



GRACE TJANG  
(GRACE ELLEN BARKEY) /  
NEEDCOMPANY

Belgium / Indonesia

*MALAM / NIGHT*

20. Juli 2022, 17:00  
20. Juli 2022, 19:00  
22. Juli 2022, 17:00  
22. Juli 2022, 19:00

mumok – Museum moderner Kunst  
Stiftung Ludwig Wien

Österreichische Erstaufführung



GRACE TJANG

bei ImPulsTanz

2022  
Jan Lauwers / Needcompany  
*All the good* (Performer)

2013  
Grace Tjang (Grace Ellen Barkey) / Needcompany  
*MUSH-ROOM* (Choreographer)

2008  
Grace Tjang (Grace Ellen Barkey) / Needcompany  
*The Porcelain Project* (Choreographer)

2006  
Grace Tjang (Grace Ellen Barkey) / Needcompany  
*Chunking* (Choreographer)

2001  
Grace Tjang (Grace Ellen Barkey) / Needcompany  
*Few Things* (Choreographer)

CREDITS

*Installation, Zeichnungen, Kostüm und Performance:*  
Grace Tjang  
*Video:*  
Grace Tjang (Ausnahme: *Deer* in Zusammenarbeit mit Emma van der Put)  
*Soundinstallation, ‘Imaginary landscapes’:*  
Rombout Willems

*Technische Leitung:*  
Ken Hioco  
*Technische Koordination:*  
Tijs Michiels  
*Produktionsleitung:*  
Marjolein Demey  
*Outside Eye:*  
Emma van der Put  
*Künstlerische Assistenz:*  
Kasia Törz

*Produktion:*  
Needcompany  
*Koproduktion:*  
Théâtre Garonne, scène européenne – Toulouse;  
Das Internationale Figurentheaterfestival Erlangen,  
MA scène nationale – Pays de Montbéliard Tax Shelter  
funding; BNP Paribas Fortis Film Finance NV/SA

Mit Unterstützung des Tax Shelter der belgischen Bundesregierung und der flämischen Behörden

Uraufführung am 7. Oktober 2021, The Sun Machine  
is Coming Down (Berliner Festspiele)

Dauer 60 Min.

ÜBER ABOUT

Wir müssen vor allem darauf achten, dass unser Geist nicht durch einen Horizont geteilt wird. Amartya Sen, *Identität und Gewalt. Die Illusion des Schicksals*

Grace Ellen Barkey ist Frau, Enkelin, Tochter, Schwester, Ehefrau, Mutter, Großmutter, Javanerin, Indonesierin, eine Frau aus dem ehemaligen Niederländisch-Ostindien, Indonesisch-Chinesin, Indonesisch-Chinesisch-Niederländerin, Indonesisch-Chinesisch-Niederländisch-Belgierin, eine Frau aus Amsterdam, aus Brüssel, Kämpferin, Prinzessin, Kriegerprinzessin, Überlebende, Tänzerin, Performerin, Bildermacherin, Künstlerin.

Grace Ellen Barkey ist ein Nachtvogel.

In der Mühle in Molenbeek arbeitet sie wochenlang an einer neuen Installation/Performance, in völliger Einsamkeit. Ihre Liebsten, Freund\*innen und Kolleg\*innen arbeiten in demselben Gebäude. Sie zieht sich in ihr Atelier zurück und gibt ihrer Interpretation der Nacht Gestalt. Die Nacht, die ihr so vertraut ist.

Die Schlaflosigkeit hat sie gelehrt, die Nacht zu umarmen, die Welt zu betrachten, die sich im schwachen Schein einer Straßenlaterne manifestiert. Der Vorgarten ihres Hauses ist ihr Observatorium. Die Pflanzen, die Naturelemente, das fahle Licht und die Schatten der Nacht regen ihre Fantasie an. Sie entführen sie auf einen anderen Kontinent, wo organische Formen, Licht und Schatten die Grundlage für ein uraltes Puppenspiel namens Wayang bilden. Das nächtliche Spektakel setzt in ihr die Vergangenheit frei, eine Familiengeschichte, die alle Wunden und Narben dieses und des vergangenen Jahrhunderts in sich trägt. Eine Geschichte von Männern und Frauen, vor allem von Frauen. Die Enkelin, Tochter, Performerin, Künstlerin erschafft ein tropisch prickelndes poetisches Universum aus Schatten und Licht, sie ehrt alle, die ihr vorausgegangen sind.

Grace Ellen Barkey ist jetzt Grace Tjang.

*EN*  
*We have to make sure, above all, that our mind is not halved by a horizon.*  
*Amartya Sen, Identity & Violence. The Illusion of Destiny*

*Grace Ellen Barkey is a woman, a granddaughter, a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a Javanese, an Indonesian, a woman of the former Dutch East Indies, an Indonesian-Chinese, an Indonesian-Chinese-Dutch, an Indonesian-Chinese-Dutch-Belgian, a woman from Amsterdam, from Brussels, a fighter, a princess, a warrior princess, a survivor, a dancer, a performer, an image maker, an artist.*

*Grace Ellen Barkey is a nightbird.*

*At Mill in Molenbeek she works for weeks on a new installation/performance, in complete solitude. Her loved ones, friends, colleagues work in the same building. She retreats to her studio and gives shape to her interpretation of the night. The night that is so familiar to her. Insomnia has taught her to embrace the night, to contemplate the world that manifests itself in the dim glow of a streetlamp. The front garden of her house is her observatory, her night world. The plants, the natural elements, the pale light and the night shadows appeal to her imagination. They take her to another continent, where organic shapes, light and shadow form the basis of an age-old puppetry called wayang. The nocturnal spectacle unleashes the past in her, a family history that carries all the wounds and scars of this century and the previous ones. A history of men and women, especially women. The granddaughter, daughter, performer, artist creates a tropical tingling poetic universe of shadow and light, she honours all that preceded her.*

*Grace Ellen Barkey is now Grace Tjang.*

LITTLE STORIES, A GREAT HISTORY

*Two men of Dutch origin both conceive a child out of wedlock in the Dutch East Indies, one a son, the other a daughter. The men do not know each other, but the life path of their children will intersect.*

‘My family is a family in transition. There’s a lot of melancholy. We came from Indonesia. I was two when we left the country. When my mother died, I wanted to dig into my origins. I went looking for the stories. They are many, but in one small story lurks a whole history, a history called colonization.’

*Grace makes a performance. Grace is the grand-daughter of Tjang Afung. She rummages in her parents‘ past, looking for nourishment for her art, for her soul. An Indonesian girl in the Netherlands, later in Belgium, anxious to find pieces of the puzzle distilled from the lives that precede her. Lives that took place in the Dutch East Indies.*

*Between Sumatra and Borneo lies the island of Banka, the island of the tin mines. Since the 18th century, cheap and technically skilled workers, descendants of Chinese coolies, have been extracting the crystalline silvery-white metal from the soil, first for the sultan, later for the Dutch rulers. There, in 1923, the Chinese Tjang Afung gives birth to a boy. The father, perhaps named Leonard, is a Dutch-man. Three more children follow, but no marriage. The boy is nine when his father decides to move to Europe. He takes the children, drops them in an orphanage on another island and leaves. None of them will ever see their mother again.*

*Grace’s father tells her a story about a drink his mother gave him so that he would forget her. ‘But daddy! Such a drink, that is not possible at all, it does not exist!’ Grace’s reaction is spontaneous and cruel, her father is distraught. By asking questions, Grace, the (grand)daughter-who-is-now-a-mother conjures up memories. It takes time. The mementos are scarce. Tjang Afung was Buddhist, she took her children to the temple. There was a niece who often helped her; the father of the niece was a woodworker... She lived and died in Banka. She gave her children a drink to forget about her. That’s about all Grace knows.*

*Grace’s father sees his father again once, just after the war. It feels uncomfortable and their lives quickly drift apart again. Years later, in the Netherlands – Grace is ten or twelve – the (grand)father, who feels the end of his life is approaching, requests to meet. It remains a one-off visit. Leonard – if that was his name – did not leave the Indies alone, he was in the company of Mrs Kilian and another man. A ménage à trois. He dies and none of his children wants to inherit a penny from him. His eldest son visits Mrs Kilian out of politeness. She appreciates it and wants to go with him to Paris, the deceased father exchanged for the son.*

‘My father was 17 when the war started, as soon as he became 18 he was called to fight against the Japanese. His defence of the motherland involves only one day. With the gun on his shoulder, he guards a small airfield. The next day he is locked up in a Japanese prison camp. His father didn’t give him much, but he did give him a name: Barkey. That name was registered as Dutch and even though my father looked anything but like a Dutchman, his name made him end up in that camp. My mother was locked up in a similar camp. But that’s another story.’

*Over the years Grace blends the family stories, in small chunks she pieces together the past and in the meantime, she leads her life. She follows a dance training, creates performances, she works hard, her mother dies, she dives into the library of the Tropical Museum and teaches herself the techniques of Javanese dance, she meets Jan, falls in love, they set up a company together, she moves to Brussels, she gives birth, she gets sick, critically ill, she fights, she performs, she travels from stage to stage, from country to country... but never to Indonesia, never to Banka.*

*After the war, Grace’s father makes a number of decisions. He follows his heart and becomes Indonesian, he marries a woman without papers, without a family name. The turbulent after-effects of the war and the struggle for independence make him long for a different existence. The Netherlands is repatriating its citizens. In 1960, the young family attempts the crossing. An illegal act. Indonesia doesn’t mind getting rid of the bastard children of Dutch rule. The dream of the fledgling family comes with a struggle for non-existent rights. The Dutch government must perform a post-colonial act. The names of those who are being pardoned are published in the Official Gazette. The undocumented Indonesian gives up his recently acquired nationality, from now on he and his family will go through life as Dutch citizens. The topic is never mentioned again. The young father, new-fangled European, traces the origin of his name to 1500. The Barkey family tree has its roots in Germany, branches out via England to South America and*

*fans out to Indonesia. The history of the progenitors was written by European migrants and settlers. The origin of the Chinese (grand)mother remains irrevocably shrouded in mystery.*

‘October 2020. My father is 93 and doesn’t survive COVID-19. I write a text to say goodbye and look back on his extraordinary life. A life marked by a mother who was erased from memory with a drink. It’s time to save her from the folds of oblivion. To honour her. To heal our broken bond. I’m working on NIGHT / MALAM and I decide to decolonize my name. I’m now Grace Tjang.’

MOTHER

‘My mother’s father lived his life on two islands. On one he lived with his legitimate wife and their eleven children. On the other he stayed with my grandmother, with whom he fathered three more children, who did not get his name. My grandmother and her children are locked up in the infamous Japanese women’s camp of Surabaya. My mother is only a child, she has malaria and is therefore not put on the transport that will take her mother to another camp. The truck leaves. The child-who-later-on-will-be-my-mother is lifted up by an unknown woman and thrown into the arms of her mother.’

*The Japanese are notorious for their torture techniques. Unlike the father-with-two-lives, mother and children survive the madness. She has to start looking for a new home. The widow-concubine becomes a nanny and after a while again a concubine. No photos of her have been preserved.*

‘I know these stories from my father. My mother is silent. All her life she would never say a word about her mother. I only understood her silence when I read ‚Bezonken rood‘ by Jeroen Brouwers. ‚I thought at the time: now I want another mother because this one is broken.‘ *The child who witnesses the dehumanization of his mother in the camps has a broken mother image for the rest of his existence.* ‘I was born with the melancholy that settled in my parents‘ lives, with the scars of the trauma that marked these children of the colony at a very young age.’

*Parting is part of life. But in Grace Tjang’s life, parting takes on a new dimension. Like a snake, it squirms through her family history, ruthless, raw, leaving deep scars. The mother’s parting comes unseemly early. Grace is almost graduating from the dance academy in Amsterdam. She creates a performance that will receive a lot of acclaim. Her mother will never see Grace shine on that stage, or on any stage for that matter.*

*How do you say goodbye to life? To a loved one? A father? How do you live when death manifests itself in your body? If no future beckons, no plan?*

Text by Kathleen Weyts, translated into English by Luc Franken (short version)

BIOGRAFIE BIOGRAPHY

Geboren in Surabaya in Indonesien, studierte **Grace Ellen Barkey** Tanz an der Theaterschule von Amsterdam und arbeitete im Anschluss als Tänzerin und Schauspielerin. Sie choreografierte mehrere eigene Produktionen, bis sie 1986 die Needcompany mitbegründete und sich Vollzeit der Choreografie widmete.

*EN*  
**Grace Ellen Barkey, born in Surabaya in Indonesia, studied dance expression and modern dance at the theatre school in Amsterdam and afterwards worked as an actress and dancer. She choreographed several productions before co-founding Needcompany in 1986 and becoming its full-time choreographer.**