

The Variations of Beckett symposium: Time, Memory and Dreams

Place: Skuterud Gård, Nesodden

Time: 31st July - 2nd August

Important introductory note: The artists and organisers of the symposium will follow the instructions provided by the government for everything concerning Covid19. In order to follow the current regulations which we think will still be active in the time of the symposium, this open call is mainly directed at artists living in Norway. We are conscious of the rules that apply when we meet physically, and so for the three days at Nesodden we will arrange our program so that we may still respect social distancing. You are however welcome to apply from abroad if you think that this symposium speaks to you (submission form is at the end), and we will take into account if parts of this symposium shall be online on Zoom. We will assess this based on the applications, and adjust to people's needs. This call is primarily directed at artists working with performance, but we are open for others to join as well.

“In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you.” - *Samuel Beckett, Ohio Impromptu (1981)*

The Variations of Beckett group invites artists across all disciplines who are interested in practice-based artistic research to join us for our three days symposium. The themes we are proposing to explore are: time, memory and dreams. These are central to Samuel Beckett's work but are relevant beyond this specific context, and can be interpreted in any way the artists may find interesting. The main focus of the symposium is to create an artistic exchange and a reinforced network of people who work within the field of artistic research. Furthermore, we aim that the participating artists will potentially gain a new interest in Beckett's work if they are not familiar with him in advance. As the backdrop for the performative core of this symposium we have thus chosen to explore the format of a *reading performance* based on Beckett's "*Ohio Impromptu*".

The idea behind creating this symposium emerged before the corona outbreak, and was a result of our wish to initiate an artistic exchange with the possibility to work with Beckett in a new format. When corona was officially a part of our new reality and we had the first period of quarantine and self-isolation, we saw the need to rethink why we want to do this and how we can contribute as artists. This led to many discussions over zoom where the issues of *otherness*, *nothingness*, *emptiness* and *isolation* were shared from a personal perspective, and reinforced our connections to Beckett's literature. Seeing our new daily

lives through a Beckettian lens paved the way for a new understanding of his work, and thus launched us into looking at Beckett's letters from after WWII.

The idea was to grasp what you experience in a situation where a country is opening up again after a lockdown, and that new phase in-between which is hard to place temporally. The new everyday life is not only "new", but we are also experiencing radical changes which will have an impact on the post-corona times. How do we meet this new world? This is an important aspect of our upcoming symposium discussions, and is brought to the table through the themes we have chosen to focus on. It will hopefully enable us to start reflecting on a time in flux, where self-isolation has been a distancing but also unifying experience. We thus open up for the possibility of exploring a diary or letter format into a performance context, where participants can freely share their stories from these past months. This could for instance be to reflect upon if anything has changed in your artistic practice, and in what way. Our chosen text for preparing the symposium "*Ohio Impromptu*" strengthens the self-reflective mode that we want to tap into. The play is questioning who "I" is in relation to your own story, and how you can change your own narrative. The characters can be perceived as one and the same person, although there is one reader and one listener. The listener is the one controlling the reader, or is it the other way around? We wish to explore the possibilities that lie in the tension between the listener and the reader through a personal angle, where you perceive yourselves both inside and outside a collective context.

Here the notion of *togetherness* comes into play, which is something that we would like to explore as a way of understanding group dynamics both between the group of artists, but also the artists and the audience. It also prompts a critical eye on how you move in space and how you interact with your surroundings. In a time where we have self-isolated, have we not also been able to create new online interactions which could also be seen as *togetherness*? These different forms of being and acting together are very crucial for what will happen during the symposium.

Thus for this symposium we propose the following research questions:

- What is the impact of *togetherness* when examining *self* in times of isolation?
- How can we explore individual dreams and memories collectively?
- How do we perceive the concept of time in performance?

We welcome all approaches, be it philosophical, linguistic, scientific or art theoretical. The goal is to have a diverse group with various backgrounds who all want to share their perspectives, and who are working with performance as a mode of exploration.

This exchange will happen over the course of a weekend, and we will work in an intensive format in order to find immediate responses to the themes. Here we are interested in exploring what happens when you work from a spontaneous creative energy, and what this could generate in a group of new people. The goal of the process is that we scratch the surface of very large themes by attacking them from a smaller entry. Thus working on finding a specific perspective or mode of analysis that we can test together and present as a performance in front of an audience at the end of the symposium.

The symposium will take place at Nesodden in its entirety, meaning that it is also partly a retreat due to the participants eating and sleeping on site after working. We will be outdoors if the weather permits it, and all artists are welcome to explore Nesodden on their time off. *Please note: There may be changes to our program, and we will in this case update this text. This might lead to parts of the program being at Nesodden and in Oslo.*

We are opening up for maximum ten participants.

Applicants chosen to participate will receive more details regarding schedule, travel details etc. two weeks before the symposium. .

Practical information: We are currently applying for funding for the symposium and will know in late June if it should be possible to reimburse travelling fees. Per now we are offering a place to stay and food for all three days.

Please submit this application form by 30th of June 2020:

<https://forms.gle/wGeuP5B6pHeDvqiv5>

Any questions? Contact us: schouskollektivet@gmail.com