

The Reflections of Memory
Artistic presentation
of a cognitive approach to Historically Informed staging
by Gilbert Blin

Leiden University
On Tuesday 11 December at 17h00,
Academy Building, Leiden

This artistic presentation by Gilbert Blin marks the final phase of his PhD research on staging operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nourished by a decade of productions, the first objective of his research is dedicated to his creative and interpretive processes in the operatic field. The main research question he attempts to answer can be phrased as follows: how can a post-modern stage director use historical research for creative purposes?

The Reflections of Memory is the appellation Gilbert Blin has given to his current approach as an artist: the dissertation of the same title constitutes a conceptual answer to this question while the artistic presentation takes the twofold expressive form of an installation/exhibition: a « Wunderkammer » where remains from the past (books, engravings, objects) coexist with a cabinet of curiosities of performing elements (designs, models, costumes) for his recent staged productions of operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Room 1 – Installation ***Memory***

The « Curatorenkamer » contains an installation evocative of a collector's cabinet. The apparent disparity of objects on the table illustrates the many paths of exploration I undertake while preparing a Historically Informed production. Therefore, this temporary « lieu de mémoire » is staged as a new illustration of the allegory of « cognitione ». The table is already a stage where all objects act as mementos. The painted walls from the eighteenth-century function as original backdrops. This installation incorporates *Remaining parts*, including the physical features of the room, to create a conceptual experience in an inspirational larger learning milieu. (There were many cabinets of curiosities in Leiden during the Baroque era.)

Room 2 – Exhibition ***Reflections***

In the « Rectoren Kamer », a small exhibit reflects the major process of my research: the *Remaining parts*, vestiges of the past, coexist in various *Structural Parts* which allow me to cognitively create the *Performing parts* of my opera projects (as explained in my dissertation). Period engravings from my collection are presented next to staging documents and the scenic designs they have inspired and nourished. The selection combines items related to Historically Informed productions conceived during the last decade for the audience of Boston, Prague and Nice.

As a complement to the exhibition, a short video focuses on my work as Opera Director at the Boston Early Music Festival and offers an overview of experimental rehearsals and public performances of a selection of productions.

Gilbert Blin
11th of December 2018

Gilbert Blin wishes to thank:

Universiteit Leiden | Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen
Academy of Creative and Performing Arts:
Dr Rosalien van der Poel, *Institute Manager*,
Lotte Batelaan, *Research Coordinator*.
Boston Early Music Festival: Kathleen Fay, *Executive Director*.
Opéra de Nice | Côte d’Azur: Eric Chevalier, *Directeur général*,
Pascal Fauq, *Responsable du Pôle production*,
Caroline Constantin, *Directrice de l’Unité Production Diacosmie*,
Janine Gregori, *Responsable du Patrimoine costumes*.
Ball Square Films: Kathy Wittman, *videographer*.

And:

Dr Camille Tanguy, Dr Mickael Bouffard, Hendrik Jan Elderhorst,
Anna Josephine Jansen and Andrew Sigel

for their help and assistance
in the preparation of this presentation.