

Editorial

While researching in The Magdalena Project's archives in preparation for the twentieth anniversary celebrations at the Transit 5 Festival in January 2007, we came across many letters from and between the women involved in the activities and planning of the early years. The letters have the common characteristic of jumping continually from personal to professional information, from questions and thoughts concerning the creative process to news about friends, partners and children, to timetables and schedules for future meetings. Many **letters** are hand-written and the style of writing, the underlining, colours, pressure, question and exclamation marks are just as revealing as the words.

Most exchange now happens by telephone or email. The speed and quantity of contact that technology allows us has also stolen a particular quality from our written words which is underlined in this issue of *The Open Page*. Single articles recall the influence of **letters** on a certain production or present a creative process which is planned through them. Compilations of correspondence between different authors create a more complete image of a situation. Sequences of letters outline a discussion and inform about faraway experiences. Generations study each other through their distinct way of considering letter writing. Past and future, academics and practitioners, archives and productions dialogue in this issue by trying to pinpoint the value of letters as historical documentation or as a form which women in theatre choose to use in order to pass on information.

Letters are personal and secret forms of communication, characteristics which enable us to hear the voices of some seemingly silent women of the past and present. The design of individual letters and of different alphabets, seen as paintings or graphic design, emerge in this issue as action, inspiration, sound, awareness, availability and rhythm to emphasise the individuality, age, tradition and cultural circumstances of each author.

Lots of **letters** remain hidden in drawers and boxes, together with the implicit motivations which guided us at the time when they were written, perhaps for future historians to select, examine and contextualise. In the meantime the same **letters** can be used to recall a mixture of references and feelings, or to generate ideas and material for new creative processes. Readers and writers have to read in between the lines as well as looking at the evidence of the letters.

At Transit 5, during the presentation of the experimental performance *Women with Big Eyes*, we saw **letters** projected on a white wall and sentences falling off like rain or leaves; letters painted with water evaporate and disappear; letters written as urgent messages on strips of paper burn to light up a tree. Letters can compose many words and meanings, they can become part of books, anthologies and biographies, but they can also speak for themselves. We hope this issue reveals some of their secrets.

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