
C:NTACT

ABOUT:



C:NTACT is a branch of the Betty Nansen Theatre, established in the summer of 2005. The main location of C:NTACT is at the Edison, the annexe stage of the Betty Nansen Theatre.

The Betty Nansen Theatre has many years of experience in combining reality and theatre, and C:NTACT is a natural continuation of the thoughts, ideas and visions with which we have been working, in our usual repertoire, in our theatre/integration initiative “Thoughts of the Others”, and certainly in our pilot project “Players Project”.

The core issue for C:NTACT is the personal stories of the participants. C:NTACT therefore seeks to encourage the ability to communicate thoughts, dreams, ideas, visions. To communicate is inseparably linked with the ability to implement. Experience from previous projects has taught us that the process of creating within theatre and other media not only demands knowledge of narrative techniques and methods, but also requires basic skills in order to cooperate and develop together with others. Therefore, the creative process is as essential as the final product, so we believe that this process is as fruitful as the actual meeting between production and audience, when it comes to integration in general.

C:NTACT consists of a wide range of activities, workshops and productions, primarily aimed at young people of Danish as well as non-Danish origin. Through C:NTACT, these young persons will meet professional artists and teachers who will help them develop and create products that can be shown to an audience.

Some activities will be short, intense processes, whilst others will be a longer, continuous teamwork targeted at actual productions. Likewise, some activities will take place during school hours, while others will be in the late afternoon or the week-ends.

C:NTACT is not an educational project per se. Those taking part will be met at eye level, but will also be met with the demands that are obvious in any creative process.

In other words, C:NTACT is an artistic platform where the young people can express themselves on their own terms, and where the audience will meet stories that are otherwise only presented to them in edited versions, simplified in the daily media. C:NTACT caters for the

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usual theatre audience as well as for people who otherwise never make use of the activities at the theatre. Performances, film and radio productions will be presented, and there will be monthly café events where the participants will present their work.

C:NTACT strives to establish new networks, by means of the young people's own contacts as well as through our "culture-ambassadors", i.e. groups of people that advise us and evaluate our initiatives.

The Edison, annexe stage of the Betty Nansen Theatre, is the venue for C:NTACT, and the various public shows taking place parallel with the professional repertoire at the theatre. However, some activities will take place elsewhere, e.g. on the main stage of the Betty Nansen theatre. Productions suitable for the purpose may be shown around the country, at schools, colleges, community centres, or other theatres. The various film and radio productions will furthermore be involved in a major distribution strategy.

C:NTACT has already made agreements of cooperation with a series of cultural institutions regarding the development and the distributions of the activities of the department. And C:NTACT will work closely with schools and other educational institutions, as these are an important factor in the contact to the youth, and in the evaluation and optimisation of our projects.

C:NTACT has been established with the support of the BG foundation, the Ministry for Integration, the Ministry for Education, the Ministry for Culture, and is so far scheduled for a period of three years.

THE BACKGROUND:



About the pilot project: "Players Project"

Players Project was launched in August 2004 and involved more than 200 young people, most of them of non-Danish origin. The project consisted of four sections: Theatre, Film, Radio and Communication.

The Theatre section was headed by Jeremy Weller, Director and Artistic Director of the Grassmarket Project in Edinburgh. In cooperation with contact persons from seven different institutions, and through a series of workshops, he selected the young people that would benefit the most from participating in the project. These young people met at the Betty Nansen Theatre, where they worked with their own stories while being trained in speaking, acting etc., and they were actively involved in the PR and communication work. This culminated in the performance "We are", which played to full houses at the Betty Nansen Theatre 14 times, and later went on tour to three other towns of Denmark.

The film director Annette K. Olesen initiated a documentary film project at the theatre. She and two professional teachers/directors, Suvi Helminen and Morten Meldgaard, taught 15 youths camera- and narrative technique for a month, after which the youths produced short documentaries themselves, assisted by the teachers.

A radio project was started by Georg Larsen, journalist and documentarist. A group of young girls worked with radio production and eventually they produced a series of radio documentaries by themselves.

The film and radio productions will premiere in May 2005.

"Players Project" was backed by the Ministry of Integration, the councils of Frederiksberg and Copenhagen, and the Theatre Association of Greater Copenhagen.

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About the theatre initiative: "Thoughts of the Others"



The Danish parliament election of 2001 (where the main issue was immigrants and refugees) was the incentive for the Betty Nansen Theatre in starting the theatre project "Thoughts of the Others".

We were astonished that a relatively small group of people in the Danish society could cause so much worry and become such a hot issue in the election campaigns, so we decided to make an effort to get acquainted with the group of people that are usually referred to as "the Others".



"1001 Nights – NOW" was the first in the series of performances under "Thoughts of the Others". Eleven of the greatest story tellers from nine muslim countries were invited to write a story about what occupied their thoughts here and now. The show was directed by British director Alan Lyddiard and was later staged at the Theater Neuhausen in Germany, and will be performed in the autumn of 2005 at the Northern Stage Theatre in Newcastle.



The second production was "The Others" (2003), which dealt with the most complicated conflict in our time: The Israel-Palestine conflict. The director Jeremy Weller helped us develop and stage the show, where Palestinians and Jews, all resident in Denmark, were brought on stage together to tell their own stories.



The year after, in 2004, the third production, "the Wedding", was added to the initiative. This play was based on a documentary film "A Wedding in Ramallah", by Sherine Salama, and it was developed in cooperation with a group of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants, who contributed with their own experiences and personal stories.



"The Sky Above Us", based on Wim Wenders' film from 1987, "The Wings of Desire", was staged in 2005. 15 non-professionals, Danes and immigrants, were on stage together with professional actors, a stand-up comedian, and a circus performer.

In November 2005, the production "Fathers and Sons" opened. The Director Jeremy Weller created a play about frustrations, anger, forgiveness and yearnings, based on the personal experiences of 11 "real" fathers and sons, who played their own roles on stage.

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The latest performance in the series of "the Thoughts of the Others" was "the Headscarf Monologues" which premiered in January 2006. This show was created on research, interviews and talks with more than 100 women, all living in Denmark. The research resulted in 18 monologues, each telling its own truth about being a woman in Denmark. The show was performed by three professional actresses and was directed by Vibeke Bjelke.

Next in line will be "Aeneas", a co-production with the Danish State Ensemble for Children's Theatre, Corona La Balance, which is planned to open in April 2006. This is a show for a young audience, with professional performers, storytellers and amateurs on stage. This show is developed on the basis of Vergil's epic "the Aeneid" and focuses on topics such as exile, war, and destiny.

Since the Thoughts of the Others was launched in 2003, the idea has spread to other European theatres, e.g. the Riksteatern and the Teatertribunalen in Stockholm the Northern Stage Company in Newcastle, and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg.

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A NEW WAY TO MEET



C:ntact/Stage

C:ntact/Stage consists of various projects of different duration and number of participants.

So far, C:NTACT/Stage has staged two major shows. The first, called “Ethnical Mishap”, premiered in December. It was created by 38 young persons who for several months had been working in workshops dealing with dancing, poetry slam, rap and visual design. The director Inger Eilersen helped the youths collect their efforts into one show about being young in Denmark today – whether of Danish or foreign origin.

This show was a vast success, and extra performances were made in January. More than 6000 people watched this show.

The next production will be “the Girls’ Club”, created by 35 girls of different backgrounds. The show is about a group of girls who are gathered with the intention to establish a girls’ club. The themes of the show are social and cultural differences, but it is certainly also about boys, parents, dreams and visions. “The Girls’ Club” is the successor of a similar, but smaller project which took place in the autumn of 2005. The young girls were first tutored by two instructors in acting techniques, and later met with director and choreographer Mikala Bjarnov Lage.

“The Girls’ Club” opens on March 2nd 2006 and is planned to be performed 11 times.

C:ntact/Stage is the natural link between the department’s own productions and the professional productions at the Betty Nansen Theatre, covering everything from concept and script development to actors, extras and technicians. The training is always done by professionals, i.e. artists, directors, performers, teachers etc., Danish as well as non-Danish.

C:ntact/Com

C:ntact/Com will have an editorial group which will cooperate with DR SKUM (Youth website of the Danish State Radio/TV) regarding the development, establishing and updating of the website. The editorial group is an important link between the various activities as press releases and publication to networks and distribution channels. This site was opened in the autumn of 2005 and has since has a large number of visitors. – See for yourself on www.dr.dk/contact

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Furthermore, a team has been established with the intention to publish a nationwide C:NTACT magazine a few times a year. The editorial team will be instructed by professionals within journalism, communication and media.

C:ntact/Com trains the youths in expressing themselves through the Internet and the press, and the department is an important player in the development and production of newspapers, programmes, posters and general information about the department.

C:ntact/Film

C:ntact/Film offers two annual long-term documentary film projects. Based on their own stories, the youths can develop film and produce their own documentary films that will be shown at the Edison Theatre, on television, at the DR SKUM website, and at various film festivals, e.g. the salaam.dk festival.



On march 5th 2006, the first film group in C:NTACT/FILM premieres with “2400 Northwest meets 2900 Hellerup” – eight portraits of young people from two very different parts of Copenhagen. The team was instructed and supervised by two professional directors, Suvi Helminen and Saskia Bisp.

C:ntact/Film establishes a distribution network to schools etc. throughout the country where the films can be used. The training will be done by two professional film documentarists.

C:ntact/Radio

C:ntact/Radio has two annual projects, offering knowledge and competencies within radio documentaries. Through their own stories, the youths learn about the media and the need to structure their stories.

C:ntact/Radio aims at broadcasting the radio documentaries. Also, the productions will be sent to schools and other relevant institutions through its distribution network, and the radio team works closely with the C:NTACT website www.dr.dk/contact. The team is instructed by professional journalists and radio documentarists.