WEISE VON LIEBE
ES CORNETS
TÖPH RILKE
ANNE TERESA
DE KEERSMAEKER
MICHAËL POMERO
CHRYSSI DIMITRIOU
DIE WEISE VON LIEBE UND TOD DES CORNETS
CHRISTOPH RILKE

ANNE TERESA DE KEERSMAEKER
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Rainer Maria Rilke knew from a young age that writing was his calling, but throughout his life he was uncomfortable with his early piece titled “Cornet”—this “short, naive work of youth”—becoming his most successful. And it has remained his most successful piece to this day. He even coquettishly asserted from the literary Olympus that he should apologize for it as a youthful misdeed. But perhaps he did so also because he feared the critical judgement of others and himself. Rilke was as sensitive as he was ambitious, and he liked to be in control of what we would today call image. He wove legends about the origin of “Cornet,” and even about his own background. He went so far as to change his name. He meticulously instructed his first publisher to demonstrate the quality of the printing paper, the font, the heraldic design, and his initials (“But it’s clear, isn’t it, that we must not scrimp and that plainly we must make something immaculate?”)—and that for a print run of just three hundred copies.

This was in 1906. Later Rilke would castigate his “verse-infected prose” so much that he would lose touch with his loyal audience. His public loved “Cornet.” Columnist Fritz J. Raddatz’s comment only a few short years ago rings true: “Had Rilke written just these pages, which don’t even add up to twenty, he would be a giant.”

After Goethe, Rilke is today the most-read German-language poet in the world. He was born in Prague in 1875, and as a citizen he would remain Austrian until the end, but as an author he had no home. He worked in Germany, Spain, Scandinavia, Austria, Italy, France, and Switzerland. He also traveled through Tunisia and Egypt and in
the 1890s took several trips to Russia with Lou Andreas-Salomé, who had developed a strong loathing for Friedrich Nietzsche and was Rilke’s lover for a brief period. In 1899, during a hiatus in his travels, he wrote “Cornet” and used the trips he’d taken to Russia as a source of inspiration for his collection of poetry Das Stundenbuch (The Book of Hours), in which he saw the effective beginning of his career as a poet.

Rilke shied away from commitment but yearned for affection. He married the young artist Clara Westhoff, but the marriage broke down following the birth of their daughter, Ruth. Rilke lived in the German artists’ colony Worpswede for a while, then moved to Paris in 1902 to write a book about the sculptor Auguste Rodin, for whom he did secretarial work—yet another relationship that would break down because of disputes related to mutual disappointments. In Paris, the fragment “Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge” (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, 1910) was published. The demands that this fragment made on him were so great that he suffered a writer’s block that lasted years. In 1922 Rilke achieved the pinnacle of his success with the ten-part metaphysical poetry cycle Duineser Elegien (Duino Elegies). He died in a Swiss sanatorium in 1926.

“Always on the move” is how Stefan Zweig concludes concisely. Rilke could be described as exhibiting inner and outer restlessness, which had already fl owed forth as “Cornet” at scarcely twenty-four years of age: suspense and breathlessness, a swelling and an ebbing of yearning, seeking, drifting, driving.

A young, eighteen-year-old officer rode out with his army troops. It’s the middle of the seventeenth century at the time of the Ottoman wars in Europe. The soldier discovers male camaraderie, even friendship, is promoted to cornet, standard bearer, and learns about life at the front: dead bodies, rape, drunks, prostitutes—and, finally, first love, passion, the exhilaration of a night of love. Still wrapped in ecstasy, there is an attack. Shining, now with the flag, Cornet plunges onto the battlefield. And dies, dreamlike, a hero’s death.

In twenty-six snapshots, an entire lifetime surges past. The child grows into a youth, the youth into a man (into a soldier, into a lover), the man into a hero. An initiation. Man turns from the mother’s bosom to a woman’s breast and finds, scarcely awake from the night of love, the sleep of death. The circle of life closes. Early and swiftly, too swiftly—senselessly, as one might say today. But what more can humans achieve if not love and honor? What should come next? Not a question, an observation. At least in Rilke’s time.

Little wonder, then, that “Cornet” found its way into soldiers’ backpacks in the First and even in the Second World War. Rilke as romantic devotional literature? As intellectual warmonger? Statements from that time make for alarming reading. As the author Alfred Hein, who volunteered in the First World War, tells us: “So to read it in ‘Cornet,’ so it was given us to experience it (almost blissfully!). We still took the war like the fulfilment of a little Rilke dream construction.” While the author Wolfgang Paul bitterly noted in 1952: “So many took ‘Cornet’ with them onto the field, and so many thin tomes lay rotting on the battlefield amid the bones of those who were compelled to follow the dark calls: ‘and then the enemy...’”

That, too, is “Cornet.” It is the story of soldiers who place their fatherland above all else, above love (Cornet left the countess behind in the burning castle) and above their own lives. Seventy years after World War II came to an end, we believe such veiled heroism to have been vanquished. Nevertheless, it comes to us again in the suicidal ideologies of fundamentalists and terrorists. Only Rilke’s poem is essentially aimed at something in addition to the superficial subjects of warfare: “War was not what was meant, inasmuch as I wrote this / in one night. Destiny was scarcely meant, / only youth, crowds, attack, pure drive / and destruction, it burns and denies itself.”

The origin. Rilke insisted on having committed the “Cornet” legend to paper in just “one dream-inducing night ... in one go by the light of two candles flickering in the night breeze; it was brought about by the clouds drifting over the moon.” He gladly hid the fact that after 1899 he reworked the text many times before allowing it to be printed.

He drew inspiration from an old seventeenth-century war chronicle as well as from a note from the Dresden state archives that he’d found among his uncle Jaroslav’s documents. He had carried out extensive research into aristocratic ancestors and believed he had...
“Cornet’s” long ride is unstoppable: “Through the day, through the night, through the day...”

Rilke rejected his own work as “tacky,” “such a mixture of attempts at prose and poetry,” and this is precisely what readers today find fascinating. From the very first lines—verses, in fact—the reader is suggestively drawn into the tableau. Constant, delayed riding. These first words also depict a weariness of the era—a weariness of a generation that, on the threshold between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, was tired of waiting for a new time, one against which it would like to ride.

According to Rilke, he united—blended lyrically—thus offering a vivid reflection of the soldiers’ inner world through epics, through which he maintained a general distance from the dramatic, thereby allowing the actors to speak directly to each other. It is the purest image that can be conjured by the mind’s eye, what would today be described as loosely based on a true story. Well, very loosely. Rilke cleverly suggests authentic timeline adherence and still leafs through a great parable of youth with the free play of the imagination.

He wrote like a composer. There’s no shortage of leitmotifs, variations, repetitions: the eyes, the hands, the light as sun or as fire—or as both in one. And the rose: the woman, saintliness. She gets broken like communion bread. For Rilke, who incidentally was a passionate rose breeder, the rose is always a double metaphor: for the uncanny nature of beauty and for death. Neither Mary nor the rose can protect Cornet.

All of “Cornet” is a great binding and releasing between man and woman, a pulling-close and a pushing-away, a uniting and a deserting. The woman here is a girl, a mother, Madonna, the Virgin Mary, a lover, a prostitute—and very often a personification of danger, even when she disguises herself as a promise. The person writing this was himself unsure in sexual contact and afraid of amorous assimilation. The strong presence of the mother figure in “Cornet,” culminating in the analogy with death in chapter 22, should delight every amateur Freudian. And the “stronger sex”? Rilke spent his whole life yearning for androgyny. He describes the chivalrous marquis as having “soft” hair.
Manhood and womanhood shimmer here, the flank penetrating the military war zone and at the same time being confronted with feminine dominance. Fifty years before the word “gender” saw the light of day, Rilke threw out male and female stereotypes and depicted soldiers as flower girls and countesses as active seducers who take whomever they please.

Rilke may be forgiven his postpubescent metaphor for loins (“his flag is erect”), which was again taken up in his “phallic hymns”: “A new tree raises its abundant crown / and rises toward you.” Man, woman, war, and sex are united in “Cornet.” The flag is sacrificed to the phallus, to the woman, to the symbol of war with which Cornet is fearless and longs for death. His death on the battlefield, the garden of pleasures, by sixteen sabers, “flash for flash”: an orgasm.

Rilke is a poetry-writing musician. He calls the narrative a “lay” and emphasizes the folksong style. Lyrical and epic passages speak, even sing, in rhythms. Rilke writes like this, too: places a full stop where others would continue writing, uses colons like evocations, and starts chapters with “And” and “But” as though one had been wrenched from a dream.

“We are tempted,” the literary scholar Harry Maync once said of Rilke’s poetry, “to give them, phrase for phrase, preliminary musical sketches over tonality and beat, and musical expression marks; here a crescendo, there a presto or ritardando, a moderato or con fuoco.” Precisely because it is like music.

On that score, Rilke was very suspicious of the many attempts to set “Cornet” to music. In 1915, Casimir von Pászthory was the first to compose a piece inspired by Rilke. The composition was performed in Leipzig, along with a recitation of the “Cornet” text. Rilke was not amused. The public, in contrast, was. Very much so. And soon there were more promoters and composers jumping on the bandwagon. “If, heaven forbid, ‘Cornet’ the musical is free without further ado,” Rilke wrote to his publisher that same year, “then this winter we’ll be able to see the hip ‘Rilke Circus’ full from Kottbus to Kötzschenbroda; voilà une admirable perspective!”

Rilke feared melodrama; he opposed the seductive nature of music. It exists in his “Cornet” only for timekeeping purposes. Onomatopoeia experiments with words, images, tonal colors: like the successive advances of an army, Rilke alternated pausing and urging chapters, rest and restlessness. Right down the middle, after the thirteenth scene, Cornet appears to have arrived with the troops, calm restored, a moment of happiness. Nevertheless it continues for an entire nine chapters. Then, ripped out by the nocturnal raid, the rhythm whips itself up into an unexpected, breathless pace only to, in the final lines (the ambivalent ones), find peace.

What remains is a more sober swan song. Chronicler’s duty: “There he saw an old woman weep.” Maync calls it “a peaceful, faintly emotional conclusion on a long quivering note that slowly fades away.” Rilke had decided only shortly before going to press that the “melody” should end this way. In earlier drafts, the countess was rescued and even bore Cornet’s child. In 1906, the young aspiring author, Rilke, found such a Happy Ending to be manifestly suspicious. And nevertheless it is worthwhile to examine the first version of the poem from 1899 that came fresh from the heart. Rilke ended chapter 26 of that version as follows: “Cornet is laughing there, his lips ready to drink: Is this life? And then surrenders himself.” He’s mad—and is in no way wrong. Since if one knew nothing about the warlike scenery, it would be difficult not to take this for youthful passion for life, as it should be: the purpose of all striving. Fulfillment.
In the beginning was the word. It’s a credo one rarely expects to hear when talking about a dance production. To be precise; the written word, by Rainer Maria Rilke. For a very long time, the Belgian dancer and choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker has wanted to create a choreography based on Rilke’s early short novel entitled “Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke” (The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke). A choreography? Perhaps we should first stick with the word “performance.” The way in which we approach material during a work process is also the way in which the performance approaches Rilke’s work.

After the prologue: the written word. The read word. Self-paced tempo, free association, mind’s-eye images, audiovisual imagery, too, in light of the highly melodic language.

Then: music. Chaotic music by Salvatore Sciarrino, one of the leading contemporary composers for the flute. Notes flying, cascades darting, arches of sound gently expanding, then falling abruptly. Breathing music. Breathless music.

“The high flames flared,” Rilke writes. “Voices whirred, tangled songs jangled out of glass and glitter, and at last from the ripegrownt measures: forth sprang the dance.” Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Michaël Pomero are now moving toward Chryssi Dimitriou, the quiet flute virtuoso; in pairs, the dance begins—in confrontation with the heard, the read, the sensed.
And now the spoken word also begins: the narrated, the reported, what’s passed on. The word as meaning and the word as music. That’s how it is with Rilke. Here, it becomes “literature dance.”

Several years ago, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker had already completed work with a few fellow choreographers based on epic and dramatic texts, some from Heiner Müller (with Quartett for the first time in 1987 and again in 1999) or Peter Handke (I said I, 1999). After these choreographies, De Keersmaeker focused her attention on music as the starting point for her performances. And eventually, years later, the word returned again in her music: initially as a libretto as in Gustav Mahler’s “Lied von der Erde” in the 2010 3Abschied production, or through selected songs from the performances En Attendant (2010) and Cesena (2011). Dancers sing, singers dance. What happens when someone does both at the same time?

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker raises this question in Die Weise when she herself is on stage. Rilke’s text is many things at once: poem, story, song. “Just like in Bach’s music,” De Keersmaeker notes, “Rilke’s phrases seem already to possess something dancelike. It is very present, plastic, palpable. We want to seize it and hold on to it.” In doing so, this movement is reflected in the text as two counterpoints: movement and rest. Permanent alternation: masculinity stands opposite femininity, or, that is to say, the feminine within the masculine and vice versa. Day and night, sun and moon, watch-fire and conflagration—antipodes everywhere, opposing currents. Not least: love and death.

From the choreographic point of view, these oppositions are reflected in horizontal and vertical movements. In recent years, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker has developed a principle of movement: movement in perfectly geometric trajectories of very minimalistic moves, often called the “tenor line,” which spreads out in wider orbits and physical freedom. These movements have their logic. They follow the impulses of the text, stress it, comment on it, wean themselves off it. De Keersmaeker asks: what was the very first, originating impulse to move?

Before the dance and before the word is air. Breath. Breathing. Just as with the music by Sciarrino. “In the far Eastern idea of ‘breath of life’ there are three levels,” De Keersmaeker tells us. “First the intention, then energy, and finally form. This means the concept is the first to come into being. Then it uses energy, which takes care of thought. And finally one has to find the expression for this.” This is precisely how it will happen on stage. The text finds “expression” in different ways, ultimately literally embodied in dance.

And in the spoken: De Keersmaeker speaks Rilke. She follows both the tones he set and her own voice, a very personal approach and account. During the rehearsals, she also listened to recordings of “Cornet” by the Austrian actor Oskar Werner, a confirmed pacifist who recorded Rilke’s narration twice in the space of nearly thirty years.

It’s not easy today to have an unencumbered relationship with some of the trails Rilke sets out in his text. Take for example the hero’s death at the end, celebrated almost euphorically. It was not for nothing that the “Cornet” nurtured military propaganda in the time of the World Wars (against Rilke’s will). “As a result, Cornet is no war hero in the classic sense,” De Keersmaeker explains. “It is not victories he wins, but rather a fairly naive defeat.” He even leaves the woman he loves in a burning castle. And one can certainly also read that the blindness, into which Cornet is plunged in the final lines, is a hidden warning.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker has had many discussions about the religious allusions in the text, about the male and female images, about words and expressions such as “Turkish” and “pagan dogs,” about “blond boys,” “blond girls,” and “to be a new generation for each other.” Some passages read almost like a handbook for Fascist aesthetics. Even though Rilke was far from a racist. “It is striking,” De Keersmaeker states, “how we encounter in Rilke at once militaristic diction and great romanticism.” What relevance can this kind of romantic poem have in times of extreme brutality? De Keersmaeker keeps coming back to the importance of the body: love, death, violence—nearly every storyline in “Cornet” is experienced physically. That is something very modern. “Why was there such a huge outcry around the world when, in early September 2015, a photograph was published of the body of a drowned boy on the Turkish coast?” she asks. “We had long since learned of the plight, but it was the body that moved everyone.” The “Cornet”
offers an opportunity to think about the hotbeds of war fever, even if this question arises from the history of the reception of “Cornet” rather than from the text itself.

In essence, “Die Weise” recounts an initiation—a fatal one from today’s perspective, but also a stormy, immediate one. An ambivalence, torn between speed and hesitation, joy and grief. Antitheses and basic principles. And the fact that everything emerges only from the mind and finally returns there, until our dying breath.
Your work on *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* is a very personal involvement. Can you remember when you first read Rilke’s work?
I’ve had the text for a very long time, more than twenty-five years. I discovered it when I was doing a production based on a play by Heiner Müller. Since then it has been on the rehearsal lineup many times. But then “Cornet” had to be put on the back burner, so to speak, for quite a while.

As you just said, you have a long tradition of working on and with texts.
Yes, texts have long played a big role in my work. I used texts for *Elena’s Aria* (1984) and *Bartók/Aantekeningen* (1986). Then there was a period when I produced some performances with my sister Jolente De Keersmaeker and tg STAN. For example *Quartett* (1999) involves an actor and a dancer. I was struck by how spoken word and formal movement stimulate each other. But I was soon seeking a higher level of abstraction, so I started to focus on abstract dancing and stopped using texts.

You came back to texts, after some time, through productions where you focused on the human voice. How important is the voice in your work today?
Singing is the simplest and most natural way to make music. The voice exposes. Maybe singing relates to speaking in the same way that dancing relates to walking. So I started looking into how language can lead to dancing, and conversely how movement can convey meaning. What is the possible physicality of the spoken
that Rilke disliked all attempts at adding music to his "Cornet," I didn’t want to work with melody.

The title of the first piece, “Immagine fenicia,” refers to the image of Phoenix rising from the flames. Fire is an important image in the “Cornet” story.
The music is extremely sensual. The flutist Chryssi Dimitriou may look like she was taken directly out of Botticelli’s *Primavera*, but she plays the devil (*laughs*). The physicality and Chryssi’s playing and her Madonna-like look have something vital, combative, erotic, maybe even orgasmic about them.

Not all audiences understand German. But a translation will be projected onto a screen, and those who do not understand the spoken language will experience the words as sounds or as music. It is a very musical text indeed. And I think there will be a very direct experience of the splendor or the concrete matter of the text without having to understand every word. I believe Rainer Maria Rilke is one of the best poets in the history of literature. It’s a gift to be with this text.

word, and how can the abstract form of a dance move influence the content of a spoken text? In *Golden Hours (As you like it)* (2015), which uses the Shakespearean play *As You Like It* as a starting point, the challenge was to explore the differences between representing language with the body versus with the voice.

**Why did you feel like it had to be you, on your own, performing *Die Weise*?**
As I said, I’ve been carrying the text with me for a very long time. I’ve developed a very personal relationship with it. After several attempts with various actors and dancers, I decided to take the advice of my dance partner, Michaël Pomero, and perform the text myself. It was a great challenge but it seemed the most honest approach.

**What did you experience, or even learn, in this production?**
The most important task was to develop a kind of language whereby a logic of movement is combined with a logic of a text. As far as the movement is concerned, you know I am a formalist. But then there is the logic of the text, which has a very specific structure and various layers: formal, musical, historical. It’s unclear how to categorize the text’s genre: is it poetry? prose? song?

**The historical context is a huge question.**
Yes, it is. The time in which Rilke wrote “Cornet,” how it was then recycled as war propaganda for each of the two World Wars, how it can be viewed against a broader historical background, and how it can be seen in the context of what is happening today—this all raises questions about the relevance of the text, what kind of political statement you’re making when performing it. The intention is for the music and the dance to underline, contradict, and comment on the texts.

You wanted to avoid the cliché image of Michaël being the young, virile Cornet and you being the elderly countess.
Yes, that would not have been interesting. The challenge was to avoid a one-to-one identification.

**How did Salvatore Sciarrino’s music filter into the project?**
The Sciarrino works we chose have a strong physical nature that removes melody and reduces music to sound and breath. Knowing
Floor pattern with names of the performers assigned to pentagon circles and superimposed spiral; drawing by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker
Deconstruction of the floor pattern: two pentagons and superimposed spiral; drawing by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker
With Rainer

Observations of Friends

“The Very Young”

Despite the surprising volume of work Rainer had completed and published, it was not predominantly in his essence to evolve into the promising great poet he should have been. Rather, it came completely from his special human nature.... When for example one of his friends, Ernst von Wolzogen, jokingly addressed him once as “Pure Rainer, immaculate Mary,” there were no feminine-childlike expectations in Rainer’s internal situation, but rather his own kind of manliness, what to him was a sacredly tender masculine earnestness.... Something one would call “masculine grace” was thus appropriated by Rainer to a great extent, delicately straightforward and irrepressibly harmonious with every expression of its nature. At the time, he could still laugh—could still know that he remained innocent and unsuspecting of life in its delights.

Lou Andreas-Salomé
“Sense of Completion”

Order, cleanliness, and silence were real physical necessities to him, and so was moderate behavior. Having to travel in an overcrowded tram or sitting in a noisy bar could upset him for hours. He could not bear vulgarity of any kind, and although he lived in straitened circumstances, he always dressed with the utmost care, cleanliness, and good taste. His clothing itself was a masterpiece of well-thought-out and carefully composed discretion, and there was always some unobtrusive but very personal touch about it, some little thing that secretly gave him pleasure, such as a thin silver bracelet around his wrist, for his aesthetic sense of perfection and symmetry extended to the most intimate personal details. I once saw him in his rooms packing his case before leaving—he rightly declined my help as irrelevant—and it was like a mosaic, every single item lovingly lowered into the place carefully left free for it. It would have been sacrilege to destroy that almost floral arrangement by lending a helping hand. And he applied his fundamental sense of beauty to the most insignificant details. Not only did he write his manuscripts carefully on the finest paper in his rounded calligraphic hand, so that line matched line as if drawn with a ruler, but he chose good paper for even the most unimportant letter, and that calligraphic handwriting, pure and round, covered it regularly right up to the margin. He never, even in the most hastily written note, allowed himself to cross out a word. Once he felt that some sentence or expression was not quite right, he would rewrite the whole letter with the utmost patience. Rilke never let anything that was less than perfect leave his hands.... If you lent him a book that he had not yet read, it would be returned to you wrapped in smooth tissue paper and tied with a colored ribbon, like a present. I still remember how he brought the manuscript of his “Die Weise von Liebe und Tod” to my room, a precious gift, and to this day I have the ribbon that was tied around it.

Stefan Zweig
“The Mother”

Early on, Rainer was looking in vain for futile salvation in the assumption that he was who he was, “predestined,” molded forevermore in all the losses that changed him despite his intense objection. He attached this most intensively to his mother. He worded this almost lifelong agony most strongly in a letter to me dated April 15, 1904, after one of the ever-widening intervals between mother-and-son reunions. In the middle of it he wrote:

My mother has come to Rome and is still here. I see her very rarely, but—as you know—every time we do meet there is a kind of regression. If I have to see this lost, illusory, disconnected woman, who cannot grow old, then I feel like a small child who’s been trying to escape her and I’m profoundly frightened that I, after years of running and moving, have still not put enough distance between us, that internally I still have stirrings somewhere that are the antipode of her atrophied airs, parts of memories in pieces that she carries around with her; then I am horrified by her scattered piety, her obstinate beliefs, particularly these contortions and distortions onto which she has latched herself like an empty dress, ghostly and terrifying. And that I am nevertheless her child; that, concealed in this faded wall that belongs to nothing, there is a scarcely recognizable door through which I entered the world—(if any such entrance can even lead into the world...!)

Lou Andreas-Salomé

“War Is Always a Prison”

One day there was a knock on my door, and there stood a soldier, looking hesitant. Next moment I started up in alarm. It was Rilke—Rainer Maria Rilke in military disguise! He looked pathetically clumsy, his collar constricting him, upset by the thought of having to salute any officer by clicking the heels of his boots. And as in his urge for perfectionism he wanted to carry out even this pointless formality precisely in accordance with the rules, he was in a state of constant dismay. “I’ve had this uniform since I was at cadet school,” he told me in his quiet voice. “I thought I’d said goodbye to it for ever. And now I’m wearing it again forty years on!” Luckily there were helping hands to protect him, and thanks to a kindly medical examiner he was soon discharged. He came back to my room once, in civilian clothes again, to say goodbye to me. I might almost say that the wind blew him in, he always moved so very quietly. He wanted to thank me for trying, through Rolland, to save his library in Paris, where it had been confiscated. For the first time he no longer looked young; it was as if the idea of the horrors of war had exhausted him. “Ah, to go abroad!” he said. “If only one could go abroad! War is always a prison.” Then he left.

Stefan Zweig
Biographies

**Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker**
In 1980, after studying dance at Mudra School in Brussels and Tisch School of the Arts in New York, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker created *Asch*, her first choreographic work. Two years later came the premiere of *Fase, Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich*. De Keersmaeker established the dance company Rosas in Brussels in 1983, while creating the work *Rosas dans Rosas*. Since these breakthrough pieces, her choreography has been grounded in a rigorous and prolific exploration of the relationship between dance and music. She has created with Rosas a wide-ranging body of work engaging the musical structures and scores of several periods, from early music to contemporary and popular idioms. Her choreographic practice also draws formal principles from geometry, numerical patterns, the natural world, and social structures to offer a unique perspective on the body’s articulation in space and time. In 1995 De Keersmaeker established the school P.A.R.T.S. (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios) in Brussels in association with De Munt/La Monnaie.

**Chryssi Dimitriou**
Born in Athens, Chryssi Dimitriou studied the flute with Stella Gadedi at the Athenaeum Conservatory, where she received her professional diploma with first prize and the Athenaeum gold medal. As a scholar with the Alexandra Triant scholarship and the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, she pursued postgraduate studies at the RNCM with Peter Lloyd and Anders Ljungar-Chapelon, the École Normale de Musique with Pierre-Yves Artaud, the Conservatoire National de Région de Strasbourg with Mario Caroli, and the Hogeschool Gent Conservatorium, where she received tuition and guidance from Michael Schmid. Her postgraduate degrees include an MMus in performance with merit, a diploma in professional performance-PPRNCM, an MPhil in performance, and a Diplôme Supérieur de Concertiste and a Diplôme de Spécialisation, both unanimously and with the congratulations of the jury, as well as a Master en Meester of arts soloist with honors. Dimitriou currently lives in Brussels and works as a freelancer in contemporary music, notably with Ictus ensemble and Rosas dance company, and is a PhD in arts candidate at the Conservatorium/Vrije Universiteit Brussels, as a scholar of the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation.

**Michel François**
Michel François has never restricted himself to one single discipline, but uses all sorts of materials and media and combines industrial and natural objects, photographs, videos, sculptures, and installations. He is interested in “signs of life” such as gestures, sounds, images, and everyday customs and habits. He also uses space and tries to make it into a visual resource. Spatial modifications are at the heart of his work, and the relationships between work and space, and images and architecture, play an emphatic part in it. For Rosas François has created the set designs for *The Song* (2009), *En Attendant* (2010), and *Partita 2* (2013).

**Anne-Catherine Kunz**
Anne-Catherine Kunz is a costume designer who has also participated in video, documentary, and multimedia productions. She was the costume director for Rosas

**Michaël Pomero**

Michaël Pomero studied at the Rudra Béjart Workshop School in Lausanne, Switzerland. He started his professional career in 1999, at the Béjart Ballet Lausanne. In 2001 he joined the Lyon Opera Ballet, where he performed work by John Jasperse, Angelin Preljocaj, Dominique Boivin, Russell Maliphant, and others. The year 2003 saw the beginning of his freelance career and a move to London, where he participated in two creations by Russell Maliphant and worked on different projects in the United Kingdom and Switzerland. In 2005 he cofounded the collective Loge 22 in Lyon. Since then he has danced in the following productions by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker: Bartók/Beethoven/Schönberg: Repertory Evening (2006), The Song (2009), Cesena (2011), Vortex Temporium (2013), and Work/Travail/Arbeid (2015). Throughout, he stayed involved in the projects of Loge 22. He is also active in SPIDER, an international creative collaborative that organizes artistic gatherings.

**Luc Schaltin**

Luc Schaltin was educated as a photographer. His photographic work centers on theater and dance photography, and travel photography. Usually he works as a lighting designer for theater, dance, and music. He learned the techniques of the theater at the STUK arts center and during the international dance festival Klapstuk. He worked there for five years, including three years as technical director. Since 1999 he has worked for Kaaitheater as a lighting and sound technician. He combines this part-time job with freelance lighting design for various artists. He has created lighting designs for Rosas, Jan Decorte, Raimund Hoghe, †Barre Land, Bl!ndman, Kris Verdonck (A Two Dogs Company), Tine Van Aerschot, P.A.R.T.S – Mia Lawrence, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Andros Zins-Browne, Zita Swoon Group, and Needcompany as well as for performances with Sato Endo, Riina Saastamoinen, Stefaan Quix, Kate Macintosh, Meg Stuart and Damaged Goods, and Christine De Smedt.
Then he puts the letter away inside his tunic, in the most secret place, beside the roseleaf. And thinks: It will soon take on that fragrance. And thinks: Perhaps someone will find it someday ... And thinks: ... For the enemy is near.
Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker
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the 24th of November 1663 Otto von Rilke / of Langenau / Gränitz and Ziegra / at Linda was enfeoffed with the share of the Linda estate left by his brother Christoph, fallen in Hungary; but he had to make out a reversion / by which the feudal tenure would become null and void / in case his brother Christoph (who according to the death certificate presented had died as Cornet in the Baron of Pirovano's Company of the Imperial Austrian Heyster Regiment of Horse ....) should return ...
Reiten, reiten, reiten, durch den Tag, durch die Nacht, durch den Tag. Reiten, reiten, reiten.


Riding, riding, riding, through the day, through the night, through the day. Riding, riding, riding.

And courage is grown so weary, and longing so great. There are no hills any more, hardly a tree. Nothing dares stand up. Alien huts crouch thirstily by mired springs. Nowhere a tower. And always the same picture. One has two eyes too many. Only in the night sometimes one seems to know the road. Perhaps we always retrace by night the stretch we have won laboriously in the foreign sun? Maybe. The sun is heavy, as with us deep in summer at home. But we took our leave in summer. The women's dresses shone long out of the green. And we have been riding long.

So it must be autumn. At least there, where sorrowful women know of us.
Der von Langenau rückt im Sattel und sagt: „Herr Marquis ...“
Sein Nachbar, der kleine feine Franzose, hat erst drei Tage lang gesprochen und gelacht. Jetzt weiß er nichts mehr. Er ist wie ein Kind, das schlafen möchte. Staub bleibt auf seinem feinen weißen Spitzenkragen liegen; er merkt es nicht. Er wird langsam welk in seinem samtenen Sattel.
Aber der von Langenau lächelt und sagt: „Ihr habt seltsame Augen, Herr Marquis. Gewiss seht Ihr Eurer Mutter ähnlich –“
Da blüht der Kleine noch einmal auf und stäubt seinen Kragen ab und ist wie neu.

Jemand erzählt von seiner Mutter. Ein Deutscher offenbar.
Laut und langsam setzt er seine Worte. Wie ein Mädchen, das Blumen bindet, nachdenklich Blume um Blume probt und noch nicht weiß, was aus dem Ganzen wird — so fügt er seine Worte.
Denn es sind lauter Herren, die wissen, was sich gehört. Und wer das Deutsche nicht kann in dem Haufen, der versteht es auf einmal, fühlt einzelne Worte: „Abends“ ... „Klein war ...“

He of Langenau shifts in his saddle and says: “Marquis ...”
His neighbor, the little fine Frenchman, has been talking and laughing these three days. Now he has nothing more to say. He is like a child that wants to sleep. Dust settles on his fine white lace collar; he does not notice it. He is slowly wilting in his velvet saddle.
But von Langenau smiles and says: “You have strange eyes, Marquis. Surely you must look like your mother –”
At that the little fellow blossoms out again and dusts his collar off and is like new.

Someone is telling of his mother. A German, evidently. Loud and slow he sets his words. As a girl, binding flowers, thoughtfully tests flower after flower, not yet knowing what the whole will come to — so he fits his words. For joy? For sorrow? All listen. Even the spitting stops. For these are gentlemen every one, who know what is proper. And whoever speaks no German in the crowd suddenly understands it, feels individual words: “At evening” ... “was little ...”

Da sind sie alle einander nah, diese Herren, die aus Frankreich kommen und aus Burgund, aus den Niederlanden, aus Kärntens Tälern, von den böhmischen Burgen und vom Kaiser Leopold. Denn was der Eine erzählt, das haben auch sie erfahren und gerade so. Als ob es nur eine Mutter gäbe ...

Now are they all close to one another, these gentlemen who come out of France and out of Burgundy, out of the Netherlands, out of Carinthia’s valleys, from the castles of Bohemia and from the Emperor Leopold. For what this one tells they too have experienced, and just as he has. As though there were but one mother ...
Dann singt er. Und das ist ein altes trauriges Lied, das zu Hause die Mädchen auf den Feldern singen, im Herbst, wenn die Ernten zu Ende gehen.

Sagt der kleine Marquis: „Ihr seid sehr jung, Herr?“
Und der von Langenau, in Trauer halb und halb im Trotz: „Achtzehn.“ Dann schweigen sie.
Später fragt der Franzose: „Habt Ihr auch eine Braut daheim, Herr Junker?“
„Ihr?“ gibt der von Langenau zurück.
„Sie ist blond wie Ihr.“
Und sie schweigen wieder, bis der Deutsche ruft: „Aber zum Teufel, warum sitzt Ihr denn dann im Sattel und reitet durch dieses giftige Land den türkischen Hunden entgegen?“
Der Marquis lächelt: „Um wiederzukehren.“
Wie – war? denkt der junge Herr. – Und sie sind weit.

Watch-fire. They sit round about and wait. Wait for someone to sing. But they are so tired. The red light is heavy. It lies on the dusty boots. It crawls up to the knees, it peers into the folded hands. It has no wings. The faces are dark. Even so, the eyes of the little Frenchman glow for a while with a light of their own. He has kissed a little rose, and now it may wither on upon his breast. Von Langenau has seen it, because he cannot sleep. He thinks: I have no rose, none.
Then he sings. And it is an old, sad song that at home the girls in the fields sing, in the fall, when the harvests are coming to an end.

Says the little Marquis: “You are very young, sir?”
And von Langenau, in sorrow half and half defiant: “Eighteen.” Then they are silent.
Later the Frenchman asks: “Have you too a bride at home, Junker?”
“You?” returns von Langenau.
“She is blond like you.”
And they are silent again until the German cries: “But then why the devil do you sit in the saddle and ride through this poisonous country to meet the Turkish dogs?”
The Marquis smiles: “In order to come back again.”
And von Langenau grows sad. He thinks of a blond girl with whom he played. Wild games. And he would like to go home, for an instant only, only for so long as it takes to say the words: “Magdalena – my having always been like that, forgive!”
What – been? thinks the young man. – And they are far away.


„Kehrt glücklich heim, Herr Marquis. —“
„Die Maria schützt Euch, Herr Junker."

„Das wird Euch beschirren. Lebt wohl.“

One day, at morning, a horseman appears, and then a second, four, ten. All in iron, huge. Then a thousand behind: the army.
One must separate.
“Return safely home, Marquis. —”
“The Virgin protects you, Junker.”
And they cannot part. They are friends of a sudden, brothers. Have more to confide in each other; for they already know so much each of the other. They linger. And there’s haste and hoofbeat about them. Then the Marquis strips off his great right glove. He fetches out the little rose, takes a petal from it. As one would break a host.
“That will safeguard you. Fare well.”
Von Langenau is surprised. He gazes long after the Frenchman. Then he shoves the foreign petal under his tunic. And it rises and falls on the waves of his heart. Bugle-call.
He rides to the army, the Junker. He smiles sadly: an unknown woman protects him.

A day through the baggage-train. Curses, colors, laughter —: the countryside is dazzling with it. Come colorful boys a-running. Brawling and calling. Come wenches with crimson hats amid their full-flowing hair. Beckonings. Come men-at-arms, black-iron as wandering night. Seize the hussies hotly, that their clothes tear. Press them against the drum’s edge. And at the wilder struggling of hasty hands the drums awake; as in a dream they rumble, rumble —. And at evening they hold out lanterns to him, strange ones: wine, gleaming in iron headpieces. Wine? Or blood? — Who can distinguish?
Der von Langenau hat nicht gefragt. Er erkennt den General, schwingt sich vom Ross und verneigt sich in einer Wolke Staub.
Und das ist viel.

At last with Spork. Beside his white horse the Count towers. His long hair has the gleam of iron.
Von Langenau has not asked. He recognizes the General, swings from his horse and bows in a cloud of dust. He brings a letter commending him to the Count's favor. But the Count commands: “Read me the scrawl.” And his lips have not moved. He does not need them for this; they're just good enough for cursing. Anything further his right hand says. Period. And one can tell by the look of it. The young man has finished long ago. He no longer knows where he is standing. Spork is in front of everything. Even the sky is gone. Then Spork, the great General, says: “Cornet.”
And that is much.
Der von Langenau schreibt einen Brief, ganz in Gedanken. Langsam malt er mit großen, ernsten, aufrechten Lettern:

„Meine gute Mutter,
seid stolz: Ich trage die Fahne,
seid ohne Sorge: Ich trage die Fahne,
habt mich lieb: Ich trage die Fahne –“

Dann steckt er den Brief zu sich in den Waffenrock, an die heimlichste Stelle, neben das Rosenblatt. Und denkt: Er wird bald duften davon. Und denkt: Vielleicht findet ihn einmal Einer ... Und denkt: ....
Denn der Feind ist nah.

Von Langenau is writing a letter, deep in thought. Slowly he traces in great, earnest, upright letters:

“My good mother,
be proud: I carry the flag,
be free of care: I carry the flag,
love me: I carry the flag –”

Then he puts the letter away inside his tunic, in the most secret place, beside the roseleaf. And thinks: It will soon take on that fragrance. And thinks: Perhaps someone will find it someday ... And thinks: .... For the enemy is near.

Rast! Gast sein einmal. Nicht immer selbst seine Wünsche bewirten mit kärglicher Kost. Nicht immer feindlich nach allem fassen; einmal sich alles geschehen lassen und wissen: was geschieht, ist gut. Auch der Mut muss einmal sich strecken und sich am Saume seidener Decken in sich selber überschlagen. Nicht immer Soldat sein. Einmal die Locken offen tragen und den weiten offenen Kragen und in seidenen Sesseln sitzen und bis in die Fingergipfel so: nach dem Bad sein. Und wieder erst lernen, was Frauen sind. Und wie die weißen tun und wie die blauen sind; was für Hände sie haben, wie sie ihr Lachen singen, wenn blonde Knaben die schönen Schalen bringen, von saftigen Früchten schwer.
Und Einer steht und staunt in diese Pracht. Und er ist so geartet, dass er wartet, ob er erwacht. Denn nur im Schlaf schaut man solchen Staat und solche Feste solcher Frauen: ihre kleinste Geste ist eine Falte, fallend in Brokat. Sie bauen Stunden auf aus silbernen Gesprächen, und manchmal heben sie die Hände so --, und du musst meinen, dass sie irgendwo, wo du nicht hinreichst, sanfte Rosen brächen, die du nicht siehst. Und da träumst du: Geschmückt sein mit ihnen und anders beglückt sein und dir eine Krone verdienen für deine Stirne, die leer ist.


„Sehnt es Dich nach Deinem rauen Rock?“

„Frierst Du? – Hast Du Heimweh?“

Die Gräfin lächelt.

Nein. Aber das ist nur, weil das Kindsein ihm von den Schultern gefallen ist, dieses sanfte dunkle Kleid. Wer hat es fortgenommen? „Du?“ fragt er mit einer Stimme, die er noch nicht gehört hat. „Du!“

Und nun ist nichts an ihm. Und er ist nackt wie ein Heiliger. Hell und schlank.


„Herrgot, wie Du willst!“

Kürzer sind die Gebete im Bett.

Aber inniger.

“Have you forgotten that you are my page for this day? Are you leaving me? Where are you going? Your white dress gives me right over you –.”

“Do you long for your coarse coat?”

“Are you cold? – Are you homesick?”

The Countess smiles.

No. But that is only because the being a child has fallen from his shoulders, that soft dark dress. Who has taken it away? “You?” he asks in a voice he has not yet heard. “You!”

And now he has nothing on. And he is naked as a saint. Bright and slender.

Slowly the castle lights go out. Everyone is heavy: tired or in love or drunk. After so many empty, long nights in the field: beds. Broad oaken beds. Here one prays otherwise than in a wretched furrow on the way, which, as one falls asleep, becomes like a grave.

“Lord God, as thou willest!”

Shorter are the prayers in bed.

But more heartfelt.

Die Turmstube ist dunkel.
Aber sie leuchten sich ins Gesicht mit ihrem Lächeln. Sie tasten vor sich her wie Blinde und finden den Andern wie eine Tür. Fast wie Kinder, die sich vor der Nacht ängstigen, drängen sie sich einander ein. Und doch fürchten sie sich nicht. Da ist nichts, was gegen sie wäre: kein Gestern, kein Morgen; denn die Zeit ist eingestürzt. Und sie blühen aus ihren Trümmern.
Er fragt nicht: „Dein Gemahl?“
Sie fragt nicht: „Dein Namen?“
Sie haben sich ja gefunden, um einander ein neues Geschlecht zu sein.
Sie werden sich hundert neue Namen geben und einander alle wieder abnehmen, leise, wie man einen Ohrring abnimmt.

The tower room is dark.
But they light each other’s faces with their smiles. They grope before them like blind people and find each the other as they would a door. Almost like children who dread the night, they press close into each other. And yet they are not afraid. There is nothing that might be against them: no yesterday, no morrow; for time is shattered. And they flower from its ruins.
He does not ask: “Your husband?”
She does not ask: “Your name?”
For indeed they have found each other, to be unto themselves a new generation.
They will give each other a hundred new names and take them all off again, gently, as one takes an ear-ring off.


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For indeed they have found each other, to be unto themselves a new generation.
They will give each other a hundred new names and take them all off again, gently, as one takes an ear-ring off.

Alles ist hell, aber es ist kein Tag.
Alles ist laut, aber es sind nicht Vogelstimmen.
Das sind die Balken, die leuchten. Das sind die Fenster, die schreien. Und sie schreien, rot, in die Feinde hinein, die draußen stehn im flackernden Land, schreien: Brand.
Und mit zerrissenem Schlaf im Gesicht drängen sich alle, halb Eisen, halb nackt, von Zimmer zu Zimmer, von Trakt zu Trakt und suchen die Treppe.
Und mit verschlagenem Atem stammeln Hörner im Hof: Sammeln, sammeln!
Und bebende Trommeln.

Was a window open? Is the storm in the house? Who is slamming the doors? Who goes through the rooms? – Let be. No matter who. Into the tower room he will not find his way. As behind a hundred doors is this great sleep two people have in common; as much in common as one mother or one death.
Er läuft um die Wette mit brennenden Gängen, durch Türen, die ihn glühend umdrängen, über Treppen, die ihn versengen, bricht er aus aus dem rasenden Bau. Auf seinen Armen trägt er die Fahne wie eine weiße, bewusstlose Frau. Und er findet ein Pferd und es ist wie ein Schrei: über alles dahin und an allem vorbei, auch an den Seinen. Und da kommt auch die Fahne wieder zu sich und niemals war sie so königlich; und jetzt sehn sie sie alle, fern voran, und erkennen den hellen, helmlosen Mann und erkennen die Fahne ...

Aber da fängt sie zu scheinen an, wirft sich hinaus und wird groß und rot ...

Da brennt ihre Fahne mitten im Feind und sie jagen ihr nach.

Aber die Fahne ist nicht dabei.

Rufe: Cornet!
Rasende Pferde, Gebete, Geschrei,
Flüche: Cornet!
Eisen an Eisen, Befehl und Signal;
Stille: Cornet!
Und noch ein Mal: Cornet!
Und heraus mit der brausenden Reiterei.

Aber die Fahne ist nicht dabei.
Der Waffenrock ist im Schlosse verbrannt, der Brief und das Rosenblatt einer fremden Frau. –

Im nächsten Frühjahr (es kam traurig und kalt) ritt ein Kurier des Freiherrn von Pirovano langsam in Langenau ein. Dort hat er eine alte Frau weinen sehen.

He of Langenau is deep in the enemy, but all alone. Terror has ringed a space around him, and he halts, in the very middle, under the slowly dying flare of his flag. Slowly, almost reflectively, he gazes about him. There is much that is strange, motley, before him. Gardens – he thinks and smiles. But then he feels that eyes are holding him and is aware of men and knows that these are the heathen dogs – and casts his horse into their midst. But, as he is now closed in on from behind, they are indeed gardens again, and the sixteen curved sabres that leap upon him, flash on flash, are a party. A laughing fountain.
Publication

“Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke” by Rainer Maria Rilke
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“Dance Theatre and Literature Dance” and “Of the Way of Loving and Living”
Interview with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker by Vasco Boenisch
English translation by Isobel Mackie

“Sense of Completion” and “War Is Always a Prison” by Stefan Zweig, from The World of Yesterday (Pushkin Press, 2009)
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DIE WEISE
UND TOD DES
CHRISTO
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