



Photo: Petra Kohle + Nicolas Vermot Petit-Outhenin

'A l'âme en secret', Performance by Simone Rüssli,
Theater Arsenic Lausanne 2009

excerpt of the text 'writing performance' by Rachel Lois Clapham

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... I put my foam earplugs in to block out the noise of everyone's chatter and concentrate on my writing. As the foam expands the artists voices fade away to a muffled, indistinguishable blurble, their mouths move but no sound reaches me. I look back at the blank document on my computer screen. To where my written response to Simone Rüssli's performance should be but isn't, because I can't focus on what I want to say amid all the comings and goings. I push my earplugs in a bit more and think back to last night but now it's the inside of my head, my blood pumping that is amplified, mixed in with the noise of my thinking. Dun Dun, Dun, Dun I remember Rüssli sporadically walked around in the theatre, playing bits of music from her ipod, then changing her mind, stopping mid track and playing others. Dun Dun, Dun Dun. She casually folded a series of rustic woven blankets that were dotted around the space, she took some of the bottled water that was centre stage and put it on a small camping gas stove to boil. She did this and various other small, everyday and seemingly insignificant gestures for 40 minutes. Dun Dun, Dun, Dun. Then suddenly something happened, an event, if it had not been one already. A member of the audience who had been sat next to me - debating whether or not to intervene - suddenly got up, entered Rüssli's performance space and lay down on one of her blankets. He watched Rüssli for her reaction. Rüssli promptly came over and gently covered the interloper with a blanket and tucked him in. Dun Dun, Dun, Dun. It was this unscripted moment that revealed the real contingency and potentiality of the performance. It highlighted Rüssli's indecisive actions in the space as deliberately undecided and meaningful in their very lack of clear intent; they were shown as actions that stemmed from a desire to fully experience the abundance and precariousness of potentiality live on stage. Dun Dun, Dun, Dun. The critical and contingent nature of her performance was due to its being rooted to its moment, being open to its eventual nature, in particular to any unanticipated, background or outside agency it contained. Dun Dun, Dun, Dun. It was in and by the porosity of the event that we the audience, usually confined to our seats as necessary witness to the live, were affecting the performance, and vice versa. ...