

**Bak-truppen YFTC
SUPER-PER**

4 - 8 July

Cast: Erik Balke, Øyvind Berg, Hans Petter Dahl, Ingvild Holm, Trine Falch Johannessen, Jørgen Knudsen, Gurå Mathiesen, Bo Krister Wallström

"The mistake of conventional theatre is to repeat in whatever place at whatever time the production as originally established."
(Bak-truppen in Theaterschrift 5/6. 1994).

IN 1993 THE NORWEGIAN theatre group Bak-truppen staged a series of six different performances with the same title, that enjoyed huge success in Bergen, Zurich, Berlin, Antwerp and Frankfurt. *Peer, Du lügst. - Ja!* (*Peer, you are lying. - Yes!*) was based on the character Peer Gynt taken from the Henrik Ibsen play, but misquotes the famous first lines. In the original version, Peer answers "No", when told by his mother Aase that he is lying. Despite the lust for adventure that his life reveals, Peer denies that fantasy means all and reality very little to him. Bak-truppen start where Ibsen leaves off: in their version, Peer is no longer betraying himself, but cultivating his talents. *Super-Per* became the summing up of their *Peer, Du lügst. - Ja!* productions, and the most surprising adaptation of the Ibsen play.

Since their foundation in 1986, Bak-truppen have used various theatrical texts as a source of inspiration, but have never staged them in a traditional way. The members of the group, who come from different backgrounds, such as music, theatre, visual arts, set design and poetry, develop their shows in accordance with the

time, place and circumstances in which they find themselves. Most of them are collages of different elements: short scenes, movement, dance, dialogue, sounds, snatches of live music and a great deal of live humour. Their work falls somewhere between experimental theatre, happening cabaret and performance art.

"We develop our material at very short notice," they say. "We establish a theme for ourselves, and each of us has his or her totally personal experience of the theme corresponding to his or her own means of expression. Out of this synthesis of individual experience, the piece develops."

Integral to the warmth of their performing presence is the importance they give to authenticity and informality. They perform on an empty stage, with the audience in a rough semi-circle, surrounded by musical instruments, technical equipment and actors in daily clothes. Everyone on stage seems to have changed their name to Peer Gynt. They make demonstrative gestures and quote headlines from the earlier productions, obviously enjoying telling stories about what has happened since. We are taken on a journey from a post office in New Jersey to an erotic enlightenment show for Germans, from Hong Kong to an Institute for Happiness Research. You never know what will happen next. Bak-truppen rejoice in their ability to break down barriers. They respond to the heritage of Ibsen's naturalism by confessing cheerfully that their imagination has become part of their very existence. The only tragedy that can befall them (and us) is not to believe that we are what we imagine.

While the Wooster Group from the USA might be called the masters of avant-garde over more than 20 years, Bak-truppen (Norwegian for "rear-guard") have freed their work from that illusion in the most constructive sense, by defining themselves as a "negative avant-garde": "We don't care about the idea of avant-garde," they say. "Indeed, everything has been done already. But what people recognise is the image and not the experience."

Bak-truppen celebrate *Super-Per* as a unique moment of our life, leaving their audience breathless with wonder, slightly tipsy with joy. Not a purely intellectual, but a truly social event.

Marijke Hoogenboom, assistant to the director of Das Arts, Amsterdam.

Super-Per is performed in English and lasts approximately 1 hour and there will be an after show talk on Thursday 6 July.

Super-Per is produced by TAT, Frankfurt; BIT, Bergen; Zürcher Theater Spektakel, Zürich; Hebbel Theater, Berlin; The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Monty, Antwerpen; Bak-truppen YFTC
Supported by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ICA
INSTITUTE OF
CONTEMPORARY
ARTS
Sponsored by
TOSHIBA

Presented in association with Visiting Arts

