



Interview

with

Mette

Edvardsen



Interview with Mette Edvardsen ➡
Live Arts Week, Bologna



METTE EDVARDSEN (N/B) – TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE AFTERNOON SUNSHINE – A LIBRARY OF LIVING BOOKS, PERFORMANCE, PHOTO BY ELLY CLARKE (BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY)

(English text below)

Inizia oggi la **Live Arts Week** a Bologna. Dopo l'intervista con Daniele Gasparinetti, ATPdiary ha approfondito, con brevi interviste, alcuni appuntamenti del festival.

Oggi, martedì 8 aprile 2014, dalle 12 alle 19 nella **Biblioteca Salaborsa** prende avvio la performance di **Mette Edvardsen**: *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine – a library of living books*. Prodotto da Xing/Live Arts Week, il progetto coinvolge un gruppo di persone che ha imparato a memoria un testo a sua scelta, formando in questo modo un catalogo di libri viventi 'consultabili' nella biblioteca. I libri sono a disposizione e possono essere richiesti al desk e portati in un angolo tranquillo della biblioteca per essere ascoltati. Mette Edvardsen esplora in questo modo lo spazio sensibile tra performance e linguaggio, corpo e memoria, apprendimento e cancellazione. L'intero progetto si ispira a *Fahrenheit 451* evocando la visione di una società futura in cui tutti i libri, considerati come oggetti pericolosi, sono stati bruciati.

Oltre a *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine – a library of living books*, Mette Edvardsen presenta, nella serata di venerdì 11 aprile (dalle 21) **No Title**: una nuova performance in prima italiana. "No Title segna il passaggio da 'ciò che abbiamo davanti' a 'ciò che non c'è', intesi entrambi come condizioni di attivazione e produzione di pensiero e immaginazione. Mette Edvardsen prosegue la sua ricerca giocando con le possibilità e i limiti del linguaggio, e con l'attualizzazione nello spazio e nel

tempo. Con *No Title* realizza il divario tra un mondo e le nostre idee su di esso, l'invincibile divario tra pensiero ed esperienza, tra qui e là."



METTE EDVARDSEN (N/B) – TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE AFTERNOON SUNSHINE – A LIBRARY OF LIVING BOOKS, PERFORMANCE, PHOTO BY SVEINN FANNAR JOHANNSSON (OSLO LIBRARY)

Some questions to Mette Edvardsen

Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine -

a library of living books

performance, italian première, co-production Xing/Live Arts Week

(*starting every half hour, advanced booking recommended)

For *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* a group of people have each memorised a book of their choice. They form a collection of living books that spend their time in the library waiting to be picked up. At the lending counter, a reader can order one of these books before being taken by it to a quiet place to have it recited ... Characterised by a great economy of means, the work of Mette Edvardsen explores the sensitive space between performance and language. Inspired by Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* which describes a world in which all books have been burned, her *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* is a remarkable experience. With disarming naturalness and without the intermediary of a physical object, the living books remind us that learning a text 'by heart'

is an act of love that mobilises memory as much as forgetfulness. It is the direct transmission of this process that makes the encounter so very moving.

ATP: How did you get the idea of *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine*?

Mette Edvardsen: *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* started out as an experiment which was first realized in 2010 in Belgium. But the idea actually developed a few years before that for a context reflecting upon, amongst other things, the Seed Vault built on the Svalbard Island of Norway in 2008. The Seed Vault is built into the mountain and aims to preserve and store a large variety of plant seeds from all over the world. It is an attempt to insure against the loss of seeds during large-scale regional or global crisis. Anyhow, the project *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* took place some time later, and since then it has been growing and developing. In the first place I was interested in developing learning by heart as a practice, and what that would mean. With the group of performers, or 'books' as we call ourselves, we are developing the practice of learning by heart and entering a process of memory (and forgetting). For me it is important to bring the focus to the engagement of the doing. Memory is unstable. Even if you have learned a whole book by heart, you will still need to practice or else you will forget it again. This is also the beauty of it. More than an achievement it is the engagement with the continuous doing of something, the ongoing, which I find important.

ATP: Nowadays no one learns by heart poetry or whatever. Why do you think it's important to remember the importance of learning by heart prose or poems?

M.E.: It is true that nowadays, at least in our western culture, we don't really learn by heart. I think it is a loss. Learning by heart is a practice with a long history. Today forgetting is a virtue and a skill, memory is redundant and useless. In a world where we are constantly defined by novelty, maybe this practice can be a resistance against forgetting. I think memory is radical today. To develop learning by heart as a practice and share it with an audience as an art project is in the first place in order to create an experience. But to undertake this activity has been very meaningful in several ways. Certainly, learning by heart is not merely about acquiring content to the mind. It is engaging with the process of memory and of forgetting, and it is a learning process. And next to making a very close reading of the book you choose to commit to memory, it is developing a practice. And to engage in a practice over time is eventually rewarding also outside of the artistic intensions of the work.

ATP: In the festival you bring the performance "No Title". Could you tell me about that?

M.E.: With the new piece *No Title* I continued where my last piece ended. In *Black* I made invisible objects appear by naming them and placing them in space. Having been obsessed with what is here, I am now looking into what is *not* as a way of activating and producing thoughts and imaginations. *No Title* is also about memory, how memory and imagination blur. It is about how reality exists in language and how this extends into real space, and how things can be there and gone at the same time. In *No Title* I address existence through negation. I am interested in negation, how we can define something by what it is not, and by this also actually negate its very existence.

ATP: Even this project is about language. How comes you're so interested in that?

M.E.: I started to work with language in this way with the piece *Black*, which I made in 2011. Up until then my pieces were usually quite mute, with an occasional word or sentence being spoken. I worked a lot with objects. For me the objects also form a part of language, like an action, a movement, the space. I still think of all of my pieces as a form of writing, a writing in time and space. When I made *Black* I was questioning my relationship to objects. I wanted to work in a space with nothing, to make a piece with 'nothing'. This is how speech entered. But I am not a writer. For me it is important that the text I speak both in *Black* and for *No Title* is really with and in space, and in time, for a present audience. I don't mean that it is improvised, but I mean in the sense as a writing it is not existing on paper and does not exist as such outside of the performance. I don't think my work is about language, although I use language extensively. There is a certain capacity in language which I find interesting to work with.



METTE EDVARDSEN (N/B) – TIME HAS FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE AFTERNOON SUNSHINE – A LIBRARY OF LIVING BOOKS, PERFORMANCE, PRIMA ITALIANA, VERSIONE PRODOTTA DA XING/LIVE ARTS WEEK (DRAWING/DISEGNO DA: CAPTAIN NEMO'S LIBRARY, ILLUSTRATION FROM TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA BY JULES VERNE



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No Title a piece by Mette Edvardsen www.metteedvardsen.be

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