

C&H
BÜHNENSTÜCK

BÜHNENSTÜCK

Bühnenstück attempts to make use of everyday life conventions and habits in order to let rule, in the theatre, their respective realities, activating successively different implicit participative relationships between observer, actor and events.

scenographic dispositive

A rectangular, ca. 80sqm (7x11m) big room is constructed in the middle of the theatre hall. The space is closed on its four sides by high black theatre curtains hung from the ceiling.

The audience remains throughout the piece inside of these four curtain walls. All that is to be seen in the piece is that which is inside this confined space; the outside remains completely hidden.

The curtain walls are made of several pieces of cloth hanging next to another, slightly overlapping. Eight gaps in the curtain walls, two on each sides of the room, allow the three performers to enter and exit this black box without revealing the outside to the audience standing inside.

There is no fixed installation made inside the room which is, fundamentally, empty.

The audience is not assigned any particular place in the room; the spectator is free to stand, seat or move around wherever he/she wants to.

the action

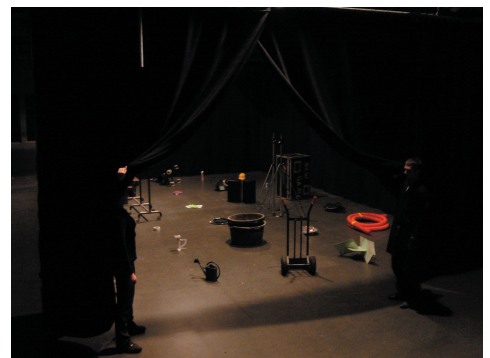
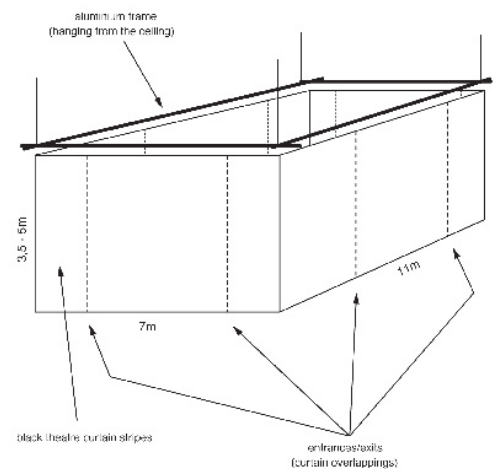
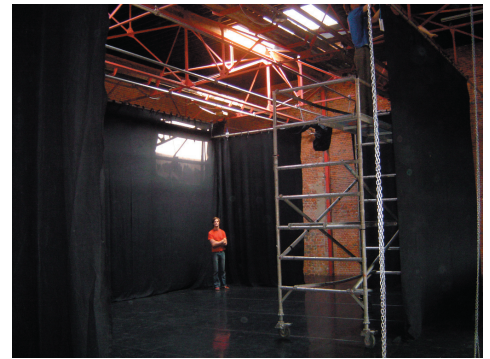
The content of the black-box (BB) is continuously exchanged throughout the 70min of Bühnenstück. Objects are permanently brought in and taken out of the room; their spatial placement inside the room always defined anew.

The piece is made of a series of distinct "scenes" following another successively, resulting from the transformative work carried by the three members of C&H.

(1 entrance, 2 briefing, 3 construction site, 4 bus, 5 game, 6 cleaning, 7 concert, 8 set change, 9 cinema, 10 interlude, 11 bar, 12 waiting room, 13 new start, 14 cockpit, 15 factory, 16 elevator, 17 museum, 18 lecture, 19 slide-show, 20 breaking down.)

When passing from one scene to the next, not only the objects present in the BB and their specific spatial configuration change, but the conditions for the observation of these changes varies with them as well.

While it does remain the designated object of the spectator's observation, it is the environment of the spectator that is being transformed: through not defining, neither a specific space, nor a specific role for it's audience, Bühnenstück engages the spectator in a tacit involvement through the fact that he/she is being led, at each new scene, to reconsider the position that he/she adopts within the situation and towards what happens in it (although all changes operated by C&H must be adapted to each new audience, they never depend on it in order to occur. The created situations are thus not as much "interactive" as to be mere propositions made to the audience which can be taken or not...)



scenes / situations

Bühnenstück is more a matter of organising situations than one of staging scenes. If, on the one hand, things are given to the audience to watch (confirming it's observer's role), on the other hand, the spectator is regularly made conscious, through their successive changes, of the staging of the very conditions allowing him/her to play this very spectator's role: the conventions become participation in the events.

For instance, in the concert-scene, three a-capella music pieces are sung by C&H. The audience, listening to them, disappears from the scope of the other's observation, thanks to the polarized attention directed towards the singers. The spectators so become an actual concert-audience, although they consciously came to attend a theatre piece (they embrace almost automatically the attitudes and conventions attached to the concert situation: observing a strict silence, applauding only when the musicians have relaxed their concentration - and not in between the parts -, positioning oneself frontally, opposing the musicians, etc.)! This last fact is reactualized, at the latest, when the transition towards the next scene is started and new conditions begin to establish themselves, as it is the case during the set change - scene that follows the concert: the question, whether C&H again moving objects through the room is a preparation for the next scene, or if it already is that next scene is left unanswered. The concert situation is also put into perspective in retrospect, recalling one of the preceding scenes, for instance one in which the spectators are brought to play the "game of the musical chairs" (as well called "the journey to jerusalem", through which all chairs are being removed from the BB), which loosens the perspective of the spectator observing something being presented to him/her.



the audience

The attitude of the spectators, their specific implication, as well as their possible participation in the events, in short, the very activity of the audience, composes inasmuch the performance as the physical movements of the scenography and the actions of the three actors do. The spectator's activity, precisely through its very latent character, participates actively in the shaping of the piece itself.

the actors

The three members of C&H, on their side, rather fulfill the function of operators accomplishing the necessary duties for the unfolding of the piece than they actually are actors, although they undoubtedly and openly play that role for the audience.

In fact, everything C&H does in Bühnenstück is only ambiguously performative. Each action is linked to a practical necessity that is, if not always directly understandable, at least interpretable as such by the observer. Most of the performer's activity is technical (displace an object, make use of a tool, connect or manipulate an electric device, ...) and the finality of the actions is, either obvious, because it perfectly corresponds to an everyday logic (to apologize towards someone (f.i. a spectator) in order to make one's way through a crowd, to use a cart to transport an object too heavy to be carried, to use a torchlamp to help oneself in darkness,...), or that finality is more specifically derived from a previously established situation (it is common to illustrate a lecture with slide projections, it is usual to turn off the lights during that slide projection and it is normal to tear entrance tickets while controlling them, ...). The "roles" played by C&H as "actors" of the piece can thus be easily reduced to a series of duties to be accomplished, but in the particular context of a theatre piece.



labour

All the work essential to the unfolding of the piece is, without exception, entirely carried by C&H, with no external technical help. The dramaturgy of Bühnenstück is so highly dependent on the "real time" required to execute each action, each building up and taking down. The actual labour of the performers, uninterrupted throughout the piece, eventually appears as the only permanent dimension crossing the heterogeneity of the different scenes, even when it happens not to be in the center of the public's attention, as, for instance, when the performers work outside of the BB, or in the darkness of a movie projection...



the objects

The objects required for Bühnenstück (about 80 different objects, ranging from a mattress to a DVD player, over a shampoo bottle) are for each new performance venue collected on the spot, according to what can be found in the theatre building, on the street, etc. The piece must so each time be adapted to a new collection of objects, resulting in slightly diverging versions. On top of being a mere practical logistic solution, this location-specific aspect of Bühnenstück finds its way in the consciousness of the audience through the lecture held during the show treating of these objects, explaining their origins, the reasons of their presence in the piece, or telling related anecdotes. The lecture emphasizes the other realities to which the objects belong to besides their participation in the theatre piece Bühnenstück and the objects with their continuously transformed usage both enable and reflect the processes engaging the room and it's inhabitants.



Bühnenstück is co-produced by:
Plateaux-Festival, Mousonturm, Frankfurt/M
Kunst/Werrk, frogs open-source, Antwerp
wpZimmer, Antwerp
Netzwerk, Aalst



NOTE:

The included DVD shows a documentation of the first performances of Bühnenstück. The actual version of the piece (s. pictures) differs slightly from the video. In particular, chairs are left inside the BB after the first half of the piece for the audience to sit and an additional scene is included (*elevator*).