

ERICH SIDLER

LETTER FROM A SPECTATOR

I am able to make very precise observations, look with a new intensity at the relationship between the performers and the spectators. Optik's performing develops a mood of sensitivity which lets me listen, watch, respond to private, to public sensations. The performers raised for me the whole questions of what makes a 'successful' piece of theatre. We all have the capacity to experience worlds of feeling and possibilities, of potential. We often marginalise these, block our own selves, 'sectarianise' areas of ourselves in order to control and manipulate. Tonight, Optik offered us a theatre which opens up the 'no go' areas, which entertains, which heals. The movements are not based on virtuoso technical 'gimmicks'. They are at once elementary and deeply innocent: an opening up of the performer as him/herself and as link to the spectator's self, too. The sequence of movements is impossible to predict, and can come at an extraordinary pace. A performer moves here and there in the space. Stands runs and then stands again. Breathes, lies down.

The performers sometimes do this very close to one another, or very close to a spectator, sometimes 'isolated'. Suddenly one of them goes diagonally across the path of the others. A 'hindrance' is created, and with it a performance koan of contact/ non-contact. The communication is intense, inexplicable. Buried in such moments is the continuous 'flow' or pulse of the performance. This deep underground rhythmic score surfaces as shattered silences, as long held sequences of repeated actions, as sound. Each spectator seems to perceive fragments of story in some of these moments. But as soon as they are recognised (and sometimes even before then) the moment has passed, the stage dissolves. There is no story, no meaning. This performance has left me awash with impulses, sensations. I have spent an hour in the company of a large number of people, acutely aware of watching and being watched, of bodies sitting, moving. It is a strange and peculiarly exhilarating experience. Simple things fill your mind: how people walk toward one another, how they meet, have contact, leave one another. Postures, movements become startlingly clear. I

am left with a feeling that is absolutely precise yet impossible to determine exactly. I settle finally for this: I have been watching what people are.