

# Geddy Aniksdal

## My Privilege

A year ago, when we in the editorial group started the work on this issue of *The Open Page*, I had a certain theatre colleague in mind. I wanted her to write about her work, looking back at the performances that she had created, especially since she no longer works in theatre. I had expectations that this would be a useful experience for her, and interesting for us readers. I wrote to her. She answered, flatly refusing, claiming she did not have any reason to write about struggle, whether it was a personal struggle or in the profession. Struggle did not belong to her, it belonged to other women in other countries, women living with war, poverty and in harsh situations. My first reaction was: she is right! It took two seconds. My second was: she is wrong! To be more precise, I disagree with her, and I feel that if I do not, my whole sense of dignity will collapse. As if my life were not real, as if all of us don't struggle? If I, a western woman, cannot say I also struggle, how am I to be fully responsible and own my life? Being responsible means that I know that I am privileged. Knowing that I am privileged makes me act, instead of feeling shame or guilt. I can *use* my privilege.

One of my privileges has been to examine other notions. For example, the notion of Norway, my country of birth, as *good*. In my recent performances I have worked with the objective of questioning the notion that rich always means good, democracy means fairness, education means civilisation... The list could be long. Whatever insight one might have, it doesn't help if it is not used! Sometimes a provocation gives you *good* thoughts!

I came to theatre primarily to find a place for myself. For more than twenty years it has been one of my homes, one of my wrestling places, a place where I can work and contribute my best. Before entering the world of theatre I was active in the Women's Movement in the 1970s. The discovery of a problem, the need to protest, do it immediately, gave instant relief and new energy from which to continue. Being in a theatre group meant I had to transform *this energy into my*





actor's work, to my body that wants to speak, jump, twist and turn, and sing out loud - action. I know I struggle, I know I am privileged.

What do I struggle with? That there is always so much more to do! I struggle not to feel bad about "hiding in the theatre" instead of being in the streets protesting. I struggle with conflicting opinions about whether I should use my resources in the official world of the theatre, big meetings, big people, big pictures, big time, big money! I am acutely aware that traditionally all the men are there and I would welcome a change, either in the shape of the meetings, or who takes part in them or the topic covered. I could do this and no one would hinder me. At the same time I know from my own male colleagues how utterly futile some of these meetings are, and how tedious, the same thing over

and over again. Still, it is reported in the media, written about in books and so on. Then instead of thinking I should be there, as I should be everywhere, and cannot, I can thank them for doing this hard and often boring work. I use my privilege of being able to make theatre, make actions - being at the heart of the theatre, whether that is seen or not, historically speaking.

Within the theatre, I can also attack injustice. To be a part of the Magdalena Project is to be part of a permanent attack against injustice, silencing and invisibility. I would be the first to say that I wish there was no need for the Magdalena Project. But there is a strong need for the Magdalena Project and I am privileged to be part of the struggle.

I struggle with my impatience, this need, this urge to have it done, and to have it done now! It is of no use to have discovered a new path for the whole group to walk along if I am the only one to see it. The others do not have my eyes, my background, my own very personal Molotov cocktail that makes me "me". I have to realise I cannot go if the others can't come, and maybe they cannot walk that quickly or want to go to other places. Changing or finding new paths takes longer than I like to accept. Changes are so slow that I might not live to see them. Looking from my grandmother's life to my daughter's, I get a good glimpse of how different things are - a good enough glimpse to make me continue the privilege of struggling.

GEDDY ANIKSDAL (Norway) is a performer and director at Grenland Friteater and a teacher of actor's methods of creating their own material. She has been active with the Magdalena Project from its beginning. She is also on the editorial board of *The Open Page*.