applicable are the following: The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, The laws retained in force by virtue of Article 188 of the Constitution, The principles of Common Law and Equity, The Laws enacted by the House of Representatives. Following the accession of The Republic of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, the Constitution was amended so that European law has supremacy over the Constitution and national legislation. http://www.supremecourt.gov.cy/judicial/sc.nsf/DMLLegSystem_en/DMLLegSystem_en?OpenDocument

autonomous power and influence: 'the letter sent to members of parliament by the Holy Synod reportedly called the issue "a matter of honour," saying that "The church condemns homosexuality as a sinful and repulsive act because it is contrary to the spirit of Scripture and the law of nature" '(Trimikliniotis & Karayanni, 2008,.20). How the church came to be expert in 'the law of nature' is not expanded on.

It seems, then, that what the Greek Orthodox Church applied was a relentless emphasis on policies which would maintain its autocephalous relationship to the Greek-Cypriot community. It exhorted strict adherence to the law, thus simultaneously suppressing and conforming by 'arguing that homosexuality will eventually weaken the backbone of the Greek Cypriot National Guard, and so diminish its ability to resist the Turkish Army stationed in the northern part of the divided island'(Trimikliniotis & Karayanni, 2008, 21). There is no recognition here of the spirit of the Sacred Band of Thebes¹⁴! Here is Phaedrus in Plato's *Symposium*, expounding on the contribution to bravery in battle engendered in male sexual bonding:

"If one could contrive that a state or an army should entirely consist of lovers and loved...a handful of such men, fighting side by side, would defeat practically the whole world". (Plato, 43)

The antithesis to this will be culled from the Old Testament of the Bible:

"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is detestable". (*Leviticus*, 18:22)

Similarly from the New Testament, invoking the shame of Sodom and Gomorrah:

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one

¹⁴An army comprised of 150 pairs of homosexual lovers. The army won every battle until it was finally defeated by Philip of Macedonia and his son Alexander the Great. When Philip saw the lovers dead side by side, he wept and said, "Perish any man who suspects that these men either did or suffered any thing that was base." He then buried them with honor. **Plato** wrote about their code of ethics.

"If there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonour, and emulating one another in honour; and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest, at such a time; Love would inspire him." Plato: "*Symposium*" see in <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Sacred%20Band%20of%20Thebes&defid=622956>

another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.” (*Romans* 1:26-27)

And again:

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (*Corinthians* 6:9-10)

To this day, the Greek Orthodox Church does not accept homosexual marriage, a mark of the equality besought by the LGBTI/Accept community.

What does the state say?

Nevertheless, and more positively, the secular state has a different perspective. On the 26th of November 2015 the Cypriot government passed a landmark law that would allow for the creation of civil partnerships for same-sex couples (the Civil Partnerships Law, L.184 (I)/2015). Even though some critics say that the law is still inadequate, as it does not provide adoption rights to same-sex couples and is not as far reaching as marriage, the passing of the Bill signals a positive outlook and is a promising step towards a different future (*pinknews*,2015). At the same time the future has already started to make its appearance and some of the mechanisms for altering perceptions in the Greek Cypriot psyche are being developed in Gay Theatre. I will try to illustrate these mechanisms through analysis of the selected three performances I have attended, based on Pavis’ theoretical approach which we will discuss in the following chapter.

Perception of the performances

According to Malgorzata Sugiera, ‘a reflection on the attributes of reception and on the methodology available for dealing coherently with the mass of information absorbed by the spectator has been attempted by Patrice Pavis in *L’Analyse des Spectacles* (1996, 207-229). Pavis found himself at a loss in the face of many contemporary performances, characterised as they are by a plethora of powerful sensory stimuli that act directly on our “body memory.” He understood then that one

must be sensitive to them as real, material actions, and not as a conscious production of images, signs and metaphors intended to be “objectively” decoded with the help of semiotics’ (Sugiera, 2002, pp.226-7). Dealing with a new kind of theatre, Pavis proposed a method inspired by phenomenology on the one hand, and Freudian psychoanalysis on the other. Using Gestalt principles¹⁵, theory and framework the analysis should focus on an assembly of given aspects, and not on isolated details (Sugiera, 2002, pp.226-7)

Sugiera goes on to state that ‘Pavis sees audience perception and reception as a subjective act of rhythmically constructing a sense-making whole and that the stage material is vectored which for Pavis the principle of vectoring constitutes the Gestalt signs, and the vectoring of a performance means a construction of meaning and rhythm as a sequence of oriented frames or segments’ (*Ibid.*,226-7). She brings up the idea of describing performance as a kind of phantasm, which the participants have to materialise from their own attention to it, deciphering (rather than decoding) its latent content. Furthermore, a reviewer or a theatre theoretician has to use Freudian categories of condensation (*Verdichtung*) and displacement (*Verschiebung*) [of the representation logic of dreams] to reveal its enigmatic mechanisms (Sugiera, 2002,227). That is in ‘Condensation every element of the manifest content represents several dream thoughts; and as Freud puts it , “over-determined” (*uberdelermindert*). Thus the material obtained by analysis of a dream is far richer and more extensive than the manifest content, and may exceed this in amount by ten or twenty times. Of all the mechanisms it is the easiest to observe, and to it is mainly due the sense of foreignness that dreams give us, for it is a process with which our waking thought is not familiar’(Jones,1910,286). Moreover, ‘Condensation is the means of which similarity, agreement or identity between two elements in the latent content is expressed in the manifest content’ and ‘the two elements become fused into one, thus forming a new unity’(Jones,1910,287). The second distorting mechanism is Displacement (*Verschiebung*) where ‘ in most dreams it is found after analysis that there is no correspondence between the psychical intensity of a given element in the manifest content. An element that

¹⁵ *Gestalt* is a psychology term which means "unified whole". It refers to theories of visual perception developed by German psychologists in the 1920s. These theories attempt to describe how people tend to organize visual elements into groups or *unified wholes* when certain principles are applied. These principles are: Similarity, Continuation, Closure, Proximity, Figure and Ground. See in <http://graphicdesign.spokanefalls.edu/tutorials/process/gestaltprinciples/gestaltprinc.htm>

stands in the foreground of interest in the former, and seems to be the central feature of the dream, may represent the least significant of the underlying dream thoughts; conversely an apparently unessential and transitory feature in the dream may represent the very core of the dream thoughts' (Jones, 1910, 288-289).

In other words 'watching a performance means looking for something that will attract our attention as meaningful, like a Gestalt sign' and it is further stated that 'it involves entire sequences, enabling movement from one plane or level of reading to another' (Sugiera, 2002, 227). Added to this, Patrice Pavis illustrates 'that the spectators concretely experience the materiality when they perceive the various materials and forms in the performance, provided that they remain on the side of the signifier, i.e. provided that they resist the temptation to immediately translate everything into signifieds' (Pavis, 1997, 214). In other words, Pavis explains that depending on 'the presence and the corporeality of the actor, the texture of his voice, or some kind of music, colour or rhythm, the spectators at first submerged in an aesthetic experience and the material event' (*Ibid.*, 214) In terms of Phenomenology¹⁶ he argues 'that the basis of phenomenological thought is that any experience of perception has a form or gestalt which contains organized, defined wholes standing out against a background. The spectator's perception tends to look for the most balanced, simple and regular form to distinguish different ensembles with clearly defined contours' (Pavis, 1997, 225-226). Consequently, 'phenomenology provides an image of the stage processes which is at the same time a theory of action and a theory of the perceiver's appropriation of the performance' so when the spectator is thinking conceptually or watching a theatrical event then 'the eye and mind are active and not merely recording' but rather produce their perceptions and the connections between them' (Pavis, 1997, 226)

Shifra Schonmann in her work on *Theater as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations* (2006) clearly designates the terms *Perception* and *Reception* as the 'choice between two different traditions' such as *perception* being tied up to phenomenology and the way we humans perceive the world while *reception* is related Sauter's theory on reception (Sauter, 2000, 5)' such as 'to the cultural studies and the analysis of social values and mental worlds'

¹⁶ 'Phenomenology is concerned with what it is like for human beings to be alive in the world around them and how they perceive that world 'see in (Frontier, p.38)

(Schonmann, 2006, 53). As suggested by Sauter, 'perception should be connected with the immediate communicative aspect of the theatrical event and reception should be employed to describe the process or consequence after the event which is the result of the perception the communication that took earlier' (*Ibid.*,53) Thus Schonmann formulates the following interactions for her young audience: Presentation-Perception-Participation-Reaction-Reception. That is the action of the actor is the reaction of the spectator which describes the communicative theatre interaction (Schonmann, 2006,53).

Based on the above evidence of this research I will try to relate them to the three performances which are the main focus of my research. In each of the three theatrical events I had handed out questionnaires where the audience of Nicosia would voluntarily leave their comments and perspectives after the plays. Of course not everyone was willing to do so but this was again respected. All three performances were staged in the city of Nicosia in Cyprus therefore the comments on the questionnaires represent the general audience that resides in Nicosia.

In the first play, *La Cage aux Folles* (1978), the director sets the scene with a choreographed opening and the audience's first triggering of sense of emotions is activated to the hearing of the song *Queen of the Night* (1993)¹⁷. The song was used probably as a trigger stimulus where the enactment of the play in the memory of the spectators could be related to the singer and actress Whitney Houston's (2012) image in her music video and movie where she was dressed up in a Follies Bergère style costume with sparkly makeup, a glamorous hairdo, featuring a high-kicking show-leg girl (see Annex 1:A). The stage is constructed on different levels. The lighting for the upper floor is minimal and the audience can only get a tantalising sense that something is taking place there. On the other hand the main focus is on the first floor where the performers, with their fancy, glamorous feathers, dance to the frantic rhythms of the song. There follows another song, *Raining Men*¹⁸, in Scene 5 (see Annex 2:A) which acts as a further stimulus to the audience's emotions, thereby

¹⁷ *Queen of the Night* is the last single from the soundtrack to "The Bodyguard" See in <http://genius.com/Whitney-houston-the-queen-of-the-night-lyrics>

¹⁸ *Raining Men* was performed by the 'Weather Girls duo in 1978 and this song was specifically directed to the Gay community which was quickly embraced in gay dance clubs. Even though it was sung from the perspective of women, it objectified men in a way that was rarely heard in popular music. This message was not lost on gay listeners who heard it as a celebration of their culture' see in <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=2299>

engaging and activating their memories. If it wasn't for the accompanying sound motifs the audience would not be able to respond to the more complex, condensed visual motifs, and to accommodate them with their own private details and subjective feelings (Sugiera, 2002, 233) To be more precise, on the sound of the specific music and its title *Raining Men* the audience may be diverted to an array of interpretations each and every one individually; however the song itself due to its popularity in the late 70s and early 80s has been added to the mainstream of the gay culture thus it is easier for the older generation audience to relate and speculate that the content which will be further presented on stage will be related with homosexuality (see Annex, 2:A, 3:A)

Further to the above, Sugiera designates that 'Sperber and Wilson, based on David Lewis's model of inferential communication, aim to attempt a more cognitive account of communication. Specifically, they propose that in a context of communication all that is said, or any other stimulus-gesture, gaze, movement-comes with a presumption of relevance within the interaction' (Sugiera, 2002, 228). An inferential process in the receiver starts from a set of premises that depend on the context, described as a set of assumptions derived from the real situation and /or what has been said/done before and /or from knowledge already stored in the memory' (*Ibid.*, 228). In *La Cage aux Folles* the entrance of the dancers in the gaudy plumage and glitter of their costumes stimulates the inferential process of communication to begin. In this way the audience's engagement comes from the irresistibly combined stimulus of colour, sound and rhythmic movement. However, without cognitive context what happens is that the onus is shifted to the audience which has to respond in the search for relevance (see Annex 1:A).

In the play *Dark Angel* (2014) the laws of mental operations come to be activated through the two protagonists. Both, Anita and David, use the laws of memory throughout the whole play. The laws of imagination and dream can be seen working on a scene where David describes to Anita his first intimate sexual moment with Vincent which in a way this is a moment of embarrassment hence even though in the Cypriot community there is a strong relationship between a mother and a son, yet in matters of sexual preferences or relationships a Cypriot son would not confide his mother mainly for culturally moral codes and biased stereotypes. On the other hand, there were some giggles floating on the air from the left corner of the scene where some young people took this moment of embarrassment in a different way

(see Annex 13:A) This intimate moment between the two protagonists makes the specific moment of narration into an illusion between the real and the unreal. For a moment Anita is drawn into this narrative dream, a reaction which is vindicated by her kiss -in which the audience is a bit of shock since it came out of the blue , it wasn't cognitively expected- (see Annex 14:A). David, in his reminiscence, fades out Anita and recreates her as Vincent. Vincent becomes vicariously present through the presence of his mother. This specific memory shifting is transmitted to the spectator and is added to the visual and auditory gestures which the spectator may try to relate in his/her mind. In other words, the conditional mode of a world on the stage, presented from an individual and subjective point of view, remains visible merely in the deliberately displayed unnaturalness of movements and gestures, in the theatricality of stage figures and their relations (Sugiera, 2002, 234).

From the feedback of the questionnaires which were handed at the end of the play by myself, it was evident that many of the spectators were deeply moved by the experience of David as an individual, gay or not (see Annex 4:A) The majority of women could relate to the mother and her loss (see Annex 5:A) The play itself had touched not only the mind but also the hearts of the spectators and it 'brought physical symptoms such as emotional tears of sympathy, heavy breathing, anxiety, giggles and even caused disturbance of one's sitting behaviour' (Coppieters,1981, 41) (see Annex 6:A) Coppieters draws on Goffman, who 'lists some of the objective signs of emotional disturbance by which an individual may recognise extreme embarrassment in others and even in himself and says that these gestures 'provide the individual with a screen behind which he tries to bring his feelings back into tempo and himself back into play' (Coppieters,1981,41). Thus moments of embarrassment are marked in the memory of the spectator and can be easier recalled when needed.

Another point to consider which may have influenced the perception of the audience was the way the audience was seated and the gaze phenomena. In the third play, *Which Body* (2015), the close proximity of the audience to the action meant that it was unclear at times what constituted each. There were continuously shifting boundaries between the territory of the performers and the public space. In being so close to the stage it became, for the spectator, an intimate, living theatrical experience. Some spectators made the point that the experience as a whole was rather painful to watch since the actors had portrayed their characters so vividly and

so realistically (see Annex 7:A, 8:A, 9:A) Take, for instance, the scene where the protagonist battles with her inner self and breast bandages her physical self. This was a scene where the spectator was emotionally engaged at every turn, witnessing the pain and being ineluctably drawn into the heart of the drama. The audience, unconsciously, find themselves taking on that pain. Coppieters makes a point of Grotowski's (1968) statement that 'it is particularly significant that once a spectator is placed in an illuminated zone, or in other words becomes visible, he too begins to play a part in the performance' (Coppieters, 1981,42).

The gaze phenomenon is one further element to be taken into account in the way we perceive the performance. There were times when the protagonist would turn towards the audience, engaging individuals directly with a studied gaze, locking eyes while performing. It was a means of recognising herself as the object of observation while at the same time violating some spectator's 'personal space'. Gazing can also invoke a sense of embarrassment and unease in the spectator as they vicariously and unexpectedly become themselves part of the performance, under scrutiny as they are by both the cast member and the rest of the audience.

It is also stated that 'by going to the theatre and witnessing a theatrical event and afterwards discussing and remembering it is nested in one's social life, therefore a person's social life involves two kinds of performances. There are the actions he or she contributes to the total social process, and there are the accounts in which action is interpreted, criticised and justified' therefore his 'ethogenic hypothesis that links acting and accounting is the idea that an individual's ability to do either depends upon his stock of social knowledge' (Coppieters, 1981,36). The audience who attended all three performances had certainly an idea of what the content of each of the plays was and their presence at the plays meant something of great importance (see Annex 10:A, 11:A, 12:A). In particular, attending gay-themed plays is a way of supporting and changing the social and political stereotypes of Cypriot society. Mainstream theatre and Gay theatre are a social communication process and 'perceptual processes in the theatre are a form of interaction' (Coppieters, 1981,47).

To conclude, we have to be optimistic about the future of how the Cypriot man or woman perceives homosexuality. Perceptions will eventually change but it will take long years of dedicated effort in educating the younger generations since they represent the pioneers of a brighter future in which will grow the acceptance of difference, informing how we Cypriots perceive the *other*. Changing that perception

is mandatory if we wish to call ourselves truly egalitarian and be respectful of those ideals that constitute the norms of Democracy. Theatre is a powerful way to promote and bring about this change.

Challenging the audience

Probably one of the most important factors that affect a play is the audience reception of it and how the general public reacts to the presentation of gay theatre in Cyprus. Over the last year or so I had watched a variety of performances with regard to gay-themed theatre and I chose from amongst them three specific plays: It has to be said that they were the ones which I felt had the most impact on both myself and the rest of the audience. At the play *La Cage aux Folles* (2015)¹⁹, as an ordinary spectator, I circulated, observed and spoke with other members of the audience. What to me were most striking were the positive atmosphere engendered and the hilarious responses that the play had drawn from the crowd. It was further evident that here wasn't the narrow cross-section of the public that one might expect as an audience watching a gay-themed performance but rather an audience which varied across a wide spectrum. It included scholars, students, artists and representatives of the gay community as well as those who might be typified as the 'ordinary' man or woman and who, it may well be ventured, went there to watch just an ordinary play, just like any other play they might take in as an escape from daily routine. This was evident by the feedback of the questionnaires I had handed out at the end of every performance (see Annex)

Joseph Josephides, a theatre critic wrote that the theatrical team had managed, through its use of music and dance, to shine and to give colour and rhythm to the performance (Iosifidis, *Politis* 11/11/2015). On several levels the director and the actors have orchestrated the presentation with such a note of skill, competence and professionalism to the extent that what was being performed on stage captivated the audience right from the outset and also managed to engage it with challenging questions. The director and his team, while entertaining the audience with humour and irony, had, most importantly, simultaneously introduced a didactic element to the proceedings in that they had developed a method for

¹⁹ *La Cage aux Folles* was written in 1978 see in <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077288/> but I chose to include the year of 2015 which the play was staged at Teatro ENA.

educating straight people about issues of homosexuality and gender identity via the medium of what could be considered the most difficult genre: that of farce and comedy. Consequently, we must see this play not just as escapist entertainment but, more deeply and to a greater end, as a means rather to elucidate and to raise awareness; to educate the unaware about gender orientation and to raise expectation that public attitudes should by rights embrace differentiation as opposed to remaining neutral or even negative: to give the individual spectator a congenial forum for relating to gay themes and the opportunity to empathise with unfamiliar sensibilities. This, then, wasn't just escapist entertainment but rather it was a play that presented issues and questions that the theatregoer could ponder with a smile upon departing the theatre's premises and consider positively for some time to come.

Even though this dissertation does not concern Lesbian Theatre there are useful parallels to consider in what Sisley wrote in her *Notes on Lesbian Theatre* article regarding the play *Cory* (1973). While, in *La Cage aux Folles* (1978) the play's dynamic centres on the *inner struggle against outside rejection* (Sisley, 1982, 49) and oppression within a performance redolent with laughter and sarcasm. Similarly, the play *Cory* portrayed 'the dilemma of the protagonist being trapped between her self-acknowledged lesbianism and the pressures of a hostile world. Sisley emphasises that not all lesbian plays view lesbianism solely in terms of grief, frustration and inner struggling against outside rejection' (Sisley, 1982, 49). In other words, any play may use mechanisms for changing the audience's reception by positive engagement of exposing the repressed' (*Ibid.*, 50). The *La Cage aux Folles* play was applauded enthusiastically and even after the curtain came down the audience was sufficiently enthused to remain standing there applauding for sheer joy. It was obvious that the performers had given their audience something more than the usual, more than was expected and it was self-evidently truly appreciated and received in good grace. After all, one of the most important conventions of Theatre and in this case Gay Theatre is to achieve transmission of that magical aura across its audience and to provide pleasure and satisfaction in the heart of each spectator but at the same time to provide an 'action from the actor and a reaction from the spectator' just as Schonmann illustrates in describing the theatrical communicative interaction (Schonmann, 2006, 53-54). It can be said that what the audience needs to get from the play is, with no doubt, the chance not only to comprehend and embrace the

didactic element of the play, such as the moral, but also entertainment and satisfaction for the soul as well as the spirit that persuaded him/her to watch the play thus resulting to the spectator's reaction and experience after the event. It goes without saying that the reception of an audience may change only through what the director and his/her performers come to deliver on stage. In many ways the reception of an audience might remain passive and disconnected from the play's message but it is ultimately the performance, the delivery, which will most affect the mindset and transform it into a reaction. Once the audience has entered the theatre's auditorium then it engages itself instantly to respond actively. Taking Schonmann's example on how 'the children perceive the action on stage and are ready to react openly or covertly depending on his/her own personality and his/her stage of development and experience of watching theatre' (Schonmann, 2006, 53-54) the same can be said for the adult audience when each and every spectator experiences the performance. 'Audiences may be engaged in an imaginative way or emotionally relate with the characters or the performance, they may suspend disbelief or experience what the actor is experiencing through his/her performance therefore each of these possible reasons are embodied instantly to the spectator as he/she is experiencing the performance with their whole bodies' (Reason, 2010,19).

What is worth mentioning is that the audience of *La Cage aux Folles* was certainly engaged with the performance and this was evident in their positive reaction which was evident in their faces and in their expressions, in their laughter. The performers had created a congenial environment where it was easy for the audience to be touched by them both literally and metaphorically (see Annex 1:A).

Something is changing

It is only during the last two years that Cypriot society has developed any sort of interest in plays which concern homosexuality as a concomitant of the constrictive stereotypes and taboos rooted in their minds. After all, this is the main reason for most of the gay community having chosen and still choosing to remain in the 'closet'. Furthermore, it might be expected that only people who have some sort of developed views on gender orientation and issues would be likely to attend such a play. The question might then be asked about where that development could happen since there is no fundamental education on the subject at a young age. For instance, at

Cypriot schools the module on homosexuality and gender identity has only recently started to be taught to our youth and in terms of school theatrical plays the children are orientated towards classical repertoire-theme plays and certainly not gay-themed plays. This reminds us that, even though gay and lesbian theatre proliferated in the 1990s in the United States in both theatre for young audiences and high school theatre, plays with homosexuality themes or gay characters were rare thus reflecting to the degree in which heteronormativity dominated the field (Giannini, 2010,4). When homosexuality is represented in Theatre for Young Audience, it is often treated as a calamity, discreetly packaged in plays intended to teach lessons about tolerance (Giannini, 2010,4). And when a small body of drama for young people emerged that included gay and lesbian characters it was characterised by a discourse of “troubled gay youth”, which limited representation to those who are victimised because of their sexuality. Thus the notion of *being gay* puts youth at risk of a plethora of problems by suggesting that lesbian, gay or queer youth will likely become either victims of self-hatred or the objects of social hatred – which, of course, is totally related to the Cyprus of 2016, where homophobia is prevalent amongst all age groups (*Ibid.*,4).

Going back even further, homosexuality in American Theatre was simply outlawed right up until the end of the 1960s for fear that it would lead to *the corruption of youth or others*, or that such productions would attract homosexuals to the audience “thus creating a visible presence and, therefore, a threat to the enforcement of visibility” (Costa, 2012, 26). There are obviously parallels with Cypriot society, filled as it is with its stereotypes and taboos restricted by a lack of education about sexual orientation and gender awareness. It is therefore difficult to determine that the majority of the audience attending the play had any good understanding of homosexuality at all. It was evident that some people were from the Gay community and, as a result of its previous popularity and were aware of the content of the play. The play was on stage on the 15th of October 2014 and it gave a new, fresh perspective to the Cypriot stage.

The audience for *Dark Angel* was also quite mixed but this time it appeared that there was a preponderance of middle-aged, married couples and that women outnumbered men. This was probably because of the story and the plot of the drama since it centred on the psychological drama surrounding a mother’s endurance after having lost her one and only son—a son who had been brutally abused, beaten and

killed entirely because of his sexual preferences and orientation. Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot mothers are typified for their sensitivity about their children and particularly for their predisposition toward their sons. It would not be stretching the point to recognise that, for this particular play, those mothers who attended the performance could relate to the maternal angst. After all, a Cypriot mother, or even, in general, most mothers, would be the last to understand that their boy is either homosexual or suffers from gender dysphoria.

From a personal standpoint as a teacher I have been party to several incidents where the mother was indeed the last person to know. This was such an emotional and vividly enacted play that, as an objective observer, I could distinguish how deeply it had touched the hearts of many of the spectators. When the curtain came down many remained seated, including myself, taking time to pull themselves together, some silently crying others simply absorbing the full impact of the drama. Another theatre critic wrote in the *Phileleutheros* newspaper that it was a unique night where the audience truly enjoyed watching something new and genuine; how real theatre should be (Pieridou, 2015).

Lastly, the third performance *Which body* play represents the real events and thoughts of an intersex person. Simply by having such a play on stage, Gay theatre beats a new path towards acceptance and equality. In the individual affected by gender dysphoria it demonstrates the strength of commitment and the determination of the spirit to be publicly acknowledged, accepted and respected while affirming that gender dysphoria is not a disease but rather a trait which has been assigned at birth (www.nhs.uk).

The audience's reception of this particular performance was deeply impressive. A typical response was characterised in the scene where the 'male side' of the protagonist takes off his clothes and tries to flatten his breasts by using a tight cloth bandage in order to have the appearance of a more masculine chest, a less female physique. Following the scene the audience was reduced into even greater silence. With such a depth of emotional engagement we can be encouraged to believe that here is a good illustration of the possibilities for raising public awareness through theatre and for consequently leaving the audience with issues to contemplate even well after they have left the theatre building. After the performance there were a lot of comments by the spectators (see Annex 1:B, 2:B, 3:B). In particular there was one spectator who was so affected by the mother's role that he

wanted to go backstage and speak to the actress, feeling as if the whole thing had been real which indicates a childhood mindset behaviour with regards to how some Cypriots conceive and interpret the experience of the performance or its meaning (see Annex 3:B) With its simplicity of style and after a personal communication with the director Korina Kontaxaki she mentioned that she had used the play to unsettle the audience, brought mixed responses such as anger and sympathy and, above all, the awareness that intersex people have every right to pursue the fundamentals of their own happiness (see Annex 1:B,2:B,4:B).

Furthermore, as the psychologist Thekla Vasiliou stated in her article “Gender Dysphoria”, ‘people should dedicate some of their time to gain awareness about gender dysphoria regardless whether it will be endorsed or not; yet at least to try and understand it hence this specific play gives the opportunity to do so’ (www.askitis-cy.com). The play brought home to us the idea of why one goes to the theatre in the first place. Miller and Roman in their article illustrated it thus: that 'we go to the theatre to parade our fashions and attitudes, to affirm our tastes, ideas, and values, and in order to be absorbed into a critical mass of sub-cultural resistance to the heteronormative muscle we must encounter continually in our daily lives ' (Miller & Roman, 1995,176). In other words we go the theatre to transcend ourselves beyond heteronormativity and acknowledge that 'we enter into a space of performance as non-whites, transgendered, disabled, differently-sized, celibate' (*Ibid.*,177); and of course we enter the theatre space 'to disidentify with the theatrical representation, the body in performance, the assembled crowd because we know that magic and transformation takes place there' (Miller & Roman, 1995, 177).

In *Which Body* (2014) the audience's reception was challenged as they found themselves at a stage of 'conversion' where 'the spectators have gone to the other side, have arrived, and have achieved a fixed state of grace' (Miller & Roman, 1995, 177). The reaction of the public received great attention hence more and more people started to talk about this play and then what had followed was a series of interviews of the actors, documentaries where broadcasting on television the issue of homophobia and gender dysphoria for further public awareness (see Annex F:1) The audience reception and perception was transformed hence the performance itself 'had put into motion an array of emotions that circulated within the space of performance and [in which] that dynamic transference of energy invigorates our

lives, persuades us to return again and again to the theatre' (Miller & Roman, 1995, 177).

The positive impact of this unique play was so pleasing that other artists showed interest and were subsequently influenced by it. Recently, I had attended a dance-based play by the choreographer George Demopoulos in which the central theme was also related in a way to the *Which Body* play. Despite the fact that several of the scenes were highly provocative it managed to turn the essentially passive audience into an active one by drawing the spectators into the action. This method of drawing in the audience reminded me of Boal's conventions on 'Image' and 'Forum Theatre' where the audience necessarily is actively involved in the performance and where its reaction powers the dynamic of the play. Here it was achieved by having three apparent members of the audience interrupting the performance by using abusive language against the protagonists and by such means making the audience believe for a moment that this was for real, the actions of antagonistic outsiders. The shock and surprise in the audience was almost tangible and a two-minute confusion between the real and the unreal was heavy in the air. The three 'spectators' drew the audience's attention and for some minutes they became the centre of focus, thereby altering the audience's expectations of and relation to the performance. Such a technique illustrates that the meaning of the performance as well as the messages intended to be transmitted can be conveyed more explicitly to an audience. It is therefore these dimensions and dynamics that reinforce the elements of transmission and reception between the performers on stage and their audience.

As a result of watching *Which Body* its audience was left to ponder the underlying message of the drama, which was simply but fundamentally that all human beings are entitled to be respected and prejudices based on gender identity and orientation should be relegated to the past. The play at the THOK awards was nominated for the Best Actor award and it now goes beyond our borders to make a premiere.

The point should be made that even if Gay Theatre in Cyprus is still only in its infancy it should, nevertheless, lay the foundations for a theatre where future generations can, through performance, endorse, adapt and affirm principles of acceptance and equality. The importance of educating people to respect differentiation will only serve to strengthen Cypriot society. It will allow them to grow

and expand not only socially but also politically and morally, which in turn will produce an inclusive world. A much healthier civilisation will arise based on egalitarian principles and the chance of acceptance for all.

Conclusion

Initially, when I first started researching the field I understood that this topic was under-explored and that it was going to take me into difficult waters. With this in mind, however, I was still determined to examine the nature of the challenges facing Gay theatre in Cyprus. Naively, perhaps, it seemed that the power of theatre in positively influencing audiences would prove to be a dominant force. In the event, that power, that potential has turned out to be more contextual than general. Of course, we have seen how there are qualities in Cypriot Gay theatre that answer to the need for illuminating the dark corners of the national psyche. Committed, skilful directors, producers and actors present highly watchable, interesting and informative dramas that place challenging questions in front of willing and appreciative audiences. It could be said that important issues can be examined and brought into the open when they otherwise might be seen as too 'sensitive', emotive or inappropriate in other forums – reactionary killing, gender dysphoria. In certain cases the simple existence of a problem can be revealed, in others positive support, recognition and empathy can be underwritten. At the end of the day, any positive contribution toward social acceptance of the 'other' can be seen as worthwhile – the smallest positive outcome is a step forward, no matter how slow or piecemeal the process.

Nevertheless, it has become more and more evident during the writing of this thesis that the reality of our island life intrudes on the rose-tinted picture. This is not to say simply that 'island' equals 'insularity'. The ILGA Rainbow map for 2015 (showing European rankings reflecting national anti-discrimination and equality legislation, responses to hate crime and hate speech, legal gender recognition and freedom of assembly and self-expression) shows Malta at 77% where we can only register 18% (Annex H). No, there is something in our own social construct that militates against whatever Gay theatre as a concept can offer. Whether it is a result of outdated and insupportable perceptions of homosexuality that linger in the public mind – being gay

is an insidious medical problem that can be cured with treatment; being gay is a lifestyle choice that deserves a negative reaction; being gay goes against the Bible and church teaching; whatever – it remains that the situation is fraught for anyone on the receiving end of social disapprobation. In terms of research for this thesis the effects have been regularly and, it has to be said, obstructively encountered.

On the practical side there were difficulties in my effort to get information from the two directors of *La Cage aux Folles* and *Dark Angel*. Information on the two plays was scattered and disorganised and there weren't enough records filed. Unfortunately, both directors, even after initial promises of interviews, discovered that their busy schedules made it impossible to meet or even have a telephone conversation with them. It is only a matter of conjecture whether or not there were other, unspoken barriers. In the event I managed to speak with three members of the Teatro ENA team - the choreographer, the secretary and the actor who played the role of David in *Dark Angel*. The latter was quite diffident about discussing his role in the play - for personal reasons – although he did appear to be working on the assumption that Gay theatre was better kept as a kind of closed, specialist entity playing to a 'convinced' audience. Here 'better' seems to suggest that too much of a public face would bring on unwanted, uncomfortable and possibly even dangerous outside scrutiny. It is not unknown for the human spirit to try to maintain a perceived comfort zone.

Subsequently I also had contact with several other straight Cypriot actors who simply did not wish to talk about gay themed plays - especially one of them illustrating that he knew nothing about the existence of Gay theatre at all. Furthermore, even within the Accept-LGBTI community represented in the audience it was difficult to persuade some to engage with my questionnaires. There was a definite air of mistrust and reluctance to open up to outsider intrusion, despite the constructive intentions of my interest. There is obviously a self-protective instinct at work here and, in a way, it is hardly surprising. In fact, following *Which Play* out of eighteen people approached only 9 were willing to fill in the questionnaires while some were on the verge of hostility. One of the transgender people available at the time refused to even listen to what the questionnaire was about. It would seem that there are still barriers to personal choices about coming out of the 'closet'. On the other hand it is almost impossible to fathom the negative reactions of individuals who refuse to reveal their personal frame of mind. Apart from the self-protective mindset and the closed-community attitude that we have discussed there are several other positions that might be expressed in understanding

the impact of Gay theatre. Perspectives from members of the gay community with views on aspects of queer theory such as, for instance, categorization and self-identification, oppositional and territorial politics and artificial communities would have been constructive in the analysis. Nevertheless, some progress has been made these themes remain fruitful areas for future research.

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ANNEX

A: Comments on perception

1: A “I was really enthusiastic at the opening scene and the music. It recalled another era when life was with less worries and less troubles. The colour of the costumes, the sound and movements were all urging you to get up and dance with the dancers on stage. It really activated my whole body..as if I wanted to go on stage and dance. Everything on their costumes were so vibrant!! It was truly an amazing feeling which I hadn't felt for a long time in a theatre!!!..First thing that came into my mind was Whitney Houston in the *Bodyguard* movie and I remember me dancing this song over and over when I was a child with my sister. I truly enjoyed the scene as it brought back memories and it was as if I was expecting to see Whitney Houston on the stage or something similar.... such an overwhelming feeling ..truly loved it”. (Antigone, 44yrs)

2: A “*Raining Men* is one of the most favourite disco upbeat songs not only within the Gay community but in general. It brought back memories of our disco youth and mainly from my personal experience ...being 'closeted' and secretly dancing in front of the mirror in the early 80s while my parents were out. Listening to the song in the play you could relate to what the story is about , knowing that this song amongst others ..for instance Madonna's 'Like a Virgin' or 'Y.M.C.A' are songs that celebrate our culture”. (Antonis, 42yrs)

3:A “Of course you wouldn't expect a child to know about *Raining Men* song and its representation but I mean I grew up with listening to an array of music genres and songs such as this one... and due to its upbeat rhythm it can only get you on the floor and dance. It doesn't matter if the song is gay oriented because what it really matters here is the sound of it ...it's a feel-good gospel like and it really stimulates joy assuming that this isn't just a theatrical play for fun but there's more you can expect to it ”. (Andriani, 39yrs)

4:A “I was truly touched by David's experience as a character in the play, dealing with being gay or not. He was deeply suffering, so psychologically tormented being conquered by the guilt of not helping out his friend which in the end it turns out that Vincent was his lover! I could feel his pain and it was really hard, knowing that he was searching for forgiveness after blaming himself for Vincent's death.” (Marios, 28yrs)

5:A “As a single mother I could relate to Vincent’s mother. I don’t believe that I would ever have accepted the loss of my own son and I don’t know any mother that would have. It is something that you can’t get your head round and besides every mother would expect her child to bury her not the other way round. In terms of his sexuality I don’t think a true mother would have denied her own child. As mothers we have a natural tendency to protect our children regardless of being gay or anything because above everything what really matters is our children’s wellbeing.” (Christina, 57yrs)

6:A “I couldn’t breathe...At some point I started crying without being able to stop. There were other people in the audience crying as well, even though I thought I was the only one! I stayed in my seat even after the play had ended and it took me some time to get hold of myself. This was a play that brought a lot of disturbance in the audience. I could hear the heavy breathing and a range of people could not remain still but rather there was a disturbance of one’s sitting behaviour. The feeling was awkward!”. (John, 37yrs)

7:A “I was so close to the stage that it all felt a bit weird. Every time the actress was looked at the audience it was a bit hypnotic, like you had to look at her. Like she was talking to me personally. I felt quite awkward because of the close space and it was really as if we were all part of the performance. I felt uneasy because you’re not usually so part of everything but in a way I kind of liked it because it was as if I was an actress too!!” (Elena, 32yrs)

8:A “It was so real and so true as if the play wanted to force us to open our eyes to it all. It was also painful to watch the whole experience of someone trapped in the wrong body. I found myself really feeling the pain especially at the scene where she was trying to disguise her. I believe this was a moment where myself and rest of the audience were in an emotional frozen state witnessing all that anger and all that pain.” (Marina, 25yrs)

9:A “ I am a mother of a child with this gender dysphoria. I don’t think that anyone can understand this sort of pain that these people go through with rejection or even knowing who they are. My daughter, well son I should say, wants to have a mastectomy and then finally have an operation. I’m pretty scared as this is not an easy thing to go through. I could understand Joanna’s pain in the play as it is just what my child goes through every day. I must say the difference is I have accepted it all, I think, and I’ll try to just support whatever he decides although I am trying to persuade my boy to accept his body as it is just to avoid the physical danger that the operation might cause but in terms of his personal life I understand that it is not for me to say so his choice will be totally respected. ” (Elena, 48yrs)

10:A “ I am a student of Gender Studies at the university of Cyprus. I feel that Gay Theatre has a lot to offer since Cypriot society has been biased and tabooed for so long. It is time something changed and with the appearance of Gay Theatre something is already starting to change. We need to accept differentiation and acknowledge that stereotypes must change if we want a better future for future generations. It has to be based on respect and love and understanding difference. I am really happy that changes are happening.” (Maria, 22yrs)

11:A“I think we all had an idea of what the play was going to be. When it comes to gender issues and identity orientation I believe that you attend this theatre to see what the play has to say. The people who relate to these topics such as the gay community or people with an interest in it know exactly why they attend a gay-themed play. Gay theme plays are important if we want to change the stereotypes in people’s thinking, it’s so old-fashioned. It can happen if we share thoughts about the issues rather than hiding it and staying silent and theatre is a way where we can get active debate going.” (Haris, 32yrs)

12:A “Well initially, from its title I didn’t understand what it meant. After all, I like going to the theatre in general and I was invited by a friend of mine. She said that I would love this type of theatre and it was something new in town. Marina Mandri is a favourite actress so I came. So the play really took me by surprise really. I think you could say I was spellbound by it and I would definitely recommend it to everyone and certainly come back to watch the play again with another friend.” (Georgia, 27yrs)

13:A “ We don’t actually know why we started laughing.. it was really embarrassing!! It was so quiet and everybody could hear us..and we got told off instantly but me and my friends couldn’t stop laughing ...I guess it was the awkward scene of the moment and it came out as a giggle!!” (Maria, 18yrs)

14:A “To tell you the truth this wasn’t what I had expected coming from Anita. At that specific moment I expected that Anita would have slapped David ..just to get him back to reality ..so I was a bit shocked and so were my friends cause we discussed it right after the play had ended and we were all under the same perspective. Probably because we were biased at the very beginning of the scene since David was the one to blame.. well not exactly to be blamed but as a mother I would definitely blamed his cowardice for not helping David if not him” (Sofia, 29yrs)

B: Comments on Reception

1:B “I just can’t describe how I felt up until the end of the play. I was so touched by the whole experience. It was obvious that all actors especially the main ones were so into their role. It was good and I think they got the message across. I have never heard of gender dysphoria before nor did I ever meet anyone in person. All I have known was about transvestites and transsexuals without realising the true meaning or what it really meant for someone. It is so good that eventually some awareness is gained and I totally sympathise with their struggle to be heard.” (Christos, 43yrs)

2:B “I remember a girl in my class how she was bullied. She looked so more like a boy than a girl and I always wondered what sex she was. She had a girl’s name but everyone took her for a boy because she looked like one and acted like one so I always wondered about her. She was always on her own and she wouldn’t talk much. The majority, I would say probably everyone, had no idea about gender dysphoria so we would just put a label and said she was gay. They didn’t teach us anything in school about gender orientation or homosexuality. It’s no wonder none of us knew about these issues. I am really glad that finally things are changing in some way.” (Martha, 26yrs)

3:B “I wanted to go backstage and shout at this mother as soon as the curtain went down. It really took me some time to come down to earth and realise that it was all an act. It was so intense and painful at the same time. My brother is an intersex person and it was as if I was watching our mother. She has not accepted the fact that my sister has become a man on his own, my brother who I adore so much. The play said it all and should give us hope for all those people who are silently going through hell. Bravo! Such an excellent performance.” (Elina, 19yrs)

4:B “I wanted everything to be as simple as possible on stage. I didn’t want to provoke in the sense of exposing nudity or create a love story. My aim was to awaken the audience, to show a different perspective and to signify the importance of identity. Another director accused me of being too conservative but in my perspective this wasn’t a play about sexual desire or violence but a play where the spectator would remember its essence and would experience the true meaning..that of having an identity” Kontaxaki, K.,2016. *Personal Messenger Communication*. [Facebook] 13 January 2016.

C: Comments on Performance

1:C “Well, all I can say about ‘La Cage aux Folles’ is how well I enjoyed the whole play. The director orchestrated everything on stage very well but what I truly loved most was Spartakos role in which he was great bringing laughter into the audience. Albert was also awesome in his performance as well as Starina. Spartakos however and Starina were awesome in their performance because it is not easy to perform on woman’s clothes nor to walk and dance on high heels. The facial expressions, the gestures and movement were making us laugh and enjoy throughout the whole play. Totally loved it.” (Savvas, 52yrs)

2:C “I truly enjoyed Anita’s character as it was so solid but at the same time a character that every woman could relate to. I feel that her endurance and pain was evident in a way that only mothers or women could understand and feel her pain or share her angst. Her noble soul touched my heart deeply...” (Anna, 36yrs)

3:C “George Anayiotos’s performance was remarkable and I hope that he will be acknowledged for that. I mean the way he could play the other inner self while triggering the imagination of the audience was unique. The scene where he tries to bandage the breasts of the other self is heartbreaking as the action itself is so ‘closeted’ while the general public lacks of any knowledge or awareness. For a moment the spectator is confused not knowing what he is trying to do to the physical self and then realises the action when Joanna is exposed bandaged in front of the audience. Frankly, this play was outstanding and beyond all expectations.” (Andreas, 46yrs)

4:C “I really liked how well the set design looked in the play. It was so colourful and the lighting was crazy. When Starina was performing her show it was like being in a little nightclub and it really gave that magic sense of the cabaret show with all that feathers and perfume.” (Joanna, 27yrs)

5:C “I feel that the director has created a set design which would have had an impact on the audience’s emotions. What I mean is that the set design was plain and bleak and the lightning was dim so you get the feeling something dark is happening. You could see the shadow of the actors making it dreamlike and you could feel the tension.” (Panagiotis, 34yrs)

6:C “The set design created an interesting environment for the play. For instance, the main room and the kitchen were two separated spaces and it needed us to follow what was going on in each area. I would focus into the space dynamic of the room when Joanna would hide in her room but at the same time I could see her mom in the kitchen doing her chores. The dim lighting also contributed to the atmosphere on the stage and transformed it into something that got me emotionally into it.” (George, 53yrs)

7:C “Marina Mandri’s performance was exquisite. It really took her fans by surprise!! The way she carried it off ...as if she was truly Joanna was exceptional. I couldn’t take my eyes off her and I was in tears at the part when she struggles with herself while her mother refuses to accept the fact that her daughter is not a she but a he! In my perspective Marina Mandri gave it all on stage and we need to give her credit for it.” (Nikoletta, 29yrs)

8:C Scene 6:

Kate: Are you a lesbian?

Joanna: Is that what you think?

Kate: Yes.

Joanna: So you think that I am a lesbian...Is that what you think for so long?

Kate: Why do you care what other people think?

Joanna: I care what you think.

Kate: I think ...you are confused.

Joanna: So you think that I am a dyke?

Kate: Aren’t you?

Joanna: What difference does it make?

Kate: It makes. Cause if you are, it shouldn’t bother you that I know.

Joanna: You know?

Kate: If you are not then we should talk about it.

Joanna: You know? You think that you actually know me? Nobody knows me.

Kate: Cause you are not talking to me. If you are not a dyke..then what are you? Let’s talk about it.

Joanna: Why should I be something?

Kate: Cause everyone is something.

Joanna: EVERYBODY IS SOMETHING BUT I AM NOT LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE! You of all should have known about it! You should have understood it! This is what you have understood all this time long? That I am a lesbian?

Kate: What are you?

Joanna: NOTHING! I AM NOTHING!

Kate: Ok, you are not a lesbian. I am sorry!

Paris: (weak) Try ...to see me.

Kate: I see you.

Joanna: What do you see?

Kate:....

Joanna: A..dyke?

Kate: That’s not bad..

Joanna: I know it isn't..it's just I am not.. just that.

Paris: You have seen me so many times. It's just you don't know. Look at me please!

Kate: I am looking at you..what do you want ?

Joanna: Please..

Kate looks at Paris for the first time and hugs him.

Kate: I am so sorry.. I didn't realise....

1:D The Plays

La Cage Aux Folles



Synopsis:

La Cage Aux Folles (Jean Poiret) was initially staged on Theatre ENA in 1999. Directed once again by Andreas Christodoulides the play was a great success giving its audience something to remember with joy. It is a musical play about two gay men, Armand and Albert who have had a relationship for over 20 years. They own and run a glamorous nightclub in St. Tropez, France. When Armand's son, being the offspring of a one night stand years ago, brings home the daughter of a conservative French politician and announces that they are to be married soon, a slapstick comedy unfolds and everyone is trying to hide their true identity.



The play was premiered on 15th of October 2014. The costumes were made by Niovi Constandinidou, choreography by George Demopoulos and starred Erica Begeti, Manolis Mechaelides, Sotiris Mestanas, Pantelis Antonas, Irene Constandinou, George Georgis, Penny Finiri, Diomidis Koufteros, George Demopoulos and Sotiris Sotiriou.

Source: philenews

- See more at:

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2:D



Dark Angel

Synopsis

Dark Angel was staged on the 27th of February 2015 at Teatro ENA and directed by Marinos Anogyriatis. The story is based on the psychological and hysterical drama of the theatrical play *Vincent River* by Philip Ridley. Set in the East End of London, *Dark Angel* is the unfathomable crime-story of a young artist who was found slaughtered in the public toilets of an abandoned train station. Being the only child in his single-parent family, his mother decides to break her silence and finally meets the tormented Davey- the only eye-witness person on the night of the murder. Anita and Davey are trying to find answers and clues on the question -Why did it happen?- with no possible answers. *Dark Angel* revolves on the representation of loss, the repression of sexual identity, bigotry and prejudice and the family as a destructive force with fierce honesty. In the play, there is a representation of that fateful night.



The show was held under the auspices of the Ombudsman and human rights-Principle against discrimination. Starred by Erika Begeti and Andreas Makris. The show was suitable for people over 15 years of age.



Source: *TimeOut Cyprus*

- See more at: <http://www.timeoutcyprus.com/article/11993/skoteinos-aggelos-i-nea-parastasi-toy-theatroy-ena#sthash.9TIHzEOL.dpuf>

3:D

Which Body

'Which Body' made its premiere on the 8th of October in 2014 at THOK APOTHIKES in Nicosia directed by Korina Kontaxaki. Based on the real notes of an anonymous person who suffers from gender dysphoria. Joanna has lived most of her life in her room secluded from anyone who would might ask her name. The more she grows, Paris her real trapped self is derived in the surface. Paris is expressed through drawings on the wall of her room and gradually Paris becomes autonomous and the demanding personality who fights for dominance. Amid all this struggle and isolation, the only light in the tunnel is her best friend Katy whom Joanna is in love with. Katy manages at some point to see the real self in Joanna-Paris. They eventually fall in love but their love cannot bloom unless Joanna is out of the way for ever. Yet, this is rather impossible hence Joanna's mother refuses to see or accept Paris and eventually lose her one and only daughter.

Sets and costumes are signed by George Chiotis, music by Angeliki Kuali, Assistant to the director Eleni Kosma. Performed by Marina Mandri, Nayia Anastasiadou, Elena Papadopoulou, George Anayiotos.



Source: *philenews* - See more at: <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/politismos-kypros/162/218327/p-sa-detta-ap-t-ti-#sthash.hGBG445t.dpuf>

1:E Terminology LGBTQI

A note about these definitions: Each of these definitions has been carefully researched and closely analysed from theoretical and practical perspectives for cultural sensitivity, common usage, and general appropriateness. We have done our best to represent the most popular uses of the terms listed; however there may be some variation in definitions depending on location. Please note that each person who uses any or all of these terms does so in a unique way (especially terms that are used in the context of an identity label). If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms, it is always appropriate to ask. This is especially recommended when using terms that we have noted that can have a derogatory connotation.

Ag / Aggressive - See 'Stud.'

Agendered – Person is internally ungendered.

Ally – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and genderstraight privilege in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues.

Androgyne – Person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting a gender either mixed or neutral.

Asexual – Person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation.

BDSM: (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism) The terms 'submission/sadism' and 'masochism' refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting or receiving pain, often in a sexual context. The terms 'bondage' and 'domination' refer to playing with various power roles, in both sexual and social context. These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, sane, and consensual manner can be a part of healthy sex life. (Sometimes referred to as 'leather.')

Bear: The most common definition of a 'bear' is a man who has facial/body hair, and a cuddly body. However, the word 'bear' means many things to different people, even within the bear movement. Many men who do not have one or all of these characteristics define themselves as bears, making the term a very loose one. 'Bear' is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with natural masculinity and bodies.

Berdache - A generic term used to refer to a third gender person (woman-livingman).

The term 'berdache' is generally rejected as inappropriate and offensive by Native Peoples because it is a term that was assigned by European settlers to differently gendered Native Peoples. Appropriate terms vary by tribe and include: 'one-spirit', 'two-spirit', and 'wintke.'

Bicurious – A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

Bigendered - A person whose gender identity is a combination of male/man and female/woman.

Binding – The process of flattening one's breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest.

Biphobia - The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQI community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual – A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

Bottom - A person who is said to take a more submissive role during sexual interactions. Sometimes referred to as 'pasivo' in Latin American cultures. Also known as 'Catcher.' (See also 'Top'.)

Bottom Surgery – Surgery on the genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a person's preferred gender expression.

Butch – A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. 'Butch' is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Catcher – See 'Bottom.' This term may be considered offensive by some people.

Cisgender – describes someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex.

Coming Out – May refer to the process by which one accepts one's own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersexed person (to "come out" to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one's sexuality, gender identity, or intersexed status with others (to "come out" to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed individuals.

Cross-dresser – Someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

D&D – An abbreviation for drug and disease free.

Discrimination – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individual acts of hatred or injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

Down Low - See 'In the Closet.' Also referred to as 'D/L.'

Drag - The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically.

Drag King – A person who performs masculinity theatrically.

Drag Queen – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

Dyke – Derogatory term referring to a masculine lesbian. Sometimes adopted affirmatively by lesbians (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves.

Fag – Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heteronormative.

Fag Hag – A term primarily used to describe women who prefer the social company of gay men. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Femme – Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

FTM / F2M - Abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

Gay – 1. Term used in some cultural settings to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in "homosexual behavior" identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. 2. Term used to refer to the LGBTQI community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as

heterosexual.

Gender Binary – The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or. (See also ‘Identity Sphere.’)

Gender Confirming Surgery – Medical surgeries used to modify one’s body to be more congruent with one’s gender identity. See “Sex Reassignment Surgery.”

Gender Cues – What human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

Gender Identity – A person’s sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

Gender Normative – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. (Also referred to as ‘Genderstraight’.)

Gender Oppression - The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender (gender-typical people) and subordinate and disparage transgender or gender variant people. Also known as “genderism.”

Gender Variant – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.).

Genderism – see “Gender Oppression.”

Genderfuck – The idea of playing with ‘gender cues’ to purposely confuse “standard” or stereotypical gender expressions, usually through clothing.

Genderqueer – A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Often includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

Genderstraight—See ‘Gender Normative.’

Hermaphrodite—An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (See ‘Intersexed Person’.)

Heteronormativity—The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Heterosexism – Prejudice against individuals and groups who display nonheterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

Heterosexual Privilege –Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals and bisexuals. Also, the benefits homosexuals and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.

HIV-phobia – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Homophobia – The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism as well as heterosexism.

Homosexual – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Identity Sphere – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a

linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better than another.

In the Closet – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, transperson or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. Also known as ‘Downlow’ or ‘D/L.’

Intergender – A person whose gender identity is between genders or a combination of genders.

Institutional Oppression – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

Internalised Oppression – The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

Intersexed Person—Someone whose sex a doctor has a difficult time categorising as either male or female. A person whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads, and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns.

Leather: See ‘BDSM’.

Lesbian – Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and as such is sometimes considered a Eurocentric category that does not necessarily represent the identities of African-Americans and other non-European ethnic groups. This being said, individual female-identified people from diverse ethnic groups, including African-Americans, embrace the term ‘lesbian’ as an identity label.

Lesbian Baiting – The heterosexist notion that any woman who prefers the company of woman, or who does not have a male partner, is a lesbian.

LGBTQI – A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersexed community.

Lipstick Lesbian – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

Male Lesbian—A male-bodied person who identifies as a lesbian. This differs from a heterosexual male in that a male lesbian is primarily attracted to other lesbian, bisexual or queer identified people. May sometimes identify as gender variant, or as a female/woman. (See ‘Lesbian.’)

Metrosexual - First used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term to refer to an urban, heterosexual male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. This term can be perceived as derogatory because it reinforces stereotypes that all gay men are fashion-conscious and materialistic.

MTF / M2F – Abbreviation for male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

Oppression – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Outing – Involuntary disclosure of one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

Packing – Wearing a phallic device on the groin and under clothing for any purposes including: (for someone without a biological penis) the validation or confirmation of one's masculine gender identity; seduction; and/or sexual readiness (for one who likes to penetrate another during sexual intercourse).

Pangendered – A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

Pansexual – A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions.

Passing – Describes a person's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or race/ethnic identity or to be seen as heterosexual.

Pitcher – See 'Top.' This term may be offensive to some people.

Polyamory – Refers to having honest, usually non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and subrelationships (which denote distinguishing between a 'primary' relationship or relationships and various "secondary" relationships).

Prejudice – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

Queer – **1.** An umbrella term which embraces a matrix of sexual preferences, orientations, and habits of the not-exclusively- heterosexual-and-monogamous majority. Queer includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transpeople, intersex persons, the radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive (underworld) explorers. **2.** This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label instead of 'bisexual' as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to, or as a way of stating a non-heterosexual orientation without having to state who they are attracted to. **3.** A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been semantically overturned by members of the maligned group, who use it as a term of defiant pride. 'Queer' is an example of a word undergoing this process. For decades 'queer' was used solely as a derogatory adjective for gays and lesbians, but in the 1980s the term began to be used by gay and lesbian activists as a term of self-identification. Eventually, it came to be used as an umbrella term that included gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold 'queer' to be a hateful insult, and its use by heterosexuals is often considered offensive. Similarly, other reclaimed words are usually offensive to the in-group when used by outsiders, so extreme caution must be taken concerning their use when one is not a member of the group.

Same Gender Loving – A term sometimes used by members of the African-American / Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990's with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life. (Sometimes abbreviated as 'SGL'.)

Sex - A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads,

chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into 'male' and 'female', this category does not recognise the existence of intersexed bodies.

Sex Identity – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

Sexual Orientation – The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's "sex". In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Also known as "Gender Confirming Surgery."

Sexuality – A person's exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.

Stealth – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as 'going stealth' or 'living in stealth mode'.)

Stem – A person whose gender expression falls somewhere between a stud and a femme. (See also 'Femme' and 'Stud'.)

Stereotype – A preconceived or oversimplified generalisation about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Though often negative, can also be complimentary. Even positive stereotypes can have a negative impact, however, simply because they involve broad generalisations that ignore individual realities.

Stone Butch / Femme– A person who may or may not desire sexual penetration and/or contact with the genitals or breasts. (See also 'Butch' and 'Femme').

Straight – Another term for heterosexual.

Straight-Acting – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men. Straight-acting gay men are often looked down upon in the LGBTQ community for seemingly accessing heterosexual privilege.

Stud — An African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian. Also known as 'butch' or 'aggressive'.

Switch – A person who is both a 'Top' and a 'Bottom', there may or may not be a preference for one or the other.

Top — A person who is said to take a more dominant role during sexual interactions. May also be known as 'Pitcher.'

Top Surgery - This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a maletype chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

Trans - An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole.

Transactivism- The political and social movement to create equality for gender variant persons.

Transgender – A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

Transgendered (Trans) Community – A loose category of people who

transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.

Transhate – The irrational hatred of those who are gender variant, usually expressed through violent and often deadly means.

Tranny Chaser - A term primarily used to describe people who prefer or actively seek transpeople for sexual or romantic relations. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Transition – This term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

Transman—An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. Also referred to as ‘transguy(s).’

Transphobia – The irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Transsexual – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transvestite – Someone who dresses in clothing generally identified with the opposite gender/sex. While the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘transvestite’ have been used synonymously, they are in fact signify two different groups. The majority of transvestites are heterosexual males who derive pleasure from dressing in “women’s clothing”. (The preferred term is ‘cross-dresser,’ but the term ‘transvestite’ is still used in a positive sense in England.)

Transwoman-- An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as males.

Two-Spirited – Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term ‘two-spirit’ is usually considered to specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include ‘one-spirit’ and ‘wintke’.

Ze / Hir – Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/ and /here,/ they replace “he”/”she” and “his”/”hers” respectively.

Gender Neutral Pronoun Usage Table:

Subject Object Possessive

Adjective

Possessive

Pronoun

Reflexive

Female She Her Her Hers Herself

Male He Him His His Himself

Gender

Neutral

Ze Hir Hir Hirs Hirsself
Spivak E Em Eir Eirs Emself

How to pronounce gender neutral pronouns:
Ze Hir Hirs Hirsself E Em Eir Eirs Emself
/zee/ /here/ /heres/ /hereself/ /ee/ /em/ /air/ /airs/ /emself/

Examples of how to use these pronouns:
She went to her bedroom.
He went to his bedroom.
Ze went to hir bedroom.
E went to eir bedroom.
I am her sister.
I am his sister.
I am hir sister
I am eir sister.
She shaves herself.
He shaves himself.
Ze shaves hirsself.
E shaves emself.

This terminology sheet was created by Eli R. Green (eli@trans-academics.org) and Eric N. Peterson at the LGBT Resource Center at UC Riverside 2003-2004 , with additional input from www.wikipedia.org and many kind people who helped use create and revise these definitions. This sheet is always a work in progress so please be sure to check the Instructional Materials section of Trans-Academics.org for updated versions. Please feel free to alter, use or pass on as needed but be sure to give credit to the original creators. Any updates or corrections can be submitted to eli@trans-academics.org.

1:F “Magazine Interview in City Press”

«Ο πιο δύσκολος και ο πιο ενδιαφέρον ρόλος που έχω υποδυθεί»

29.10.2014



Ακούγεται χαζό αλλά η αλήθεια είναι πως δεν είχα διαβάσει την περίληψη για την παράσταση «Ποιο σώμα;» πριν κάνω την κράτηση στον ΘΟΚ. Με το που ανακοινώθηκαν οι παραστάσεις της σεζόν, πήρα τηλέφωνο κι έκλεισα θέσεις για τέσσερα στο σύνολο έργα και δεν μπόρεσα να διαβάσω τις περιλήψεις. Ήταν απόφαση του καλοκαιριού, πως θα υποδεχόμουν την φθινοπωρινή σεζόν με το σκεπτικό «Surpriseme!», κι έχω να πω πως μ' έχει αποζημιώσει σε αρκετές περιπτώσεις.

Φτάνω στο θέατρο, περιεργάζομαι το σκηνικό, χαζεύω την διανομή στο πρόγραμμα, χτυπάει το τελευταίο κουδούνι. Περνάω το πρώτο τέταρτο της ώρας να προσπαθώ απεγνωσμένα να καταλάβω περί τίνος πρόκειται. Με την ιστορία να εξελίσσεται, απλά αφήνομαι, ακούω και παρακολουθώ. Κατά την διάρκεια της παράστασης ακούω κλάματα. Κάποια κοπέλα κλαίει λίγες θέσεις πιο πίσω. Μετά ακούω κλάματα στα δεξιά, γυρίζω βλέπω ένα άντρα να σκουπίζει τα δάκρυά του. Κάποιοι ψιθυρίζουν στην γωνία. Συνεχίζω να παρακολουθώ την παράσταση ενώ στα αριστερά μια άλλη κοπέλα να κλαίει με λυγμούς. Νιώθω περίεργα, που δεν μπορώ να ταυτιστώ, αλλά καταλαβαίνω. Μπορεί στην τελική αυτός να 'ταν κι ο συγγραφικός στόχος.

Μέχρι εκείνη τη μέρα, οι μόνες μου αναφορές σχετικά με την δυσφορία φύλου ήταν η ταινία «BoysDon'tCry», την οποία παρακολούθησα το '99, και η JennyG., κύπρια τρανς την οποία γνώρισα επτά χρόνια μετά. Τίποτα παραπάνω. Η παράσταση τελειώνει και με την φίλη μου οδεύουμε για κρασιά σ' ένα καινούριο μπαράκι που άνοιξε στην πόλη. Δεν μπορούμε να σταματήσουμε να συζητάμε γι' αυτό που είδαμε.

Την επομένη παίρνω την Μαρίνα τηλέφωνο για συγχαρητήρια. Μεταξύ άλλων, πρόκειται για τον πρώτο της πρωταγωνιστικό ρόλο στο θέατρο. Της ζητώ να συναντηθούμε και να πούμε περισσότερα από κοντά.

Η Μαρίνα είναι απ' τη Λεμεσό κι έχει αποφοιτήσει το 2006 απ' τη Δραματική Σχολή του ΚΘΒΕ. Το βιογραφικό της τα τελευταία οκτώ χρόνια συμπεριλαμβάνει συμμετοχές σε αρκετές θεατρικές παραστάσεις και τηλεοπτικές παραγωγές. Όσον κι αν το επιδίωξα, αρνήθηκε να συζητήσει για οτιδήποτε άλλο εκτός απ' την συγκεκριμένη παράσταση. «Νιώθω ευθύνη αυτή τη στιγμή. Όχι για το βιογραφικό μου, ούτε καν για την παράσταση. Έχω ευθύνη να αποδώσω τον ρόλο μου σωστά γιατί πρόκειται για μια πραγματική ιστορία που αφορά σε άτομο που βρίσκεται –σε κάθε παράσταση- εκεί μπροστά μου, κάπου ανάμεσα στο κοινό. Έχω ευθύνη απέναντι στον Alterego*».

**Ως Alterego θα αναφέρεται το άτομο στις σημειώσεις του οποίου βασίστηκε το σενάριο της εν λόγω παράστασης.*

Μαρίνα έχω να σου πω πως βγαίνοντας απ' την αίθουσα του θεάτρου συζητούσα για ώρες το τι είδα...

Αυτό είναι καλό. Αυτό θέλουμε, όλοι οι συντελεστές. Να προβληματιστεί ο κόσμος, να θέλει να μιλήσει γι' αυτό. Πέραν του θεάματος, ας μην ξεχνάμε πως πρόκειται για μια αληθινή ιστορία. Για την ιστορία ενός ανθρώπου που ζει ανάμεσά μας, εδώ στην Κύπρο.

Το 'χω απορία, ήξερες απ' την αρχή τι ρόλο πας να υποδυθείς;

Κοίτα, στον ΘΟΚ περνάς από οντισιόν. Είναι μαζεμένοι εκεί όλοι οι αρμόδιοι και εσύ έχεις να πεις ένα μονόλογο κι ένα τραγούδι της επιλογής σου. Ενημερώνεσαι αν επιλέγηκες και σε λίγες βδομάδες μαθαίνεις και το ρόλο σου. Στη συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση, το κείμενο μου δόθηκε ένα μήνα πριν ξεκινήσουμε πρόβες.

Ποια ήταν η πρώτη σου αντίδραση;

Έκλαψα. Ήταν αρχές Αυγούστου και ήταν πρόσφατος και ο θάνατος της JennyG., την οποία γνώριζα. Διάβαζα το σενάριο μες στο αυτοκίνητο, στη διαδρομή προς Λεμεσό και έκλαιγα. Η όλη ιστορία που πραγματεύεται την δυσφορία φύλου, μου θύμιζε έντονα την ιστορία της JennyG.

Οπότε γνώριζες περί τίνος πρόκειται η δυσφορία φύλου.

Ναι αλλά όχι τόσο καλά όσο σήμερα. Ξέρεις, πριν ξεκινήσουμε τις πρόβες, όταν με ρωτούσαν οι φίλοι μου για το έργο, απαντούσα πως πρόκειται για μια κοπέλα που θέλει να γίνει άντρας. Με το που άρχισαν οι πρόβες και έκανα απ' την πλευρά μου έρευνα σχετικά με την δυσφορία αυτή, αντιλήφθηκα πως δεν είναι τόσο απλή η απάντηση και πως ο πρωταγωνιστής αυτός είναι ένας άντρας εγκλωβισμένος σε σώμα γυναίκας. Δεν θέλει να γίνει άντρας αλλά είναι άντρας. Απλά η φύση του έδωσε ένα γυναικείο σώμα.



Η έρευνά σου που αποσκοπούσε;

Έπρεπε οπωσδήποτε να καταλάβω, να αντιληφθώ το ρόλο που θα πήγαινα να υποδυθώ. Οπότε, άρχισα να παρακολουθώ διάφορα ντοκιμαντέρ, να διαβάζω ψυχιατρικές έρευνες και αναλύσεις... Ήθελα να

καταλάβω πως αντιμετωπίζεται σήμερα η δυσφορία φύλου, η οποία κάποτε αναφερόταν λανθασμένα ως διαταραχή. Διψούσα να μάθω περισσότερα.

Και ξεκινάτε πρόβες...

Ναι κι εκεί μαθαίνω απ' την σκηνοθέτιδα Κορίνα Κονταξάκη το εκπληκτικό πως, το άτομο στο οποίο βασίζεται το θεατρικό αυτό έργο, ζει και μάλιστα στην Κύπρο. Και πως θα ερχόταν μάλιστα στις πρόβες να μας δει.

Πώς ένιωσες;

Ασύλληπτη χαρά και είναι δύο οι λόγοι. Ως ηθοποιός είχα την ευλογία να γνωρίσω το υλικό μου, το αντικείμενο της έρευνάς μου και βεβαίως, πέραν αυτού και σημαντικότερο, γνώρισα έναν εκπληκτικό άνθρωπο. Με τον alterego περάσαμε πολλές ώρες μαζί, δεθήκαμε και είμαστε σήμερα πολύ καλοί φίλοι.

Ήταν η βοήθεια του σημαντική;

Υπερβολικά σημαντική. Μοιράστηκε πολλά μαζί μου, λύνοντάς μου πολλές απορίες και τον ευχαριστώ. Μπήκα στην διαδικασία να σκεφτώ πως θα 'ταν να μην μου αρέσει το σώμα μου για να καταφέρω να το αποδώσω και σωστά. Ο Alterego με ξεκλείδωσε... Όταν αντιλήφθηκα περί τίνος πρόκειται, ένιωσα πολύ πιο άνετα και πως θα μου έβγαινε σωστά και στην σκηνή.

Παρόλα αυτά αντιμετώπισες δυσκολίες στις πρόβες;

Κοίτα, ως άνθρωπος και ως ηθοποιός πιστεύω πως είμαστε, κατά δύναμη, σχεδόν τα πάντα. Αυτό νομίζω με βοηθάει γενικότερα στη δουλειά μου. Παρόλα αυτά, ο εν λόγω ρόλος με... ξάφνιασε. Κι λόγος είναι πως αυτή τη φορά καλέστηκα να υποδυθώ κάτι που δεν πέρασε ποτέ απ' το μυαλό μου. Μπορεί να 'μαι κατά δύναμη δολοφόνος, highclass, μανιοκαταθλιπτική, εκατοντάδες πράγματα, αλλά η δυσφορία φύλου, όχι, δεν είχε περάσει ποτέ απ' το μυαλό μου. Δεν ένιωσα ποτέ να με ενοχλεί που έχω γυναικείο σώμα. Στις πρόβες η έγνοια μου ήταν να αποφύγω την ευκολία μου γιατί, ακριβώς, το πιο εύκολο θα 'ταν να σκέφτομαι πως υποδύομαι έναν άντρα. Ήθελα να αποφύγω αυτόν τον μιμητισμό. Ήθελα να αφήσω το σώμα μου ν' ακολουθήσει όλα αυτά που έμαθα και άκουσα μέσα απ' την έρευνά μου. Τόσο ο Alterego, όσο και οι συντελεστές της παράστασης, με βοήθησαν πολύ σ' αυτό.

Ήταν κι ο Alterego εκεί;

Ναι, κι αυτό έκανε όλους μας να νιώσουμε ακόμα περισσότερο την ευθύνη πως όλο αυτό το εγχείρημα έπρεπε να γίνει σωστά. Ήταν εκεί μαζί μας και εξακολουθεί να είναι μαζί μας, σε κάθε παράσταση. Νιώθω

πως όλοι οι συντελεστές εργάστηκαν και εργάζονται όσον αφορά στην συγκεκριμένη παράσταση, όχι για τον εαυτό τους, αλλά γι' αυτόν. Για να αποδώσουν και να αγγίξουν σωστά το εν λόγω θέμα. Για να ενημερωθεί όσον το δυνατόν καλύτερα ο κόσμος για την δυσφορία φύλου. Η παρουσία του Alterego εκεί μας ενδυνάμωσε. Ξέρεις, είναι ο τελευταίος άνθρωπος που αγκαλιάζω πριν βγω στην σκηνή και ο πρώτος, όταν τελειώνει η παράσταση. Το 'χω πάρει προσωπικά.

Πώς ήταν η συνεργασία με την Κονταξάκη;

Η Κορίνα είναι ένας εκπληκτικός άνθρωπος, μία ήρεμη προσωπικότητα, παρόλα αυτά δυναμική. Κατάφερε κι έβγαλε απ' όλους τους ηθοποιούς αυτό που ήθελε. Μας απομάκρυνε απ' τις ευκολίες μας, μας υπέδειξε πως πρέπει απλά να αφήσουμε το σώμα να ακολουθήσει και τα πράγματα να συμβούν. Κι όλα αυτά με τον χαρακτηριστικό, ήρεμό της τρόπο, μέσα από μια ομαλή διαδικασία. Στο θέατρο ξέρεις, το πιο εύκολο είναι να φωνάζεις και να χτυπιέσαι. Η Κόρινα όμως έχει ένα τρόπο να αποδίδει διαφορετικά κάποιες καταστάσεις μέσα απ' τους ηθοποιούς της.



Κι ο ρόλος της Έλενας Παπαδοπούλου πρέπει να 'ταν δύσκολος...

Η Παπαδοπούλου υποδύεται την μάνα, και μέσα απ' την έρευνά μου έχω αντιληφθεί πόσο δύσκολο είναι και για μια μάνα να αποδεχτεί τη δυσφορία φύλου του παιδιού της. Η μάνα στην οποία είναι βασισμένος ο ρόλος της Έλενας είναι επίσης μια γυναίκα που ζει ανάμεσά μας, εδώ στην Κύπρο... Το πιο δύσκολο για

μια μάνα και το βάσανό της, πιστεύω πως είναι που νιώθει πως η κοινωνία δεν θα αποδεχτεί το παιδί της.

Γιατί είναι απών ο πατέρας απ' την παράσταση;

Βασισμένη σε πραγματικά γεγονότα η παράσταση, ο ρόλος του πατέρα δεν προσεγγίζεται γιατί στην προκειμένη δεν υπήρχε θέμα με τον πατέρα. Υπάρχουν βέβαια άλλες περιπτώσεις που στον κλειστό οικογενειακό κύκλο, είναι ο πατέρας που αρνείται να αντιληφθεί την κατάσταση. Σε μία τέτοια περίπτωση, εδώ στην Κύπρο, ο πατέρας ζήτησε να ταφεί το παιδί του με κοστούμι, παρόλο που επρόκειτο για άνθρωπο με δυσφορία φύλου, γυναίκα



παγιδευμένη σε σώμα αντρικό. Σ' αυτή την περίπτωση η μάνα πρόλαβε κι έβαλε μέσα στο φέρετρο την περούκα και το φόρεμα του παιδιού της, ενώ ο πατέρας αρνήθηκε ακόμα και την τελευταία στιγμή να αποδεχτεί το παιδί του.

Είναι όμως εύκολο για ένα γονιό να αποδεχτεί την δυσφορία αυτή;

Εξαρτάται σε τι είδους κοινωνία ζεις. Μάλλον στην δική μας δεν είναι εύκολο, όχι. Είναι σημαντικό να καταλάβει όχι μόνο ο γονιός, αλλά όλοι μας, περί τίνος πρόκειται η δυσφορία αυτή. Καταρχήν να το ξεκαθαρίσουμε πως δεν έχει τίποτα να κάνει με τον σεξουαλικό προσανατολισμό, δεν είναι τύπος ομοφυλοφιλικής συμπεριφοράς. Στην δυσφορία φύλου έχουμε να κάνουμε με άτομα τα οποία είναι εγκλωβισμένα σε σώμα που δεν ανταποκρίνεται σε εκείνο που νιώθουν οι ίδιοι για τον εαυτό τους. Καταλαβαίνω πως είναι δύσκολο για κάποιον να κοιτάει ένα γυναικείο σώμα και να προσπαθεί να αντιληφθεί πως μέσα του είναι ένας άντρας. Αλλά πρέπει να αντιληφθούμε και πόσο δύσκολο είναι και γι' αυτόν που το βιώνει. Το φύλο μας το συνειδητοποιούμε μέχρι την ηλικία των 5 χρονών. Τα άτομα αυτά καταλαβαίνουν, κάπου εκεί, πως κάτι πάει... λάθος. Περιμένουν πως κάτι θα αλλάξει στο σώμα τους, αλλά δεν μπορούν να το εκφράσουν σε αυτή την ηλικία γιατί μπορεί και να νομίζουν πως αυτό που νιώθουν είναι κακό. Και μετά έρχεται η εφηβεία και περισσότερες αλλαγές στο σώμα. Ακολουθεί η απομόνωση. Σκέψου για παράδειγμα ένα άντρα εγκλωβισμένο σε σώμα γυναίκα να έχει έμμηνο ρήση στην εφηβεία. Ή στο αντρικό σώμα την φωνή που αλλάζει και την έντονη τριχοφυΐα που εμφανίζεται. Κοίτα, δεν είναι υπόχρεοι όλοι να μπουν στα παπούτσια αυτού που το περνάει, αλλά πρέπει να συνειδητοποιήσουμε –τουλάχιστον- πως δεν πρόκειται για ασθένεια, ούτε για ψυχική διαταραχή. Δεν

επιλέγει κάποιος να νιώθει έτσι κι αυτό είναι επιστημονικά αποδεδειγμένο. Ονομάζεται δυσφορία φύλου, είναι μία πραγματικότητα και το λιγότερο που έχουμε να κάνουμε είναι να αποδεχτούμε τα άτομα αυτά.

Έχεις κάποια εικόνα για το κοινό που παρακολούθησε την παράσταση και που δεν ήταν υποψιασμένο για την δυσφορία;

Το κοινό φαίνεται να σοκάρεται... ευχάριστα. Αυτό αντιληφθήκαμε τουλάχιστον. Αν ο ανυποψίαστος φύγει απ' την αίθουσα συνειδητοποιημένος, αν αντιληφθεί πως η δυσφορία φύλου υπάρχει και είναι δίπλα μας, αυτό είναι ένα πρώτο βήμα. Αν καταλάβει πως τα άτομα αυτά αναζητούν πρώτα απ' όλα την αποδοχή, για να μπορούν να ζήσουν ελεύθερα μες στην κοινωνία, αυτό σημαίνει πως κάναμε την δουλειά μας σωστά. Νομίζω πως γίνεται ένα σημαντικό βήμα μέσα απ' την παράσταση αυτή και μπράβο στον ΘΟΚ που την επέλεξε. Όσον αφορά στο κοινό, και για όλους εμάς τους συντελεστές που λαμβάνουμε μέρος, το πιο συγκινητικό είναι πως κάπου εκεί στην αίθουσα, την παράσταση παρακολουθούν και συγγενείς του Alterego.

Είχε επαφή μαζί τους; Ήρθαν στα καμαρίνια;

Ναι και με έχει συγκινήσει αυτό. Το βλέπω στα μάτια τους πως είναι έτοιμοι να τον δεχτούν, πως δεν έχουν την πρόθεση να τον περιθωριοποιήσουν.

Αν κάποιος, ή κάποια ομάδα, είχε έντονη άποψη για την παράσταση και δημιουργούσε πρόβλημα, τι θα έκανες;

Επανάσταση! Νομίζω πως αποτελούν μειοψηφία στις σύγχρονες κοινωνίες οι συμπεριφορές αυτές. Πώς πρόκειται για άτομα που δεν μπορούν να το δεχτούν όλο αυτό λόγω έλλειψης γνώσεων και παιδείας. Δεν με αφορά ο κόσμος αυτός. Απ' την πλευρά μου, δεν τον αποδέχομαι ούτε εγώ.

Είναι η Ιωάννα -και κατ' επέκταση ο Πάρης- ο πιο δύσκολος ρόλος που έχεις υποδυθεί μέχρι σήμερα;

Θα έλεγα πως ναι. Κι αυτό κάνει την όλη διαδικασία πιο ενδιαφέρουσα. Το πιο δύσκολο είναι που είχα ζωντανό μπροστά μου τον άνθρωπο στις σημειώσεις του οποίου βασίστηκε το σενάριο. Έχω ευθύνη. Να αντιμετωπίσω τον ρόλο αυτό όπως του αρμόζει.

Συνέντευξη του Alterego μπορείτε να διαβάσετε εδώ [«Πιο σώμα;»](#)

Θέατρο Αποθήκες ΘΟΚ [77772717] Τετάρτη & Πέμπτη [μέχρι και 20 Νοεμβρίου], 20:30 *Η είσοδος δεν επιτρέπεται σε άτομα κάτω των 15 ετών.

- See more at: http://city.sigmalive.com/article/5493/o-pio-dyskolos-kai-o-pio-endiaferon-rolos-poy-ehoyodythei?_hstc=104077407.f9851d965e4c5f60b89e19bd83539b60.1459978912090.1459978912090.1461931180935.2&_hssc=104077407.1.1461931180935&_hsfp=302289107#sthash.Bij1q7iz.dpuf

G: Sample of handed out questionnaires

Interviewee number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Gender:M/F/I																			
Ager Range:<20																			
20-29																			
30-39																			
40-49																			
50-59																			
60+																			
Nationality:																			
Religion: Muslim																			
Christian																			
Other																			
None																			
Educational Level: School																			
College																			
Graduate																			
Post-Graduate																			
LGBTI:Family																			
Friends																			
Colleagues																			
Acquaintances																			
Are Gays Acceptable? Y/N																			
Are Gays threatening? Y/N																			

Is Gay marriage acceptable? Y/N																		
Heard about Gay theatre? Y/N																		
Seen Gay Production? Y/N																		
Reaction: P(ositive) / N (egative)																		
Your Sexuality: S/G/L/B/T/I																		

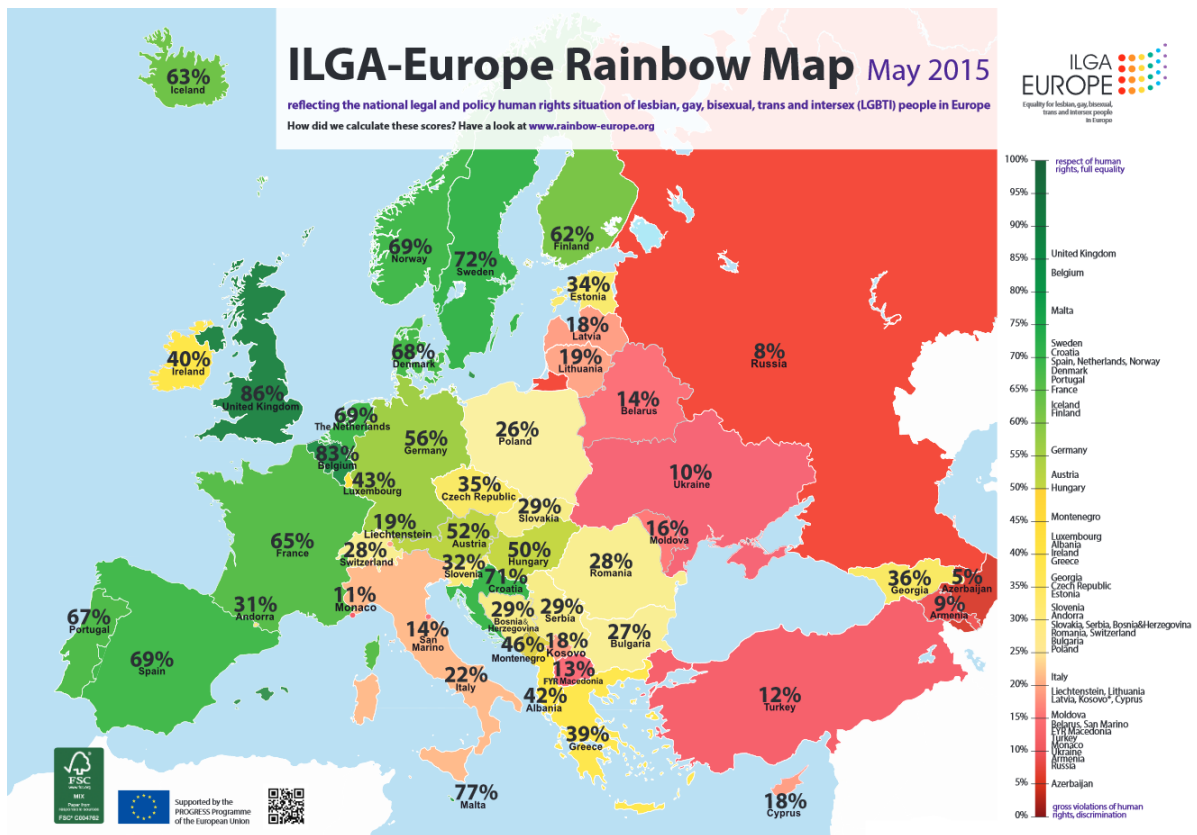
1. What did you expect from this production in terms of your own views about homosexuality?

2. Did this play tell you anything about what Gay Theater means?

3. Has it changed your perception? How and how did you react?

4. What do you understand by the 'gay etiquette' of the play?

H: ILGA Rainbow Map 2015



http://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/side_a_rainbow_europe_map_2015_a3_no_crops.pdf