

NEW CIRCUS

NEW PERFORMING ARTS: MISE-EN-SCÈNE

- a seminar about the challenges of staging New Circus

Copenhagen, December 1-3 2005

**Arranged by COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE
in co-operation with the Department of Theatre Science /
University of Copenhagen and the Danish Artists Union**

NEW CIRCUS - NEW PERFORMING ARTS: MISE-EN-SCÈNE

- a seminar about the challenges of staging New Circus creations

The very first seminar on New Circus in Denmark was held in 2000. It became a general introduction to the New Circus concept and the history behind it. The concrete result of this was the first Danish publication on New Circus: Det Teatrale Cirkus (The Theatrical Circus), edited by Michael Eigtved. Subsequently several university students were introduced to the phenomenon and have since made their theses about new circus as well as the Danish Arts Council has given financial support to the creation of new circus productions.

Copenhagen International Theatre has decided to further develop this genre of performing arts in Denmark. With this objective, and alongside a number of guest performances and travel grants in the years to come, our focus will be on specific topics connected to New Circus:

2005: Mise-en-Scène – focus on factual experiences in the process of creating New Circus performances with a dramaturgic course.

2006: The Space – focus on the space, incl. the concept of the circus arena and the circus tent, the curtain separating the artists from the audience etc...

2007: Métissage - New Circus as an open landscape of cross-overs, where we focus on the merging of stage art, music, architecture and visual art as a setting for New Circus performances.

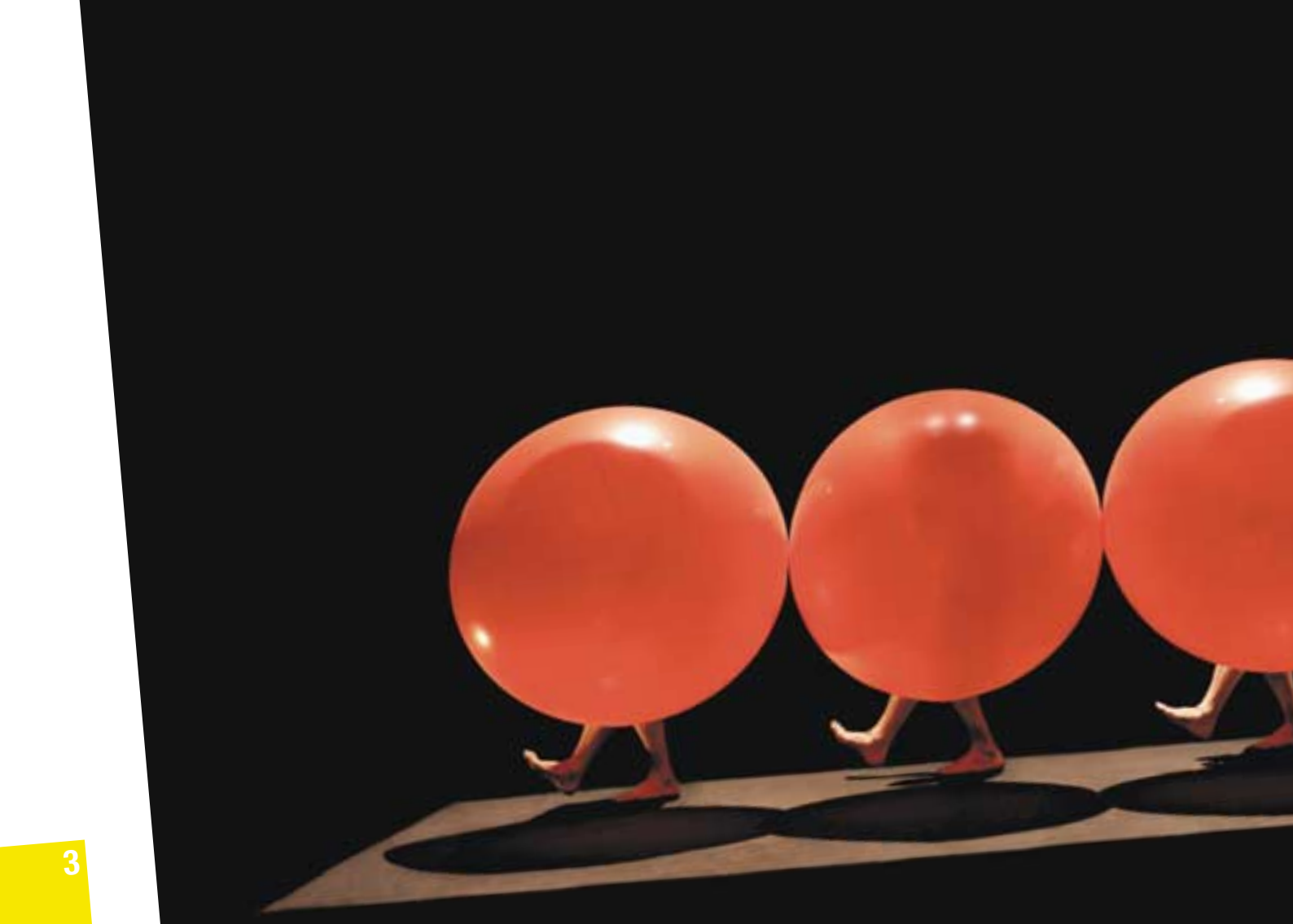
The aim is to establish a perspective and a knowledge about a new genre in the Danish performing arts, so in the future it will be possible to create, evaluate, comment and discuss new circus performances at a high level among all interested parties.

On the following pages the speakers - artists and artists and academics - at **NEW CIRCUS - NEW PERFORMING ARTS: MISE-EN-SCÈNE** will be presented.

Welcome to this seminar

Trevor Davies | Katrien Verwilt | HC Gimbel
COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE

NEW CIRCUS – NEW PERFORMING ART: Mise-en-Scène is organised by Copenhagen International Theatre in co-operation with the Department of Theatre Science / University of Copenhagen and the Danish Artist Union with financial support from the Danish Arts Council & The Danish Artists Union.



Robert Lepage (Born in 1957 in Quebec City)

Compelled by his fascination in all kinds of artistic expression, Robert Lepage accessed the Conservatoire d'art dramatique in Quebec at the age of 17, leaving behind his dream of becoming a geography professor. His growing reputation has elicited offers from many different fields that have allowed him to broaden his artistic experience: from theatre, to opera, rock concerts and film. Acclaimed by the international critique, and gifted in everything he undertakes, his original approach constantly pushes the boundaries of theatrical performance, most notably with the use of new technologies. Contemporary life is a source of inspiration in his work.

In 1994 Robert Lepage takes an important step by founding his own multidisciplinary production company, Ex Machina. Taking on once more the role of artistic director, he leads his new team through the creative process that produced the critically acclaimed "*Hiroshima - Seven Streams of the River Ota*" (1994), *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* (1995) along with his third one-man show, *Elsinore* (1995-1997). Lately we had the chance to see Lepage in Copenhagen with his solo performance "*The Andersen Project*".

He has also collaborated with Cirque du Soleil, who called on his talent to create their permanent Las Vegas show named *KÀ* at the MGM Grand Hotel and which premiered in February 2005.

Robert Lepage directing Cirque du Soleil

Robert Lepage has directed theatre, film, opera, multimedia extravaganzas and a couple of Peter Gabriel's rock shows. So it isn't a leap of coherence to see him directing traffic in a Las Vegas production that combines elements of all the above. "Walk toward the group this way," he gestures to two T-shirted martial artists at a rehearsal for the new Cirque du Soleil show, *Kà*. Then he reconsiders: "No, that way."

The incoherent part is that after a year of training and rehearsals, Lepage and his crew of 14 creative directors had yet to sort out all the show's to-ing and fro-ing.

One reason is that the restless/relentless Lepage keeps shifting the ground under his actors' feet – literally. On September 16, for instance, he announced that they would transplant a martial-arts blow out from the smaller to the larger of the show's movable stages. That opened a big box of problems, particularly safety issues. And of course it made some people upset. But upsetting performers – and audience members – or at least knocking them mentally off-balance, is not a worry that cramps Lepage's style. His penchant for last-minute changes has become a Lepageian signature.

**"It can be very messy at the beginning," he concedes.
"But it creates extraordinary things if you have the faith."**

Extraordinary, in all senses of the term, nicely sums up Lepage. The Quebec City playwright, actor and cultural alchemist has been tilting, cracking and reworking the foundation of live-performance art throughout his 26-year whirling career. Lepage, 46, blew the Quebec theatre establishment off its hinges with one of his earlier plays, *Circulations* (1984).

Lepage's reputation began to spread beyond Quebec in 1985 with the opus *Dragon's Trilogy*, a ode to the Canadian Chinese-immigrant experience that morphed into a widely acclaimed 6-hr. production.

A similar transmogrification happened to *Seven Streams of the River Ota*, which began in 1994 as a simple meditation on the atom bombing of Hiroshima. By then Lepage's style of fine-tuning a work well past the rehearsal process had become legend. An early version of *Seven Streams* was performed in Edinburgh with whole parts of the show unwritten, says long time Lepage collaborator Marie Brassard. "It was very close to a catastrophe", she says. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing in the Lepage universe: "We never tried to push things to fit in," the actress and playwright says. "We always let time teach us what had to be there."

Lepage himself has morphed – into a commodity. He has become so busy working on projects around the world that when he was approached to helm the Cirque show he thought he wouldn't have time. In the end, though, he couldn't pass up the chance to help Cirque create what he calls a "21st century style of entertainment" – one that comes to term with "the cosmos, antigravity and the notion of having lunch in Australia and breakfast in L.A. 14 hours later."

Extract from interview in Time by Steven Frank



Escarlata Circus

Bet Miralta & Jordi Aspa

(Both born in 1964 in Barcelona)

Ludmila & Alfonso are two outcasts. A couple who never achieved - but still keep on trying to realize - their dream of becoming great circus artists. The Escarlata couple meets the audience in their extremely simple physical and technical frame, where Ludmila swings the whip and is target of Alfonso's knives, etc.

These two excentric characters are played by the Spanish couple Bet & Aspa. With a background in street theatre, their characters have developed to unusual heights, making it hard to believe that these two people have a life outside the circus. And indeed they have. Alongside their performances, Bet & Aspa are artistic directors of the New Circus festival Trapezi in Spain.

During the seminar Bet & Aspa will present extracts of their performance "Llenties i Marabú" in a work demonstration. They will also be talking about their show during the panel debate which focusses on the methods of work of the different companies.



Dr. Peta Tait

Dr. Peta Tait has an extensive background in the practice and theory of theatre, drama and contemporary performance. Today, Peta Tait is Professor in theatre and drama at La Trobe University. Specialised in gender, national identity in theatre and drama, and body-based performance, her most recent book is "Circus Bodies: Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance" (Routledge 2005). At the seminar she will speak about *Acts of Menace in New Circus*

Rasmus Aitouganov (Born in 1974)

His extensive artistic background as circus aerialist and his participation in Danish and international performances make him a fine speaker in this seminar. He is one of the founders of Nova Exit. He has also performed with Swedish Cirkus Cirkör, among many others. Right now he prepares for the premiere of Nova Exit's "Roundabout".

"New Circus is today being integrated with other genres of the performing arts (opera, theatre, musical and rock concerts), and the role of the circus artist has changed. If in the beginning circus artists created and performed New Circus, now there is normally a director/choreographer coming from a different background. The circus artist is not the creator any longer, but a person with a series of technical skills. But is he? A redefinition of his role is needed.

At the same time, the relationship between director/choreographer and circus artist is essential. Dialogue and respect are required in their collaboration, since working with circus artists is a slow process and requires certain conditions regarding safety".

Rasmus Aitouganov



CIRQUE ICI

Johann Le Guillerm **Creation in Process**

ATTRACTION is the crystallisation (but by no means the accomplishment) of a thought in movement along four creative lines :

A show : Secret

A monumental moving sculpture : La Motte

A « circumambulation » on the research : The Film

Points of view on ATTRACTION : The Trace

Partly carried out during a world trip (a circumambulation), partly in a research laboratory while in residency at the Espace Périphérique of Le Parc de la Villette, Johann Le Guillerm 's investigations deal with the notions of equilibrium, form and point of view. They meet and nourish other thoughts about circus, movement and the state of impermanence.

To talk about ATTRACTION is to account for a process in movement, to follow its paths, to determine its silhouette and to render its philosophy. And since ATTRACTION deals with the multiplicity of viewpoints, it is also to open a space for those who accompany this project, who make it theirs, who throw light on it or allow its metamorphosis.

© cirqueici - Johann Le Guillerm

Cirque Ici-Johann Le Guillerm was presented by Copenhagen International Theatre during Sommerscene 2005

Isabelle Walter (Born in Deauville sur mer in 1954)

Presently artistic manager and responsible for communications and the development of projects for Cirque Ici – Johann Le Guillerm (FR), Isabelle Walter worked with the circus company Les Cousins between 1993 and 2002.

In 1996 she started planning and coordinating the national and international tours for Cirque Ici – Johann Le Guillerm and worked developing the image of the company. Since 2001 she is furthermore collaborating in the development of the company's ATTRACTION project of search towards the creative process.

Isabelle Walter has followed the work of Johann Le Guillerm for ten years.

Naly Gérard (Born in 1975)

French journalist, Naly Gérard has been editor in chief for the trimestral publication *Omni* between 2004-2005. A reviewer on performing arts (*Arts de la piste*, *Mouvement et Mouvement.net*, *Le Bulletin*, *DADA*, etc...) and cultural issues (*EnCoulisse*), she describes herself as a journalist concerned with the emerging forms of the performing arts, specially if these deal with a renewal of the traditional forms: puppet theatre and circus among others. She finds the integration of new technologies on stage a fascinating issue.

Naly Gérard has worked with Cirque Ici – Johann Le Guillerm and their project ATTRACTION since 2003.



Daniele Finzi Pasca

(born in 1964 in Lugano)

A committed human being, playwright and stage director, Daniele Finzi Pasca is also a choreographer and clown. The clown fascinates him to such an extent, that he has been researching into its figure at Teatro Sunil for 15 years. This work has been presented through courses in 14 countries. Finzi's "Teatro della Carezza" ("Theatre of the Caress") was developed inspired by the world of clowns, and this inspiration was present when he wrote "*Icaro*" in 1991. "*Icaro*" is based on the Greek myth of Icarus and is part of a trilogy on the theme of the escape, which Finzi completed during a short jail sentence as a conscientious objector.

Daniele Finzi is the founder, stage director, actor and artistic director of the Swiss-based company Teatro Sunil. He has also written and directed for numerous other companies, Canadian Cirque du Soleil among them.

Finzi has been closely connected to the Canadian company Cirque Eloize for whom he has written and directed several productions, among them *Nomade – at night the sky is endless* and *Rain – comme une pluie dans tes yeux*, both written and directed by Finzi.

Finzi's shows are characterised by a profound humanity, a playful spirit, and poetry.

Daniele Finzi is currently working on a grand closing ceremony of the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics.

Vision of the clown or the work of a tragic-epic actor

The actor can be seen as a blind archer flinging his arrows against a target he cannot see.

His energy, the strength of his thoughts, his images are hurled against a hidden mark.

Rehearsing a play means getting accustomed to hitting the centre of the target every time.

The director accompanies the progress of this work. He guides the actor showing him the result of his single shots. The actor "shoots" and the director describes the effect of the action. The corrections given by the director allow the actor to find the direction and intensity of the ideal shot.

The clown is an actor who can perceive the centre. He can discern the effects he causes through his actions. After every shot he himself can check where the arrow has landed. He is an actor who is his own director, sometimes even playwright.

A clown is therefore never there where he is located. He is around himself, directs himself, dances, dances himself.

I think of the clown as an actor who dances, who thinks choreographically. Sometimes he doesn't think, he dances his thoughts. Behind the traditional red nose we can perceive the clown as representing initiation. A long and special journey is pursued. The research develops through drama, caresses, cruelty, stupidity, all aspects characteristic of the clown's language.

His language reveals itself through his personal view of drama. "You cover yourself to reveal yourself" is the hidden meaning behind the clown's make-up. Make-up and grimasses are the means used to amplify the narrative gaze.

Games, tenderness, the incoherence of actions, vigilance, serenity are the starting point which enables us to search for a way to interpret ourselves. We are looking for the cunning idiot, the loser, the seasoned child dancing his struggle against destiny in a burlesque game which comes to life in epic colours.

Daniele Finzi Pasca



Michael Eigtved

(Born in 1964)

Associate Professor and Head of Study Committee at the Theatre Research Section at the University of Copenhagen, Department of Arts and Cultural studies since 2002, he has specialised in popular theatre and music theatre, and manages the Network for Music Theatre under the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. In 1997-98 he was information supervisor at Gladsaxe Teater and member of the theatre's board. Michael Eigtved is also a researcher and has published a number of works amongst others *Forestillinger* (Performances) in 2003.

In 2001 he edited *Det Teatrale Circus* about new circus arts, issued after the year 2000 New Circus seminar in Denmark.

Traditionally performance analysis is made on theatre. On drama, with characters, plots and dramaturgical structure. But New Circus performances call upon other measures to get to the meaning of it. Using Nova Exit's Roundabout as an example, Michael Eigtved will try to illustrate the possibilities and problems one might face when analysing New Circus.

Michael Eigtved

Bjørn Lense-Møller

(Born in 1925)

He had his debut as an actor in 1929 when only 4, and he continued acting occasionally through his adult years. In 1957 Bjørn Lense-Møller graduated in comparative literature at the University of Copenhagen after several escapes to drama and religion studies.

He has also worked for The Danish Broadcasting Corporation between 1960 and 1993, first with TV and radio drama, and later occupying different head posts in the cultural department. From 1984 he chaired the former National Theatre Council (now the Committee for the Performing Arts under the Danish Arts Council) in two periods, the last one until 1995.

He has been chairman of the board of Copenhagen International Theatre for 10 years now.

Christophe Blandin-Estournet

(Born in 1958 in Albi)

With a background in Law (Lyon, 1981) and later a graduate in Sociology (Lyon, 1990), Christophe Blandin-Estournet is today project leader in charge of programming circus, street theatre and puppet theatre at Parc de la Villette in Paris and anchor person in the international network for the production and diffusion of New Circus.

He has held positions as president and head of different centres related to the performing arts and has furthermore been artistic advisor for several organisations like the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and la Tohu - the Canadian city of circus arts in Montréal among others.

New Circus companies seem to follow several approaches when looking for a stage director or choreographer to produce their creations:

Integration of different artistic universes/genres (as known, métissage or “the mixing up of elements” is considered as one of the major characteristics of New Circus); an interest in new sources and means of creation (instead of simply transposing the formal structures and means of creation (instead of simply as theatre and dance); a claim to legitimate and establish the genre as within the realm of Contemporary Art...

The contact with other artistic genres may have largely contributed to the aesthetic evolution of New Circus (more specifically the presence of an outside look in the work); nonetheless this interaction conveys limits and constraints, especially given the irreducible singularity of those artistic universes.

Christophe Blandin-Estournet



Katrine Wiedemann

(Born in 1969)

Stage and film director, Katrine Wiedemann is an autodidact, fond of experimenting with different performance genres as a way to achieve the ideal theatre. Today she is one of Denmark's most acclaimed and innovative stage directors. Among her latest works are *Romeo & Julie* produced by Cirkus Cirkör and *Dramaten* (2002) and *The Tempest* (2003) produced by Kaleidoskop.

Most recently she has directed *The Mermaid*, a New Circus production based on HC Andersen's tale, produced by Cirkus Cirkör and Kaleidoskop. Once again Katrine Wiedemann integrated dramatic poetry and utterly physical and visual performance which Cirkus Cirkör is an exponent for.

Working with text in New Circus

“New Circus is capable of achieving visual and expressive effects that more directly appeal to emotions, to feelings and sensations. This genre is full of people eager to innovate and push boundaries. However the results are often shallow, effects for the sake of the effects, and therefore boring. Traditional theatre is good at telling a story, a plot. But its roots in the written word often become an excuse not to open up to new influences, new ways of expression. This often makes traditional theatre even more boring. In my opinion, theatre and New Circus could learn a lot from each other.”

Katrine Wiedemann



Nova Exit

The first and, so far the only Danish New Circus company, NovaExit has gathered a group of pioneers from Danish New Circus: aerialists Josephine Wulff Randrup, Rasmus Aitouganov and Anders Astrup Jensen; Kenneth Harrison from Circus Gosh, butoh-performer Anika Kristensen Barkan and musician Frederik Iversen. AnneSophie Bergmann Steen has directed.

When the Danish New Circus company Nova Exit throw themselves into the wilderness of love, it will be a sensuous, poetic and fearless circus tragedy. It is about love, desire, passion, disregards, and forgiveness. It is absurd humor and physical equilibrim created by a cast consisting of pioneers from the Danish new circus field. Through a series of rendezvous in a roundabout, the company attempts to create an image of today, where humanity glitters through entanglements, intrigues and caresses.



New Circus - New Performing Arts: Mise-en-Scène

Copenhagen University Amager, December 1st – 3rd 2005

Program (subject to changes)

Thursday December 1st

- 12.00-13.00: Registration
13.00-13.15: Welcome by Bjørn Lense-Møller & Michael Eigtved
- 13.15-14.15: From the Artist's point of view
Peta Tait: introduction of aerial artists and acts
Rasmus Aitouganov in conversation with
Peta Tait about his experiences of being staged
- 14.15-14.30: Coffee break
- 14.30-15.30: From the Director's point of view
Robert Lepage: his staging of Cirque du Soleil's "Kå"
15.30-16.30: Discussion and Q&A with Robert Lepage, moderated
by Peta Tait
- 16.30-17.30: Drink
17.30-18.15: Presentation Escarlata Circus

Friday December 2nd

- 10.00-11.00: Peta Tait: Acts of Menace in New Circus

- 11.00-13.00: Examples of New Circus companies and their creation
process
Cirque Ici-Johann Le Guillerm by Isabelle Walter
Escarlata Circus by Bet Miralta & Jordi Aspa

- 13.00-14.00: Lunch break

- 14.00-15.00: Christophe Blandin-Estournet: creation processes of
New Circus performances: a French perspective
Moderated by Naly Gérard, journalist

- 15.00-15.15: Short break

- 15.15-16.30: Daniele Finzi Pasca: Teatro Sunil and his staging with
Cirque Eloize and Cirque du Soleil

- 16.30-18.00: Work demonstration by Daniele Finzi Pasca:
Vision of the clown

- 20.00: Pre-premiere of "Roundabout" by Danish Nova Exit
at Kanonhallen

Saturday December 3rd Moderator: Bjørn Lense-Møller

- 10.00-10.30: Michael Eigtved: New Circus & performance analysis

- 10.30-11.30: Katrine Wiedemann: the use of text in circus
performances

- 11.30-11.45: Coffee break

- 11.45-13.00: Round up, future perspectives and goodbye
moderated by Michael Eigtved

- 17.00: Premiere of "Roundabout" by Nova Exit at
Kanonhallen