



BARBICAN  
BOX 2017

# INSIDE THE BOX

# BARBICAN BOX 2017

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30 x elastic bands



1 x archive folder



1 x text from  
*Angels in America*



1 x image of sculptures  
by Berlinda de Bruyckere



2 x pieces of bamboo



1 x key



2 x balls



1 x sketchbook  
per student



1 x roll of tape



1 x maquette figures



3 x pieces of fabric



1 x conductor's baton



1 x blindfold



1 x set of wooden blocks



1 x coloured stickers



1 x selfie stick



5 x ties



1 x red fine liner

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# PROLOGUE

## WELCOME TO BARBICAN BOX 2017

Before you begin working with the Box, we'd like to offer a short introduction. We are Rosa Fontein and Ilon Lodewijks, artist educators at Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Toneelgroep Amsterdam is the biggest repertory theatre company of the Netherlands. The internationally acclaimed director, Ivo van Hove, has been our director since 2001.

We have developed the contents of this Box so that you can explore Ivo's work, not only through his process of theatre-making with Toneelgroep Amsterdam, but also through his diverse work around the world.

The activities and contents of the Box will build towards you and your students creating your own material, inspired by the working methods of Ivo and his collaborator, scenographer Jan Versweyveld.

We will follow the three main phases that Ivo and Jan go through when they are creating a new piece of work:

— Concept  
*finding and developing an idea for a production*

— Pre-production  
*bringing together collaborators to make the production*

— Rehearsal  
*refining ideas and shaping the final piece*

Along the way, you'll get to know five key collaborators who work with Ivo and Jan. You'll find out what they do and what their creative processes look like. Each practitioner has suggested an object to be used as a hands-on-tool to practice your own skills in their particular discipline.

Each object is accompanied by tips, inspiration and exercises to provide you and your students with starting points to create your own work, exploring the main elements found within Ivo and Jan's productions.

**THE OBJECTS**

Team spirit is essential to each of Ivo's collaborators. Before you dive into the world of Ivo and Jan, it's important to develop a good energy for creating work within your group, especially practicing the fun of failure – something which is essential when making risk-taking theatre.

With that in mind, we have added some objects in the Box that will help to build trust and team spirit within your ensemble: **blindfolds, balls** and **elastic bands**.

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Discuss with your students what being part of a team means to them. What do they need from each other in order for their team to work well?
2. In partners, ask your students to describe a moment they remember feeling fearless. What were they doing? How did they feel beforehand, and what did they feel they'd achieved when they'd finished?

**WARM-UP**

1. Ask three students to stand in front of the class. Their task is to shout HEE and move their left legs up, at exactly the same time. There can't be one person leading – they must commit to finding the moment together as a group, and dare to do it wrong. You can then increase the number of students to four, five or more.

**TEAM SPIRIT**

1. Throw the two balls from person to person around the group, with everybody moving around the space at all times. If somebody drops a ball, everybody must die as theatrically as possible. After everyone has finished dying, the group has to stand up at exactly the same time, and then continue throwing the ball.
2. Knot the 30 elastics together to form a long chain, and ask the students to each take hold of a part of the chain. As fast as possible without talking, they should use the chain to create: a circle, a square, a star, or whatever objects you choose.
3. Choose two students, and use the elastic bands to bind their feet or hands together. Ask the students to complete a physically challenging task: to crawl under a table, climb over a chair, or move around the room as fast as they can.

**TRUST**

1. There are a number of different trust exercises that you could use here, so feel free to use one which feels right for your group. As a starter exercise, place your students in pairs, one A and one B. A is led around the room, eyes open, and B leads with the slightest touch of the hands placed together. Swap over, and when it feels like there is good focus in the room, introduce one of the partners wearing a blindfold and being led. Encourage an awareness of being a good guide for your unseeing partner.
2. Ask the class to create a tight circle around one blindfolded student. The blindfolded student must trust in giving their entire weight to the group around the edge, keeping their feet firmly planted on the floor and their arms crossed in front of them. The group gently catch and support the blindfolded student as they fall back and forth across the circle. Swap over and allow each student a turn.

'YOU HAVE TO  
TAKE THE RISK  
TO LET IT FAIL'

– IVO VAN HOVE  
DIRECTOR

# IVO VAN HOVE, JAN VERSWEYVELD AND GESAMTKUNSTWERK

## SPOTLIGHT: IVO VAN HOVE (1958)

Ivo is an internationally acclaimed theatre director whose productions have been performed at festivals and theatres all over the world. He began his career in 1981 with a small group of collaborators and no money. He then went on to become the artistic director of different theatre companies in the Netherlands and Belgium. In 2001, Ivo became director of Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Throughout the past decade, Ivo has won numerous awards. In 2016, Ivo was awarded two Tony Awards in New York, two Drama League Awards, two Drama Desk awards and two Outer Critics Circle Awards. In France he won two Grands Prix de la Critique.

Since the 1980s, Ivo has never worked without his closest collaborator, Jan Versweyveld.

## SPOTLIGHT: JAN VERSWEYVELD (1958)

Jan studied at the Sint-Lucas Instituut in Brussels and the Koninklijke Academie in Antwerp, where he graduated in graphics. He is the set and lighting designer for all of Ivo's

work, alongside designing Toneelgroep Amsterdam's office spaces, creating their show marketing images and photographing all their productions. He is responsible for the overall visual style of Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Ivo and Jan's work is characterised by its great diversity. Whether working with opera, musicals, large or small-scale productions of classic and contemporary texts, or adaptations of screenplays, they re-examine each piece through the prism of our own time.

## GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Ivo and Jan use many different theatrical disciplines and forms within their plays: acting, text, set, lighting, video, music and costume design, which come together to create what is known as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

A *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, involves a number of mediums or forms all working together in synergy. The whole is greater than the simple sum of its parts. The term *Gesamtkunstwerk* became famous through the German composer and director Richard Wagner,

who used his own opera cycle *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* to express this ideal.

You could compare a *Gesamtkunstwerk* to an orchestra. In an orchestra, each individual instrument follows its own musical score, with the mutual aim of creating a sound to be enjoyed as a unified experience. The conductor, or in our case, Ivo as director, works to unify the various sections of an orchestra, shaping the sounds of the ensemble for an audience's appreciation.

The Barbican Box itself is a metaphor for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It is built out of a number of different elements, which fit perfectly together to create the single object you see in front of you.

Ivo's creation of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* always starts with a text. He often has a strong pull towards a particular text and a feeling that it is something he has to stage *now*. His choice will be based upon finding a text which won't lose its power if you place it in another context. Once he's made his decision, Ivo looks for the most primal versions of the text; the least polished ones.

# CONCEPT



THE HIDDEN FORCE

# FINDING THE CONCEPT

Once the text is chosen, Ivo develops the concept with Jan. The concept refers to a plan or an idea about how the text needs to be staged.

This is the all-important preparation stage – the starting point, from which every other stage will build on and develop.

In this initial stage, Ivo and Jan choose the main elements needed for this particular play – and decide whether it requires video, what atmosphere the sound design needs to create, and which actors are going to play which characters.

## THE OBJECTS

We've added an **archive folder** in the Box. In this folder you'll find:

- Published newspaper articles about the work of Ivo and Jan
- The 2016/2017 brochure for Toneelgroep Amsterdam
- Extracts from three plays that Ivo and Jan have staged

You'll also find a **sketchbook** for each of the students. This is theirs to keep for the duration of the devising process. From now on, let

the students record all the material they make –including ideas about the concept of the piece– inside their personal **sketchbook**. The notes they write, the drawings they create should all be recorded here, which will become an inspiration dossier for creating their own *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

You will find a number of **wooden blocks** in the Box. These can be used to explore the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in relation to creating a piece of theatre, and can also be used to challenge the students to think about how they might apply the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* to their own lives: personally, socially, politically.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Encourage your students to research the work of Ivo and Jan online, and ask them to pick one production shot which particularly appeals.
2. Let each student discuss their choice with the rest of the class.
3. Discuss what students discovered about Jan and Ivo's work – what interested them and what did the productions have in common?

Use the **wooden blocks** to explore the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Sitting in a circle with the blocks in the middle, ask students to come up one by one to build a structure, block-by-block. See how many different constellations you are able to make. Just as the blocks can be assembled in countless ways, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* changes depending on how the different elements are placed together.

You can use the blocks to explore the following ideas:

1. Use the blocks to represent the different disciplines which Ivo and Jan draw on to create their productions (set design, video, sound, text, acting, etc.).
2. Challenge the students to think about their own personal lives as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. What kind of roles do they play in life – sibling, son/daughter, friend? What different communities do they belong to – home, school, local neighbourhood, London, UK? Use the blocks to layer these up.
3. What are the political connotations of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*? How democratic is the idea of a number of different elements working collaboratively together? Could Europe be called a *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Use the blocks to represent different countries, and explore the idea of the United Kingdom in relation to Europe.

Now you have chosen your text, you can create the concept for the play by exploring these questions:

1. What does this text tell me about myself? How do I relate to it personally?
2. What does this text say about our contemporary time? Is there a political resonance with the world around me?
3. In what kind of theatrical world is this text staged? (Is it a therapy session, an island, a battle field, a dream? etc.)

During this exercise, ask students to use their **sketchbooks** to note when they feel that the block construction is most interesting – when it becomes the perfect example of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* for them. Everyone's ideas will vary, just as each director will have a different approach in assembling the elements of each production.

## BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Inside the **archive folder**, you'll find three extracts of scripts that Ivo and Jan have previously staged.

1. Read each text as a group and ask the students to write initial thoughts, responses and ideas based on each text in their **sketchbooks**. These should be quick, intuitive ideas so they should make notes in whatever style suits them, e.g. sketches, diagrams, words.
2. Discuss their responses and choose the text which the majority of the group most relates to.



LES DAMNÉS

THE HIDDEN FORCE

# PRE-PRODUCTION



# DRAMATURGY

## SPOTLIGHT: PETER VAN KRAAIJ (1961)

Peter worked as a freelance director in theatre and film in Belgium before joining Toneelgroep Amsterdam. He wrote several screenplays and directed *Vinaya*, a feature film. In theatre he stages his own texts and specialises in 20th Century drama. Before leaving for Amsterdam he worked at Kaaithheater in Brussels and Walpurgis and De Tijd in Antwerp. From 2007 he joined Ivo as dramaturg in Toneelgroep Amsterdam. In 2013 his first novel *Wat rest* was published.

*'Apart from the usual research undertaken during pre-production, as a dramaturge you are responsible for a profound analysis of the text. Often you will be writing a new translation or adapting an existing text, and you have to be able to connect the play with our contemporary society. For Ivo, the central question is how a particular text can communicate with an audience today, and how it can reveal something about our life in the 21st Century.'*

*Before starting rehearsals there is a body of work to be done on structural analysis, character sketches and sentence-by-sentence close reading and interpretation. Then, as a dramaturge, you are continually present at rehearsals; making changes to the text, proposing ideas for the mise-en-scene, and stimulating work with the actors. Making theatre with Ivo is a collaborative art in the best sense of the word.*

*When we made Cries and Whispers (screenplay by Ingmar Bergman) we totally changed the order of scenes by not putting the different flash-backs of the characters in between the narrative. We also decided to make the main character (a dying woman) a video artist who's documenting her own process of dying. This decision made it possible to integrate the images of our video designer, Tal Yarden as though they were being shot by the main character herself.'*

## THE OBJECT

Ivo and Toneelgroep Amsterdam staged *Angels in America* at BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) in 2014. Inside the Box, **the final monologue of *Angels in America*** is printed on a big tarpaulin.

Use the **gaffer tape** to stick the tarpaulin on the wall, and the **coloured stickers** to highlight certain sentences and remove them.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Stick **the final monologue of *Angels in America*** up on the wall and read it together as a group.
2. Think about who is saying the monologue. What kind of person are they? How do they see the world? What role do they have in society, e.g. mother, child, business woman?
3. What metaphors can you find in the text?
4. Does the character seem to change at all during the text? How?
5. Using the **coloured stickers**, explore what happens to our understanding of the text if we add or remove words or sentences.



## BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Work with your students on the process of adapting their own chosen text.

1. Divide the class into three groups and ask each of them to read the scenes with a specific theme or context in mind. For example: love, historical facts or heroism.
2. Looking at the text through this viewpoint, guide them to consider what they would remove, keep, add, make clearer? Keep in mind that any changes should draw out the specific reading most effectively.
3. Based on this thinking, let the students amend/add to the text, so that they end up with a new adaptation of the piece.
4. Share with the whole group and from all the suggestions, draw together some of the most interesting decisions to create a master-text you will use for the subsequent activities.

'FOR IVO,  
THE CENTRAL  
QUESTION IS HOW  
A PARTICULAR  
TEXT CAN  
COMMUNICATE  
WITH AN  
AUDIENCE  
TODAY'

– PETER VAN KRAAIJ  
DRAMATURGE



## SCENOGRAPHY

**SPOTLIGHT: JAN VERSWEYVELD**

Please refer to Jan's biography at the beginning of this pack.

*'I have worked with Ivo for over 35 years and our work is totally intertwined. Together, we have explored how we can reinvent the use of the stage. We search for new relationships between the audience and the stage, and how to integrate the newest media techniques. Over the years, I have really come to understand that the theatre is a location – it is not an isolated place. The walls can be broken down and the world can be brought inside. In my designs there are no hidden scene changes – the technicians are often visible. I like to show how theatre is made.'*

*'We create the concept a year before the rehearsals start. It is challenging to work this far ahead so you have to be patient. I would rather be in the rehearsal room with all the different elements but the preparation is important to arrive at the necessary result. When the concept is ready, I can finally start drawing by myself, and give form to the long conversations we have had. Ivo doesn't want to see what I make in this period, he prefers to stay in a freethinking mode; in a place where things are not yet determined.'*

*I first make a design for the actors. The actors have to feel good in the architectonic spaces I create. Sometimes they have to feel supported, sometimes the space has to challenge them. I don't aim for a realistic representation of the truth – the atmosphere of a space is what's most important in my designs.*

*I think Roman Tragedies is one of my favourite productions. It's the most extreme production I've designed, in terms of audience arrangement. I equipped the stage with two bars where the audience can order drinks during the five hour play. Couches were placed onstage, so the audience could sit between the actors. Close-ups of the actors on a big video screen gave focus to the performers.'*

**THE OBJECT**

Jan is often inspired by the visual arts for his scenography and designs.

In the Box you'll find **images of sculptures** by the artist Berlinde de Bruyckere. This artist inspired Jan for the scenography of the Toneelgroep Amsterdam production *Persona*.

In the Box you'll find **maquette figures**, to a scale of their actual size inside the Barbican Theatre (1:50).

## 'I LIKE TO SHOW HOW THEATRE IS MADE'

– JAN VERSWEYVELD  
SCENOGRAPHER

**GETTING STARTED**

To explore the role of scenographer, you will investigate Jan's work on *Persona*.

1. As a group, look at the **images** of Berlinde de Bruyckere's work. Discuss what atmosphere, images or associations are conjured up when they look at the sculptures.
2. Now do some individual research on the production of *Persona*. What are the themes of the piece and what specific concept do you think the company was exploring? Can you see the influence of Berlinde's work within the production? In what way? How does the scenography relate to the images?
3. Search online for production photos of the play, where students can clearly track the inspiration of Berlinde de Bruyckere's artwork within the production.

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

Now return to the concept you decided upon as a class for your own text.

1. In small groups, look for paintings, sculptures, photos or images which express the atmosphere or tone influencing this specific concept.
2. Once you have a collection of different images, ask each group to choose the image or painting which interests them most. They should now recreate it in the space with their bodies and simple pieces of furniture, as a tableau. Hopefully, some of their stimulus material will be abstract, so encourage the students to respond to the atmosphere of the material, rather than being literal.
3. Once shared, the group can start thinking concretely about how the stage design might enhance these ideas.

By turning the four drawers of the Box upside down and placing them next to each other, you have the stage of the Barbican Theatre to scale (1:50). Inside the Box you'll find **maquette figures** so you and your class can begin experimenting with different scenography.



1. Using the **maquette figures**, experiment with different audience positions, paying attention to the viewing lines especially. How does changing the position of the audience affect the storytelling?
2. The group can now create their own stage design to scale – either in 2D, using their **sketchbooks**, or in 3D, using cardboard. Encourage them to be experimental when thinking about what else is needed onstage (e.g. video projection, playing with scale) as well as the audience configuration (are they onstage, in the round?).
3. Allow each small group to present their ideas – first showing their initial research before using the Box stage to display their final scenography designs.
4. Using the text that you've chosen, experiment with your scenography ideas on the floor or Box, playing the same scene with different scenography ideas and audience positions. What works best?

## VIDEO

**SPOTLIGHT: TAL YARDEN**

Tal studied film at Bard College. He creates, designs, directs and shoots visual content for a variety of media. He specializes in work for live events including dance, theatre, opera and music performances. He's worked with Ivo and Jan since 2000.

*'Most of the time specific visual ideas for a production arise during the concept stage. Together with Ivo and Jan, I look at the visual dramaturgy of a play. That's the starting point for my research.'*

*I often get inspiration from all kinds of art and media forms while I'm researching and then I explore how it fits into my world. For example, when developing the video design for Les Damnés, I was looking for images to represent an army. I asked myself 'How do I represent this army?' and then became inspired by the video clip from Formation by Beyoncé, where we see arrangements of people filmed from above. I took that technique and made footage from a top shot, looking down.'*

*Video design can bring the outside world into the theatre and can also widen the production's frame of reference. It's similar to what happens when we use our cell phones: we take selfies in order to connect with each other and to make sure we exist, to search for proof for our own existence. That's what we do in theatre as well, which the use of video can highlight.'*

**THE OBJECT**

Tal works with different camera positions and perspectives. The choice of camera position will tell a certain story e.g. a close-up, wide shot, long shot. A **selfie stick** can help you explore the idea of looking at an image from different angles.

# 'VIDEO DESIGN CAN BRING THE OUTSIDE WORLD INTO THE THEATRE'

– TAL YARDEN  
VIDEO DESIGNER

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Tal designed the video for *Les Damnés*, a production that Ivo directed with the ensemble of the La Comedie-Francaise. Watch the top shot clip that Tal refers to here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ\\_uf\\_zeOLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ_uf_zeOLM) (1:31:30-1:37:00) and discuss how this technique affects the storytelling onstage.
2. Watch Beyoncé's video for *Formation*, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfMIFxrMb18> Can the students see the influence of this video upon Tal's work in the previous clip? How?
3. Encourage your students to film with their cell phones and explore Tal's example of a top shot looking down. In small groups, using the **selfie stick**, ask them to film and stage different group configurations using this viewpoint.

4. Once they've explored the top shot, encourage the class to explore what other angles and perspectives they can film using the **selfie stick**. Draw out how each viewpoint has a different effect on the viewer and why you might choose each one.
5. Find a pop music video that particularly inspires you and share it with the class, investigating what worlds are explored in the video and why they chose certain perspectives to film from. Once you have modelled this, ask for other video suggestions from the class. What kind of music videos do they find inspiring, and how could these influence making their own video for theatre?

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

Now refer back to your chosen text. What kind of video material/footage could widen the frame of reference for this particular text, e.g. do you want to bring in a sense of the natural environment, a particular place in the world, an abstract emotion, colour or texture? What footage do you have to capture? Would there be a reason to film from a certain perspective?

1. As a whole class, use the **selfie stick** and decide on a group image you can film for a section of the text and the viewpoint you'll create it from. The image shouldn't contain speaking or be a 'scene' as such but could explore the atmosphere of the piece or an abstract idea from your concept, e.g. shots of hands raised, bodies separated in the space, etc.



## SOUND

**SPOTLIGHT: HARRY DE WIT (1952)**

Harry composes experimental music and designs electroacoustic installations. He also composes music for theatre, modern dance and film. He has worked with Ivo and Jan since 1997. In their productions Harry is a storyteller, a performer who is present on stage as composer/musician.

*'I always start with a profound reading of the text. I'll look for sentences that trigger something in me. I search for tension in the text. The sound design does not only have to melt together with the actors but can add a contrast to the storyline as well.'*

*'I search for one basic idea – it can be a sound or a material that represents something fundamental in the text. That's the starting point. For example in the production The Hidden Force, a book adaptation situated on the islands of Indonesia, I chose to work with bamboo. Bamboo can represent the natural forces of Indonesia perfectly. It is also a local material. For the adaptation Things That Pass, a story about a family that is damaged by horrible secrets, I chose the ticking of time as the central idea as nobody can ever escape from secrets. It can take me more than one month to find the basic idea. When I find it, I start researching all the possibilities of the material.'*

**THE OBJECT**

Harry makes installations. This means that he's less focused on using existing instruments, but instead looks for unusual new materials to create sound with. Analogue and digital music is often used at the same time. In this folder: <http://tga.nl/en/barbican-box-2017> you'll find two soundscapes created by Harry for the *Things That Pass* production, and inside the Box you'll find **two pieces of bamboo** that you can use to start creating your own natural soundscape.

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Let every student lie on the floor with their eyes closed. Ask them to listen to all the sounds around them. Bring their awareness to the sounds they might hear in the classroom, in the school building, in the street, in the city, in the wider world. Bring their awareness back to the classroom, to 5 metres away from them, 1 metre away, their own body and inside their own body.
2. Inside their **sketchbooks**, ask students to draw 'silence.' Ask them to draw 'noise.' Ask them to draw 'the sound of the city.' Ask them to draw 'the sounds inside their bodies.' Discuss in small groups.

3. In these groups, ask them to choose one picture to translate into a group soundscape. They can combine vocal and rhythmic sound, the sound of the **bamboo sticks**, and any other sounds they can make using the natural materials in their surrounding environment. How easy is it to transfer their drawing into sounds?
4. Rehearse and share with the wider class, asking them to close their eyes when listening.
5. Listen to the soundscapes that Harry has created, and discuss the effect of the sounds that Harry has chosen.

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

Go back to your text and concept. Try to find one central idea together, e.g. the ticking of time in *Things that Pass* or the bamboo in *The Hidden Force*. Once you have decided on this, collect a range of soundscape material which will support this idea.

1. Ask every student to lie on the floor again with their eyes closed, except for one person. They are the storyteller and must pick one sentence from your text which interests them. Using all the soundscape material you've collected as a group, ask the student to try and tell a story based on just that one sentence. Without revealing what the sentence is, discuss with the class where the sound took them and what images appeared in their heads.
2. Now pick a scene from the text you've chosen and design sounds which melt together with the scene, supporting the storytelling onstage. Now design sounds which create a sharp contrast to the scene. Discuss the different approaches and why, as a sound designer, you might choose each one.

## 'I SEARCH FOR TENSION IN THE TEXT'

– HARRY DE WIT  
SOUND DESIGNER

## COSTUME

**SPOTLIGHT: AN D'HUYS (1964)**

An studied costume design at Sint-Lukas in Brussels and the Antwerpse Modeacademie. After her studies, she started working in theatre and television. In 2004 she joined the designer team at fashion house Ann Demeulemeester. She's worked with Ivo and Jan since 2002.

*'The costume design in Ivo's productions is very important, not just as a design but to support the characters. The costumes are always integrated carefully into the scenography.'*

*The dramaturgy of the play is essential for me. I have to know all the different layers of a character. For example, at the start of Antigone, Antigone has just come back from the battlefield. A first idea might be to dress her up as a tough hero-like figure. But who is the woman behind the surface of that fighter? What's the deeper reason Antigone went to fight? The dramaturge helps me to get a profound insight into a character. So I ended up choosing a costume for Antigone that showed her femininity and sexuality.*

**THE OBJECT**

The fabrics that are used in costume design tell an important story. A character in a woollen dress tells a very different story to a character in the same dress, made of silk. To investigate this further, you'll find **different fabrics** in the Box.

*It is interesting to combine theatre with what I learned from the fashion house – how can you tell a story using different fabrics and different colours?*

*I work in three stages. I start by collecting different atmospheric images of paintings, styles of movies, pictures from photographers. With those images I go back to Ivo, and together we redefine what we are looking for. In the second stage, I create images for each character, and in the last stage I choose with Ivo and Jan which image works for each character.'*

# 'WHAT'S THE DEEPER REASON ANTIGONE WENT TO FIGHT?'

– AN D'HUYS  
COSTUME DESIGNER

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Look at the clothes your students are wearing and discuss what stories the different fabrics tell, e.g. are the materials decorative or hard-wearing? Were they designed with a specific purpose in mind – fashion or functionality?
2. Encourage all the students to touch and explore the **fabrics** in the Box. Discuss the different qualities of the material; is the fabric heavy or light, transparent or tightly-woven, a cheap fabric or expensive-looking, sensual or functional? Now imagine what kind of characters might wear each fabric.
3. Begin to investigate the different ways the **fabrics** can be worn, e.g. as a scarf, cape, headdress etc. Can the students see a variety of characters emerging? What sort of play or concept does each one suggest?

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

Go back to your chosen text and concept. Discuss again the atmosphere or tone of your production. Let your students pick a character from the text. They are going to design a costume based on the three phases Ann describes:

1. Collect different images, paintings, movie styles and photos relating to the concept and initial costume ideas.
2. Create a range of possible images for your character.
3. Decide which image you feel works best for your character.

Now let your students begin to collect pieces of their character's costume. They might look at home, in school for raw materials or if there is a small budget, they could visit local charity shops.





ANTIGONE

THE HIDDEN FORCE



REHEARSAL

## ACTING

**SPOTLIGHT: EELCO SMITS (1977)**

Eelco studied at the Toneelschool in Maastricht. Before he became a member of Toneelgroep Amsterdam in 2005, he was a permanent actor at the Ro Theater. Last season he performed a one-man show, *Song from Far Away* which was especially written for him by playwright Simon Stephens.

*'In the Gesamtkunstwerk, the text is the centre from which the rest of the production develops. I prepare for rehearsals by learning my text, something that Ivo expects from all the actors he works with. I get a lot of freedom when I work with Ivo and can approach the character and the text in different ways. Ivo gives me space to search for my own way but he also knows where he wants to go. Because I've worked with Ivo for a while, I know his preferences as a director. He wants it extreme. I know I can't make any compromises in my acting – I have to give it all I've got.'*

*In the rehearsal room I'm safe to make all kinds of attempts and try anything that may work for my character – nobody will ever laugh at me. The most important thing is that I have no self-censure as an actor. This is difficult, but if I stay in control it's not interesting. Ivo searches for the intensity of being real onstage, of not playing. For example in Roman Tragedies, there are some fights between the characters. Ivo doesn't rehearse the fights. The fights are real. The actors don't know exactly what will happen. Some accidents happened during the tour. It is really dangerous and the audience can feel that as well – they sit on the edge of their seats.'*

**THE OBJECT**

In the Box you'll find **5 ties**. The characters in the Toneelgroep Amsterdam repertoire are often kings, politicians, or mythical characters – people that belong to an elite. Ivo adapts this to a modern setting, so actors are often dressed in suits.

Even with a small item of clothing like the tie, students can feel 'in costume.' The challenge is to stay close to yourself even when you're wearing the tie.

We all have to find the **key** to the state where we don't have any self-censure – where we dare to show our most extreme emotions.

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Ask a selection of students to put their **ties** on onstage. Ask them to do it as if they were in their own bedroom, without acting. Keep repeating it until they are no longer aware of being onstage or watched. When does it get real for the audience? Discuss with the students watching.
2. Ivo uses this image in the opening scene of *Les Damnés*, which you watched part of in the video section. Watch the clip here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ\\_uf\\_zeOLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ_uf_zeOLM) (6:00-1000) and discuss what you can learn from the company's approach.
3. Bring five students onstage and ask them to search for an important key. Everyone else observes how they behave. Now send the five students out of the classroom and hide the real **key** in the room. Tell them you have hidden a key and that they have to find it as soon as possible. What can the rest of the students observe in the difference between the two searches? What is the difference between 'real' searching and 'acting' a search?

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

1. Choose a scene from the text and pick a specific intention for each character in the scene e.g. they have a pressing meeting so must be quick, or they want a moment alone with another character to tell them something important.
2. Now play with the stakes – how important is this intention? 1 – it's fairly unimportant. 10 – it's the most important thing in the world. Switch quickly up and down the scale.

'I HAVE TO GIVE  
IT ALL I'VE GOT'

– EELCO SMITS  
ACTOR

## DIRECTION

**SPOTLIGHT: IVO VAN HOVE**

Please refer to Ivo's biography at the beginning of this pack.

*'It's difficult to explain how I bring all the different elements of the Gesamtkunstwerk together. It is intuition accompanied by experience and expertise.'*

*The rehearsal stage is the time to find out what works and what doesn't work. Ideas rise and material is thrown away.*

*I'm well known for my mise-en-scene. Mise-en-scene is the way actors are set in a space, the way all the elements onstage are arranged spatially. I have a sculptural sense – the way I stage the actors in space. It has to be like a painting, a perfect orchestral setting.*

*A counter point in a scene is always accompanied by a physical change in mise-en-scene. In the rehearsal stage, the theatrical spatial experience is often leading. The spatial experience serves the narrative. I can swap a whole order of scenes around just because the mise-en-scene doesn't fit. I often look back at the concept to find the essence of the work again.*

*In this stage you have to be fearless again. You have to take the risk to let it fail or to change the whole ending, even one hour before the premiere if you still feel there is something missing.'*

**THE OBJECT**

In the Box you'll find a **conductor's baton**.

While directing, Ivo leads the collective arrangement of all the different elements towards opening night. The **baton** can be used as a metaphor and as a practical tool.

**GETTING STARTED**

1. Use the **key** from the previous chapter. Ask two volunteers to stand in the space – A and B. They must stand 6 metres apart and face each other. Give the key to A and explain how this key must pass from A to B. Give a direction of how the key should pass – these should be clear, concrete directions and not psychological ones.

For example:

- A walks 3 metres towards B with feet slightly turned inwards, looking at the ground whilst walking and holds out their hand for the key when they approach.
  - B looks at person A and starts walking slowly towards them whilst A remains still. B stops in the middle and then walks with big steps towards A. B stands in front of A, nods, takes the key and walks slowly back, etc.
2. Ask the audience what they understood from what they saw. Who does the key belong to? What door does the key open? Why did A give the key to B?

**BUILDING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK**

The **baton** is a useful symbolic object through which to investigate the role of the director in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

1. Choose a student to be the director, and hold the **baton**.
2. Ask everyone to take a piece of text from your chosen script and stand in the space facing the director. Everyone starts by saying their text all together.
3. Using the **baton** like a conductor of an orchestra, the director can use different gestures to influence how the group says their lines. Raising the **baton** higher might mean everyone talks in a higher voice. Circling the **baton** might mean speeding up, heavy movements signify that their emotion should increase, or a particular movement could mean that everyone stops except for one person. Allow different directors to play with these elements, creating their own *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

4. Now you can play with combining two different elements together, e.g. music and acting. Select some recorded music and choose a student to control it. Let the director play with the volume and presence of both the text and the music. When should the music come in? When should it take over the sound of the scene? When should it stop?

To explore the impact of different decisions about your mise-en-scene:

1. Choose a small section of dialogue between two characters from your chosen text. Divide the class into partners and assign an A and B character. Allow the students time to learn the text off-by-heart.
2. Ask the partners to say their text using these different configurations:
  - A & B say the text while facing each other.
  - A & B say their text facing each other again but now standing far apart.
  - A & B stand with their backs against each other and say their text.

– A walks towards B, gives B a kiss and then says the text. B kisses A and walks offstage whilst saying the text.

– A stays at the side of the stage. B looks at A and B walks off. A says text and B comes back. B says text and walks off again.

Discuss what meaning students gathered from the different mise-en-scenes. Then let the students create their own mise-en-scene using the piece of text.



## YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Everything that you have worked on to date is the rough material which you can use to create your final *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

It's time to take a good look at the material you have developed so far, and to interrogate the ideas you have collected and the choices you have made along the way.

The final stage before opening night is the rehearsal stage. The rehearsal period is very dense, and very intense – it often only takes a few weeks. In this stage the different elements of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* are put together and balanced: the script, the scenography, the ideas for sound and music, the video footage, the costume designs.

Once everything is prepared, the entire artistic team meets with Ivo and the actors in the rehearsal room.

One question remains. How do we bring all the different elements together in one *Gesamtkunstwerk*?

The answer to this is difficult to describe in words. You have to find your own style, and trust in your own intuition and expertise.

In Ivo's opinion, the rehearsal stage is the point at which you allow yourself to find out what you don't know yet. All of the preparation you have done becomes your safety net, as in this phase, your intuition is just as important as all of the content you have created to date.

Trust in yourself and each other, and make decisions based on what feels exciting – always choose the path less travelled.

Be fearless!

## THE OBJECT

There is a **red fine liner** in the Box. In the rehearsal room everyone writes down the concept, their ideas, texts, collected images, scribbles and drawings. It is time to investigate and to listen carefully to each other. It is time to make your final decisions.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Ask your students to prepare an everyday activity, paying attention to each small detail and specific step of the activity. This could be anything from letting the dog outside to visiting your grandmother.
2. Set them a homework assignment to complete this activity absolutely as it's written in their plan, with no deviating. Before you let them go, give each student an envelope to open just before they begin. Inside each envelope, write a note which reads, 'LET GO OF THE PLAN AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.'
3. Afterwards, have a group conversation about how it felt to let go of the plan. What opportunities did letting go offer them?

## FINALISING YOUR GESAMTKUNSTWERK

You have created lots of material with your class along the way. Each student has collected their own ideas, notes, text, collected images, scribbles and drawings, much of which is contained in their personal **sketchbooks**.

1. Ask each student to present and curate everything they have in their **sketchbooks** in the space, as if it was an exhibition. The students, as audience to each other's work, should make notes about what interests them in their fellow classmates' work. Share these thoughts as a group.
2. As a group, discuss what kind of story your collected material tells.
  - What central questions does your material ask?
  - Can you see any common themes emerging?
  - What theme is most relevant to this moment in time?
  - How do students personally relate to this theme?

3. Use this conversation to make decisions about which material you will keep, what is missing or you need to generate more of, and what key idea will form the backbone of your piece.
4. You can go back to the previous sections to generate more ideas if you feel that you are missing content in particular disciplines.
5. Once you've made your decisions and put your piece together, refine it and then rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!





## EPILOGUE

**THE TIME HAS COME FOR OPENING NIGHT**

This is the moment to let all of your preparation go, and be together as an ensemble in the moment of performance.

We hope that Barbican Box 2017 has prepared you for this moment, and we wish you all the best with your performance.

**ROUNDING UP**

1. Reflect with your students about the process they've been on – did you remain a team at each point in the journey? Were there tricky parts? How did you overcome these moments?
2. Think again about the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* and what you have taken from it.
3. Go back to the **wooden blocks** you used as a metaphor for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Use the blocks to represent each student in the group – this is your *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Ask each student to place their blocks and discuss their reflections on how they felt about being a member of the group throughout this process.

'TOITOI'!  
(BREAK A LEG)

– ILON, ROSA,  
TONEELGROEP AMSTERDAM  
& THE BARBICAN

# BARBICAN BOX 2017

## TONEELGROEP AMSTERDAM

PROJECT PRODUCER  
Wilma Smilde

CONTENT LEARNING RESOURCE  
Rosa Fontein, Ilon Lodewijks

LEARNING RESOURCE WRITING  
Ilon Lodewijks

LEARNING RESOURCE DRAMATURGY  
Peter van Kraaij

ARTISTIC PRODUCER  
Ramón Huijbrechts

BOX AND LEARNING RESOURCE DESIGN  
Beatriki More, Ramón Huijbrechts

BOX PHOTOGRAPHY  
Henri Verhoef

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
Judith van der Velden

PHOTOGRAPHY  
Camille David, Kevin Kwee, Jan Versweyveld

BOX PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS  
Cas Becker, Fabrizio van Es, Eline Janssen,  
Pascal Kijzer

WITH THANKS  
Brigiet van den Berg, Ivo van Hove, An d'Huys,  
Mette Raaphorst, Wouter van Ransbeek,  
Eelco Smits, Jan Versweyveld, Harry de Wit,  
Tal Yarden

[www.tga.nl](http://www.tga.nl)

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PROJECT PRODUCER  
Lauren Monaghan-Pisano

CREATIVE LEARNING OFFICER  
Lorna McGinty

LEARNING RESOURCE WRITING  
Lauren Monaghan-Pisano and Emma Higham

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